



# Assessing gendered social norms

Strengthening Dairy Value Chains in Bangladesh

## Case study

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October 2016



## Citation

Jones, L.(2016) *Assessing gendered social norms: strengthening dairy value chains in Bangladesh*. The BEAM Exchange, accessed from [www.beamexchange.org](http://www.beamexchange.org).

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## Published by:

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The BEAM Exchange is a facility for knowledge exchange and learning about the role of market systems approaches in reducing poverty.

## Acknowledgements

The author gratefully acknowledges the BEAM Exchange for their generous support of this study. Developing this paper required a collective effort, and the author would like to thank all those who contributed to the study. In particular, the author is grateful for the input and support of the team who supported the case study: Nurul Amin Siddiquee, CARE International, Rita Alam, independent consultant, and colleagues at MarketShare Associates.



The BEAM Exchange is a programme funded by the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). It is administered by PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP, working with organisations including the Institute of Development Studies and Itad.



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# 1. Introduction

CARE has been active in Bangladesh since 1949 and is well-known for its application of a rights based approach to programming which aims to address the underlying causes of poverty and transforms the lives of men and women living in poverty. More recently, CARE programmes have engaged with the private sector and developed inclusive business models to confront development challenges for people at the bottom of the pyramid. Working with women is a key strategy, and the organisation targets the most socially, economically and politically marginalised women. This dual focus on private sector development and women's economic empowerment is the foundation of CARE Bangladesh's programming in the dairy sub-sector and in particular phase II of the Strengthening Dairy Value Chains (SDVC) project. This programme has targeted social gendered norms successfully and provides insights into the type of interventions and monitoring and evaluation that programmes can follow to address these issues.

## Research and methods overview

The research for this case involved both secondary and primary research; quantitative and qualitative secondary research drew on both internal and published documents, while qualitative primary research included staff interviews and two rounds of field research. In total, the two rounds of research consisted of 5 focus group discussions with over 100 women, and 14 in-depth interviews with market actors (4 women and 10 men) in 3 districts and 6 villages.

Researchers developed a questionnaire, focus group discussion guide and interview template to collect the needed information, and tested these in three sub-districts within SDVC project areas in NW Bangladesh in January 2016. (Annex 1 offers guidance for using these tools, and the tools themselves are presented in Annex 2.) Following an initial review of findings, the tools were revised and re-tested in February 2016 in three locations in Bogra district in NW Bangladesh. Bogra district was selected because researchers could target 'typical' households and gain insights into gender norms and the effects of CARE's programme on women's empowerment. That is, Bogra is considered 'average' among the areas where SDVC is implemented – neither the richest nor the poorest, nor the most or least conservative. Furthermore, communities in Bogra represent a somewhat homogenous group in terms of economic profiles/poverty levels and similar dairy production practices i.e. a mix of local and cross-breed dairy cows.

The main difference among the communities included in the research was in the distance of producer groups from the market or milk collection point (CP) i.e. remote, near, and moderately near, as detailed below:

- Remote from market/CP: Dhulichar village, Nepaltoli Union, Gabtoli Upazila
- Midway from market/CP: Bhandra village, Durgahata Union, Gabtoli Upazila
- Near to market/CP: Vaitabhanga village, Durgahata Union, Gabtoli Upazila

Most of these communities were also part of SDVC I and, over the last 4-5 years, the amount of milk produced through the introduction of improved dairy practices, cross-breeds and artificial insemination has increased.

## Project background

### **SDVC I – the first phase of CARE's dairy value chain strengthening**

SDVC I was implemented for five years from October 2007 to December 2012 with the goal of doubling the incomes of over 36,000 dairy producers through private sector engagement in

upgraded dairy value chains. The project led to an understanding of how to reach a “tipping point”<sup>1</sup> in the dairy sector needed to generate sustainable change, which included a combination of group formation, input shops and digital fat testers. Another key development was the piloting of an innovative dairy hub model, which is now being adopted by private sector processors, as a new industry norm in Bangladesh.

CARE’s work in strengthening the dairy value chain in Bangladesh explicitly aims to benefit both male and female farmers. In fact, one of the “overarching principles of value chain development [was] gender justice and equity.”<sup>2</sup>

The project developed the capacity of service providers and dairy processors to support the poorest producers, connect them to markets, and enable them to take control of their own lives. While the project succeeded in involving significant numbers of women, significant social and economic challenges still limited their participation and empowerment.<sup>3</sup>

CARE therefore launched the Gender, Agriculture and Asset Project (GAAP – supported by IFPRI and ILRI) – to further investigate gender norms, the asset gap and its consequences, and the overall barriers for women. In particular, CARE learned that social attitudes affected women’s status, power and rights in the home and community and therefore their access to opportunities (e.g., education) and resources (e.g., assets). Based on the learnings from this research, SDVC I was able to design gender awareness tools and interventions for smallholder dairy groups that involved both women and men in addressing the barriers faced by women.<sup>4</sup>

The solution devised by CARE to overcome inequity used community dialogue to raise awareness and educate both men and women to the differences between them and ultimately lead to social change.

### **SDVC II –The second phase of CARE’s dairy value chain strengthening**

Building on the learnings and momentum of SDVC I, SDVC II – is a four-year project that runs from 2013 to December 2016. The SDVC II project works in seven districts with more than 30,000 small dairy farmers, and replicates the tipping point and dairy hub strategies in collaboration with BRAC Dairy and Food Project.

#### **Box 1: Community dialogue**

In order to confront the social biases that affected women’s opportunities and access, CARE put in place an initiative to promote community dialogue and raise awareness regarding gender norms. Day one of a two day dialogue starts by explaining the concepts of gender and community gender norms. After discussing the basic concepts, the workshop facilitator leads a session on gender equity format analysis. For example, the facilitator asks the participants, “Do we understand why we need to address the inequity issue?” Through a pictorial exercise, the facilitator is able to raise awareness around gender equity in the community focusing on the differences in five component areas: access to education, assets, rights, control over assets and power. This then leads to a discussion on the importance of gender equity in families and society. The next exercise groups men and women separately so that they can prioritise their needs amongst the five components, following this men and women’s groups come together to share their thinking. This process is repeated to promote analysis, discussion and greater understanding regarding gender and perceptions in the community.

1 Malcolm Gladwell, who has made ‘tipping point’ a popular buzzword, talks in his book about how small changes can come together to spark a trend, which spreads like wildfire when it reaches a critical mass. It has also been defined as the critical point in an evolving situation that leads to a new and irreversible development. (Margaret Rouse, [www.whatis.techtarget.com](http://www.whatis.techtarget.com))

2 McKague, K. and Siddiquee, N. (2014) Making markets more inclusive: Lessons from CARE and the future sustainability in Agriculture value chain development. Palgrave Macmillan

3 CARE (2012) Brief Report: Preliminary Findings from the GAAP Pilot Gendered Awareness Interventions

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Together, CARE and BRAC are establishing milk collection points with digital fat testing (DFT) to reach poor families and support them to increase average daily milk production and household income from milk sales. Previous work in SDVC I and with the GAAP intervention described above meant that, in SDVC II, CARE had greater awareness and capacity around gender issues, and could be more intentional about women’s participation and empowerment right from the start. With regard to women’s empowerment, SDVC II strives to promote the following:

- Women’s access to and control over resources
- Women’s decision-making authority
- Diversifying women’s roles in the value chain beyond production to service provision
- Gender awareness to support women’s participation and engagement in groups
- Time allocation (that is – workload) assessment by women and their partners

In order to achieve women’s empowerment, CARE considered the effects of gender norms on realising its goals (discussed in the next sections).

### Understanding and addressing social norms in SDVC II

SDVC II’s original proposal as well as project briefs and reports demonstrate awareness of gender issues that result from women’s lower status in society. In dairy value chains, the constraints and solutions that were identified by CARE include:

**Box 2: Exceeding project targets for reaching women**  
 By 2014, CARE had exceeded its target of 70 percent women participants to achieve 89 percent at the producer level, and 5 percent higher up in the value chain. More recently, it has been demonstrated that SDVC producers deliver more milk than non-SDVC producers even when the breed of cow is taken into account. Also, SDVC producers are supplying a more stable supply of milk per cow than non-SDVC producers, and female producers in general are delivering more milk per cow than male producers. Moreover, assessments have shown that improvements in resiliency are strongest for female producers in the SDVC programme, and the overall gender gap in productivity is smaller for women producers in the SDVC versus women producers who are not.

#### **Gender norms and roles in the home and community:**

Because of social norms around women’s mobility and responsibility for the homestead, women did not traditionally take on roles beyond the day-to-day care of cows. This enabled them to conduct their work on the homestead and did not require them to move from place to place and engage with strangers. Through SDVC II, women began engaging in new value chain roles such as input providers and artificial inseminators. SDVC II also hosted community meetings on gender awareness to support its work in overcoming the gender norms described above.

#### **Gender norms affecting engagement with the private sector:**

Relating to both mobility and segregation from men, as well as the attitudes from others around women’s roles, women did not engage with the private sector. SDVC seeks to influence private sector support for women by encouraging market actors to extend their reach to women farmers and other value chain actors in both the input supply and output markets. For example, CARE’s partner, BRAC, has established last-mile, village level milk collection points so that it is convenient for women to deliver their produce. Women also receive visible and transparent price and payment information at those centres, and are registered and authorised to collect their payment on a weekly basis. ‘Krishi Utsho’ agro input shops are established near to the collection points so that women farmers also have more convenient access to productivity

enhancing inputs. The milk delivery receipts from the collection points helps women producers to get inputs on credit from the agro-input shops that are paid off from weekly milk payments at the collection point. These activities promote women’s engagement with the private sector.

**Gender norms and the role of the public sector:** Beyond the social norms already noted, men are considered the livestock owners and the public face of the household, and so women were not reached by public sector extension services. SDVC II encourages local government livestock offices to build knowledge and skills within the dairy value chain by serving both women's groups and other service providers. For example, government agencies trained over 300 new community livestock health workers many of whom proudly served their communities afterwards. District livestock officers provided hands-on instruction, resulting in direct links between women farmers and quality veterinary services from the livestock departments.

## 1. Key findings of qualitative research on social norms

The following section examines how women dairy producers, women service providers and male service providers in each of the different localities in Bogra perceive the constraints and opportunities associated with gendered social norms, and how these impact women's participation in different aspects of the market.

### A. Women dairy producers:

In general, women producer groups reported increased incomes from their dairy business. Distance from the collection centre was key in positive outcomes for women due to norms around mobility and the roles that require them to remain close to the homestead. As a result, the closest producer group was the strongest in terms of volume of milk production, dairy care and management, and a fairly high income from milk sales and the purchase of hybrid cows. Given that the location of the digital fat testing collection point was within the village, it was easy for the women themselves to deliver the milk, or they could ask other family members to do so. The women from this group said milk sales were an important contribution to household income. They also mentioned the reinvestment of income from milk sales in other productive ventures, such as the lease or purchase of agricultural land, acquiring more cows, etc. The weakest of the women producers groups interviewed were those in the remote location of Dhulirchar village; most cows are local breeds, women use traditional milk collectors to milk cows even if it means a loss in income, and the reach of the livestock office and therefore skills and knowledge transfer is less than in other areas.

**Roles:** For the most part, women do not take on non-traditional roles but remain as producers in the dairy sector. Most of the respondents in this research trial reported that there are no objections to women taking on non-traditional activities, such as artificial inseminators, in the dairy sector, only concerns about the security of women in general. The latter is based on the

#### Box 3: Men's roles

In the focus group discussions carried out in the location nearest to the market, women indicated men help in the lighter work of caring for cattle such as providing water to cows cutting grass for the cattle feed. In addition, men are responsible for buying feed now that the demand is higher and the feed is purchased in sacks and not just small parcels of 1–2 kg. Since this is not physically possible for women, it is regarded as part of the natural division of labour in the household.

very real potential of sexual harassment when women venture out alone, particularly in the evening or at a distance from those who know them. At the same time, women producers prefer to be engaged in activities near their homes due to their household responsibilities and stated the need to learn other skills in non-dairy income generating activities so that they do not have to depend only on income from the dairy sector, which was not always constant.

**Barriers/challenges to participating in the market:**<sup>5</sup> Traditionally, women in rural households in Bangladesh take care

<sup>5</sup> Similar findings to previous research report

**Box 4: Remote women**

Even in the more remote communities, women FGD participants reported changes in recognition that they can be important contributors to the household income. As a result of greater engagement in a variety of market activities, they have experienced:

- More mobility in accessing markets
- Better negotiation skills in dealing with informal milk collectors
- Improved communication and linkages with livestock health workers and input shops
- Some level of greater involvement in family decision-making
- Better dairy management resulting in higher fat content of milk and increased incomes.

of dairy activities. Therefore none of the women faced impediments from their household or the community in home-based production activities or their involvement in local producer groups. The latter is positive for women as dairy groups provide them with the opportunity to learn about better practices in herd management. Women producers said that they have not faced any barriers to participating in SDVC II activities from their family or community. In addition, they do not have any problems in interacting with male value chain actors such as livestock health workers or artificial inseminators, and many of the women (particularly in the near location) also go to buy cattle feed and medicine from the agro-input shop.

However, social norms surrounding the timing and reasons for women's mobility appear to impede women's ability to sell their milk in the markets, whether they live near or far. For women producers located near a market place, it is not socially acceptable for women to venture out in the evenings. And, women from the midway and remotely located groups state that women can go to market places to purchase personal and household items but not for the purpose of selling milk or buying cattle feed/medicine. This is gradually changing since there are households where the men are not always present (e.g. women-headed households, or where a male member works away from home), and women go to market by necessity.

Even within the most progressive women producer group visited, older women members prefer to adhere to tradition and stay at home while they send a male family member to deliver milk or buy goods from the market. Such generational differences within households have been witnessed elsewhere as younger women are more 'modern' and norms for them are shifting, while older women adhere to the prevailing norms of their day. Although it is not completely clear why this shift is happening, it is likely that education and exposure to the media contribute to shifting social norms.

**Workload:** All women producers report that workloads have increased in order to take better care of the dairy cows and increase milk production. Some women from the nearby and midway groups have indicated that, as their contribution to household well-being grows, the more

**Box 5: Preference for female livestock workers**

In the 'midway' focus group discussion, women reported that if there are adequately trained female livestock health workers, then they would prefer to call them rather than male equivalents since the communication and rapport between women is easier.

support they receive from their husbands and in-laws. Others report that they are able to manage the extra workload even without support of their husbands, and they are motivated by the economic benefits they receive.

However, women in the remotely located group complained of the workload even though they admitted their dairy cows were

healthier and milk production had somewhat increased (and they still use traders to milk cows in some cases). This may be because they own local breed varieties and have therefore not been able to increase their return on labour in parallel with the increase in production, as have women from communities with cross-breed cows who live closer to collection points.

**Social support:** On the issue of women engaging in other professions such as livestock health worker, artificial inseminator and agro-input dealer, all the women producers stated that women can be trained and the community will not object to this. However, they reinforced the fact heard elsewhere that the only issue is security, and they can overcome this by taking a male relative with them to tend to calls after dark. If there are adequately trained female livestock health workers, then women farmers prefer to call them compared to men since the communication and rapport between women is easier.

### Reported changes in women's lives across all three localities:

- Increased mobility in going to markets and to trainings – women are now freer to move beyond the homestead as their families and communities have adjusted their attitudes about women's mobility.
- Improved access to knowledge of proper dairy management and care – as society has become more tolerant and supportive of women's engagement outside the home and community, they have improved access to services such as extension.
- Attitudes in communities have changed around women's roles and their ability to take on expanded and new roles – as the communities have seen women successfully take on new roles and as the gender awareness training has encouraged new ways of thinking about women's roles, there is greater appreciation for women's contribution in dairy activities.
- Higher status in the household resulting from women's increased capacity, contribution and confidence have resulted in more control over money matters both around household finances and in joint-decision making over re-investing earnings.
- Increased status of poor women – as poor women have also become active in the dairy value chains, attitudes towards them and their value in society has shifted. Very poor women report that now other community people even greet them, and they have increased visibility as a person.

"If I can take care of the CP in absence of the manager, I can also become a CP manager."

## B. Female service providers

Women health workers and input providers were interviewed in the two rounds of research. They report that they make good incomes, are respected for their work and take on significant technical and management responsibility. In fact, women service providers reported that the project has brought about changes in the 'gender norms' so that women are accepted for their new roles and they would like other women to adopt enhanced roles. As noted below, this acceptance is related to women's competence and the value of the services that they provide (often preferred over men due to what is recognised as their reliability and commitment to offering good services). However, the lack of other women adopting these roles suggests that there is still an internal social norm at play that restrains women, even if social sanctions do not occur for those who have taken on new roles.

### Box 6: A new role in the VC

Selina was appointed as assistant to the collection point (CP) manager who trained her himself in handling CP activities. Selina has been working for three years since she was a high school student and now earns BDT 2000/month. Her work includes collecting the milk from producers, measuring fat content and record keeping. When the CP Manager is not present, she takes full charge of all the work of the CP.



### **Box 7: Spotlight on a female livestock health worker**

Msmt Shiuli Begum is a livestock health worker in Hatibandha Union, Gabtoli Upazila, Bogra. She joined the SDVC programme in 2007 and received training. She serves producers in about 5 groups within a range of about 3.5 km. She provides services including vaccinations, de-worming and care for seasonal diseases such as pneumonia and foot-rot. Shiuli also offers practical advice on the care and feeding of cows such as the preparation of cattle feed (molasses making). She has both male and female customers and is comfortable working with both stating, “when I demonstrate my expertise and the cow recovers from illness, men also trust me.” Shiuli is the lone woman member of the local association. She was introduced to the pharmaceutical agents through the association and peers, and pharmaceutical products are now delivered to her home and explained by the company agent. Although Shiuli initially received resistance from her family and community in taking on a non-traditional role, respect and support for her have grown as she persisted despite such concerns. Even the elite of the community now support her and use her as a role model for their daughters and wives. She has also received a ‘Joyeetha’ award given by Ministry of Women and Children Affairs for high performing women. Shiuli closed her interview by saying, “I have come to this stage after overcoming a lot of problems. I want other girls to follow me in this profession.”

The following summarises learnings from female service providers, and breaks the learnings out according to key categories:

- **Women’s engagement with other actors in the value chain:** Women service providers have an easy rapport with women producers, but also serve male customers. Confidence and competency appear to be a key ingredient for this comfortable interaction. One livestock worker is a member of the local association where she is the only female, but feels she has received support to upgrade her skills and make linkages with the pharmaceutical company representatives (alongside SDVC’s support).
- **Barriers / Challenges to participation:** Women with new roles report some initial concerns from their family and the community when they take those roles on. These were overcome through discussion and persevering despite negative comments. Most people now not only accept changed roles but in some market areas, there are more women working now: e.g., running tea stalls.
- **Advantages/ Opportunities:** Female service providers reported that as a woman, it is easier to converse with women dairy farmers about the problems they face with their cows.
- **Overcoming barriers to participation in the market:** The main problems are around security of the women livestock workers if they have to go out after dark or to a remote location. This has been tackled by being accompanied by a male relative. (Interestingly, the security question is never presented as a gender norm issue but seen as something different – see discussion in lessons learned below.)
- **Sanctions:** There were initial concerns and comments from the community but there are no longer any major sanctions for the women service providers. Their contributions are appreciated and respected, and some community members note that women are responsive and conscientious, providing reliable and valuable services.
- **Support:** SDVC has carried out various awareness raising activities around the project in order to sensitise people and gain their support which has contributed to fewer challenges faced. In addition to the project, women were supported by the local association and male livestock workers. In general, they now are supported by their communities who recognise their skills and capacity.

## C. Male market actors:

A total of ten male market actors were interviewed in both phases of primary research. Male market actors reported a positive attitude about women's role in the dairy sector not only as producers but also as livestock workers. They noted that in areas where the economic benefits of improved dairy practices are being felt, traditional gender norms are changing faster, increasing women's mobility and giving them better abilities in decision-making and financial management. That is, as women are participating and contributing economically, they are realising greater benefits.

### Spotlight on a male livestock health worker

Mohammed Ali is a livestock worker and artificial inseminator in Durgahata Bazar, Durgahata Union, Gabtoli Upazila. He joined CARE activities in 2008 and was motivated to become an livestock worker after one of his cows died because of incorrect treatment. Once he was trained and became active in providing services in the community, private sectors suppliers contacted him providing access to veterinary products. M. Ali now has 15-20 customers per day, and he covers six villages on a regular basis. He notes that the area now has more crossbreed cattle than before which is why the dairy business is thriving and the demand for his services is increasing. M.Ali reports that the majority of his customers are women as they are more engaged in dairy work than their male counterparts, although men still typically make the fee payments. He has observed changes among women who are more aware of dairy diseases and follow up with him regarding vaccination and de-worming; allow him to carry out pregnancy tests on their heifers which they did not allow before; no longer hesitate to talk to male livestock workers; have an increased workload with better dairy management; and can now go to the market to buy feed but not to sell milk.

The following summarises the learnings across male market actors.

- **Women's engagement:** All the male actors generally said women are good dairy producers and that it is beneficial to do business with them. Compared to men, women pay their dues more quickly especially when they are the main custodian of the animal and in charge of dairy management.
- **Barriers/ Challenges re participation:** Most male actors do not feel that there is any barrier to women working as dairy producers or animal health workers as long as they have the proper training. The only issue of concern is the women's security in case of working after dark.
- **Advantages/ Opportunities:** Women are considered more honest in their dealings, either as buyers or producers, and in order for the dairy chain to prosper in these areas, male market actors expressed it would be good if more women were involved in different roles.
- **Overcoming barriers re participation:** Male market actors suggested that in order to encourage women's participation as livestock workers(non-traditional roles), their security should be guaranteed. It is considered the responsibility of the woman's family to make sure women are safe (e.g., by accompanying them after dark).
- **Sanctions:** Male market actors have not faced any negative impact in dealing with women. The reported challenges are more in areas of general market dynamics such as lower prices or problems in collection.
- **Supports:** Male market actors expressed that the SDVC programme has introduced new professions for women which can be gradually increase and improved over time. They also generally feel that the community will also become more accepting of changing roles.

### 3. Lessons learned

The CARE case illustrates that addressing social norms in market systems is a process that can be complex, ill-defined and unpredictable. In some cases, where we expect change to be slow, it can happen rapidly – like the significant success of a few women as market actors in SDVC II. But, on the other hand, it can appear stalled, where, for example, despite the widespread acceptance of women taking on new roles in the dairy value chain, other women are reluctant to follow suit. It is difficult to understand why these specific women have whatever it took (confidence? ambition? need?) to step out of conventional roles, become more assertive and to look forward to expanded roles in the value chain.

Despite the ‘messiness’ of understanding social norms and how to best effect change to promote women’s economic empowerment, the CARE case highlights some key learnings.

- 1. Understand the implications of variable social contexts:** When working with women whose roles and opportunities are especially limited, social issues tend to be even more complex requiring nuanced understanding of context. In fact, within one project, what works in one context may not work in another – even in one country or region of a country. The contextual analysis needs to consider the sector and its dynamics, the community and its attitudes and beliefs, different groups within a community (e.g., progressive vs conservative, religion, ethnicity, etc.) and even the generation of those involved.
- 2. Assess the context from a systems perspective:** By analysing using a systems perspective, it is possible to determine: women’s roles in the system; how women and their roles are viewed from both the household and community perspective; the attitudes of other actors in the supply chain and support service systems; whether there are existing efforts to improve the attitude and behaviours towards women in the sector; and whether there are strong networks of peer support available on which interventions can build. This analysis enables the project to design interventions at different levels in a value chain and overcome or work around the identified constraints while taking advantage of leverage points in the system.
- 3. Consider challenging social norms directly:** Confronting gender norms head-on in particular requires knowledge of the context, and demands consideration around risks associated with this approach. For example, intentional activities to help shift social norms such as the CARE gender awareness intervention that promotes reflection and dialogue among male and female members of the same households and communities, can be extremely helpful. CARE took a “positive discrimination” approach to select more women participants during the first phase of SDVC. Over time they have been proved to be more successful than their male counterparts in the value chain and were also able to change their own lives. For example, one of the key informants in this study indicated that she is now preferred by male farmers for her efficient livestock services, and is recognised by government and private representatives for her good work. This has also changed her position in the community where she had been poorly treated after her first marriage broke down.
- 4. Have a broader understanding of social norms and their implications:** In the Bangladesh research, project participants and researchers indicated that women’s security was an issue and decisions were made around this and not social norms. But, are concerns around women’s security a social norm, or indeed is lack of security for women a social norm? If women are insecure moving from point A to point B in a community in the evening, is this because the community regards these women in a certain way and therefore changes behaviour to negatively impact women’s security.

- 5. Track social norms that may be changing indirectly:** Market systems initiatives that offer enhanced economic opportunities and access without directly challenging social norms, quite often impact social norms. As women become more knowledgeable about a productive activity, they gain confidence, respect and even status. This can then carry on beyond the productive activity to other spheres such as household decision-making, voice within associations and general community attitudes.
- 6. Present business opportunities and allow self-selection:** As we are dealing with poor households, many people and their families are eager to adopt new income earning activities. Although this may not be the consensus of the community, there may be those willing to be early adopters and by taking advantage of new opportunities. These individuals (as with the women VC actors) often become change leaders in their communities, acting as positive role models both for women in business and women as family members. Although the shift resulted from financial necessity, it led to changes in women's roles enabling them to be recognised as leaders which would not have been the norm in the past.
- 7. Realise that access is a form of social and economic empowerment:** Access and agency can both involve social norms. For example, a service may not be available to women or be taken up by women due to prevailing social practices or norms. It is not always easy to divide where access ends and agency begins, or how they are interconnected in a specific scenario. It may be more important to understand the underlying social and economic constraints that inhibit access and agency around a given opportunity. For example, if women do not have access to resources such as land and equipment and do not have the agency to challenge this, it is key to understand the normative practices and beliefs around women's ownership of land and property.
- 8. Necessity can be a driver of social change:** One of the leading women service providers in the study was a divorced woman who had to provide for her family. Such women are often driven by necessity to step outside socially prescribed roles. And, due to their challenges, community members can be more sympathetic to her plight and support non-traditional roles and activities. However, this does not completely discount the leadership and role modelling that women in more fortunate circumstances may still follow – particularly if there is economic benefit.

## 4. Conclusion

As market systems development policymakers and practitioners place more emphasis on women's economic empowerment, and set their sights higher for achieving systems changes that shift gendered social norms and open new opportunities for women, it becomes even more crucial for programmes to incorporate more social analysis and tools into their work. Identifying through relatively simple tools and methodologies how social norms influence women's access and agency within given market systems can lead to more effective programming and greater sustainability. The CARE Bangladesh case study demonstrates the value of upfront research to identify the unique norms-based constraints to women's opportunities for empowerment within a given market. Thanks to concerted efforts to better understand these constraints and their origins, SDVC II was able to design interventions that both worked with in and around these social norms, and that addressed them head on. This allowed the project to broaden their perspective beyond just numbers of women participating, and to generate changes in how the system was functioning and responding to women producers' needs, and the roles that women were ultimately able to occupy and benefit from within this market system.

## Annex 1: Conducting research into social norms: the tools

The research tools were used in a pilot, refined, and then implemented in the in-depth second round of primary research. It is instructive to get a sense of the feedback from both phases and the changes that were made to the tools (see Annex 2 for the revised tools).

### General:

- In addition to the tools developed, a study process of a selected range/panel/cohort of project beneficiaries /market actors would provide quality longitudinal information that tracks the dynamics and changes in gender/social norms over time (and potentially with a more objective than perceptual lens).
- A short checklist to guide a discussion with project staff will help to get some background information on the overall role of women in access to markets and the extent of positive changes in gender norms – this helps in understanding the local women’s explanation of what they already used to do and what stands out differently.
- Other community members can have interesting observations about the effect of the project on women in the area. Moreover, male members of the community can be interesting respondents since they influence women’s behaviour. A tool or checklist would help the researcher to probe deeper on community and contextual questions.

### Focus group discussion guide:

- The revised focus group discussions (FGDs) worked well in general and provided insights into women’s roles, access and agency.
- However, since FGDs are qualitative and need to be focused, researchers need to manage expectations of what they learn from an FGD. For example, changes in the decision-making authority of women may not be precisely gauged in FGDs. It may be possible to get a general consensus on a shift, but the specifics of what this means (decisions over what, who influences decisions, are decisions joint and how do counterparts differ depending on the type of decision etc.). If deeper understanding is required, then other formats such as in-depth interviews (IDIs) may need to be considered.
- With regard to the specific FGD for the dairy VC in Bangladesh, it would be helpful to know if dairy is mainly consumed or sold and in what proportions. That is, as dairy has become commercialised, have there been increased sales at the expense of household nutrition.

### In depth interviews with women service providers:

- The general flow, format and content of the interviews with women service providers were able to elicit the desired information.
- When talking to women, it is usually better for the facilitator to be a woman. Certain aspects like harassment, teasing and domestic violence are not openly discussed in front of men.

### In depth interviews with male VC actors:

- The general flow, format and content of the interviews with men market actors were able to elicit the desired information.
- When interviewing men regarding the perception of women in untraditional roles, it is recommended that the interviewer be a man. Male VC actors might be more inclined to provide politically correct and polite answers when women are present.
- Actual attitudes of respondents need to be checked through diverse set of questions that can probe, triangulate and check the information given.

## Annex 2: Guidance on research tools

Guidance for focus group discussions – women clients/beneficiaries of targeted programme/intervention

**Objective: Understanding social norms that impact women’s ability to participate in the target programme/intervention, to realise greater empowerment, and to experience negative sanctions**

**Participants:** Women (8-12 in number) from programme households or women’s associations (formal or informal) that participate in the programme as customers, suppliers and employees. Members of the FGD should be homogenous so we are getting an overview of this group of women – for example, women dairy producers from smallholder farming households. (VC actors are interviewed separately.)

The FGD should take up to 90 minutes – remember that it is important to hear from a range of women but not necessary for each to answer every question. Rather we are seeking to understand the issues and gain consensus on these. Ideally a woman from the community or program should be present for initial introductions to the facilitator, interpretation and note taking.

This FGD ultimately wants to understand the social norms that affect women’s engagement in the sector/value chain as suppliers, customers and employees. However, we also need to bear in mind that this is an economic development programme and not a social justice programme. We need to be clear on the economic impacts of social norms both as they exist/pre-exist and as they shift, as well as the interplay between economic advancement and social change. Please read the entire FGD guide before holding the FGD so you can manage the discussion and build on each question.

The prompt questions sometimes use jargon – this is meant for the FGD facilitator to adapt the language to the particular context.

Guidance for in-depth interview tool – Female service providers active in programme/intervention

**Objective: Understanding social or other concerns of female service providers who are engaged in the sector/programme (focusing on their experience as a woman in business)**

**Target:** Female market actor engaged in the programme/intervention as a business. Typically, the in depth interview will be one-on-one and should take around 40 minutes – unless the market actor has set aside specific time for you and is very interested in the discussion then it can go to an hour or more.

We are concerned about the results from a business/private sector perspective. Although we ask questions about (and are concerned about) social sanctions, opportunities etc., we are looking at this interview and VC actor from the perspective of the business owner and their concern for their business. However, as this is a female value chain actor, they will be directly impacted by social issues – but approach these from a socio-economic rather than a social justice perspective. That is, as this business person is trying to grow their business, **how does their gender affect their ability to do business (and secondarily working with women who are being promoted as suppliers, customers or employees)**. Please read the complete guide before beginning questions so the flow is clear.

The interview questions sometimes use jargon – the interviewer should adapt the language to the particular context.

**Objective: Understanding social or other concerns of male market actors who engage with women programme/intervention clients/beneficiaries.**

**Target:** Male market actor engaged in the programme/intervention. Typically, the IDI will be one on one and should take around 40 minutes – unless the market actor has set aside specific time for you and is very interested in the discussion then it can go to an hour or more.

We are concerned about the results from a business/private sector perspective. Although we ask questions about social sanctions, opportunities etc. (and do care about these) we are looking at it from the perspective of the male business owner and their concern for their business growth (not from their concern for social justice – we approach this as more a ‘by-product’ that affects the business). That is, as this business person is trying to grow their business, and women are being promoted as suppliers, customers or employees – how is this affecting their business (challenges, opportunities, etc.). Please read the complete guide before beginning questions so the flow is clear.

The interview questions sometimes use jargon – the interviewer should adapt the language to the particular context.

## Annex 3: Research tool templates

Focus group discussion guide – women clients/beneficiaries of targeted programme/intervention

**Objective: Understanding social norms that impact women’s ability to participate in the target programme/intervention, to realise greater empowerment, and to experience negative sanctions**

5 minutes	<p><b>Welcome, introduction</b> to FGD/purpose, researchers and participants Explain the process– it is a discussion, all comments are valuable, we would like to hear from everyone even if opinions are different, practical experience is good.</p>
5 minutes <b>Brief warm up questions</b>	<p><b>Purpose of research question:</b> To get the group relaxed and positive so it is easier to address more difficult questions. <b>Suggested prompt questions:</b> How do you contribute to household income? Do you work outside the home either as paid or unpaid labour, run a micro-enterprise, do piece work, trade, tailoring etc.(This is not intended to delve into specifics of the programme but to get women talking in general, and not all women need to answer.)</p>
10 minutes <b>Roles</b>	<p><b>Purpose of research question:</b> To identify the roles of the women in the target sector as suppliers, customers, employees and to a lesser extent VC actors. <b>Suggested prompt questions:</b> What is your involvement in the target sector/intervention? That is, what roles do you play in the economic activities associated with the intervention/programme? Examples</p>
10minutes <b>Barriers / Challenges re participation:</b>	<p><b>Purpose of research question:</b> To understand the barriers faced by women to engage in the sector as suppliers, customers of services, employees. Note that it will be good to start generally – maybe the barriers are more pragmatic (e.g., finance) than social (e.g., mobility). Do not make assumptions. <b>Suggested prompt questions:</b> Did you face any barriers in joining the intervention/programme? For example, did you have the tools, services, finance that you needed? Did you feel uncomfortable, was the household or community concerned, did family members not agree? Why did these things happen? Examples /recount actual experience Women tend to state positive only at first – to make sure that they understand by talking about the smallest problems will help project think of ways to assist them</p>
10 minutes <b>Opportunities / Advantages / Supports</b>	<p><b>Purpose of question:</b> To determine the opportunities / advantages and support that enabled women to participate in the project. For example, the responses may be very practical (we do this work anyway, we live close to a collection centre), or the response may reference more social issues around childcare or extended family issues. <b>Suggested questions:</b> What made it possible for you to join the intervention (e.g., was there a trigger)? E.g., this is part of women’s work anyway, other women in your household help with childcare or cooking, the community or community elder very progressive and wants to see change, your household wants/needs the extra income?</p>



10minutes  
**Social  
barriers/  
challenges**

**Purpose of research question:** At this point we are delving more deeply into the social issues around engagement, and being more direct in our questioning. Remember that these issues are not meant to be general social justice issues, but issues that impact their ability to engage in the value chain.

**Suggested prompt questions:** If there were social barriers or challenges, how did you or the programme overcome these so that you could participate? Did the programme speak to your community or household? Did you negotiate with your family? Were special supports put in place by the programme (e.g., training or buyers came to the village, their husbands received gender sensitization) or was there some other factor that led to change?

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10 minutes  
**Sanctions**

**Purpose of research question:** We are now digging deeper into the negative social issues around engagement, and being more direct in our questioning. Remember that these issues are not meant to be general social justice issues, but issues that impact their ability to engage in the value chain.

**Suggested prompt questions:** After your involvement in the programme/intervention did you or a family member experience negative backlash from other family members, the community or private sector partners (reword as needed – may be about their engagement with the private sector as opposed to project participation)? For example, were you or your husband teased, did a family or community member criticise you, did a family member get jealous or angry, did buyers or suppliers refuse to work with you?

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10 minutes  
**Social  
supports**

**Purpose of research question:** Again, we are now more intentional about approaching social supports that enable women to participate in the value chain. These are specifically focused on the household, the community and business relationships.

**Suggested prompt questions:** After your involvement in the programme/intervention did you or a family member experience positive support from other family members of the community? For example, were family members happy about your new knowledge or increased income, did community elders praise you or your household, did buyers or other businesses express interest in your business/working with you?

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10 minutes  
**Overall  
changes in  
status**

**Purpose of research question:** To explore status in the household and community as a result of shifting roles in the programme or upgrading existing roles. What have the outcomes been for women?

**Suggested prompt questions:**

- Do you think participation in the programme/intervention has affected your status in the household or community?
- Do people come to you for advice? (for example?)
- Do you get to contribute to or make more decisions (example)?
- Do you have more mobility – (describe how if yes, b/4 and after)?
- What else has changed for you?
- Would you be willing to participate in future program activities? (what kind?)

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5 minutes

**Questions for us? wrap-up**

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**Objective: Understanding social or other concerns of female service providers who are engaged in the sector/programme (focusing on their experience as a woman in business)**

**Introductions and purpose of the interview** – to understand the challenges and benefits around women’s involvement as market actors in the sector – mainly from their own perspective as a women in business but also to some extent regarding the women with which they engage.

2 minutes We are attempting to understand the following from a business perspective not a social justice perspective (although ultimately we may be interested in this, it is not how we approach the interview).

Try to use business language (market segments, profitability, volume, quality etc.) and not social language (women’s rights, poor women).

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**Business**

**Purpose of research question:** To understand the line of business of the interviewee and what product/service they offer to other VC actors including producers. Also to determine if this is a new line of business that came about as part of the project or if the interviewee had been doing this already.

3 minutes **Question** (adapt as needed but stick to this as much as makes sense (keep focused as this is an interview not an FGD):

- What is your line of business?
  - Please describe range of products and services and how these fit with the programme/intervention.
  - Have you been engaged in this business for a long time or is this new – in particular, did you become involved in this line of business as part of the intervention?
- 

**Gender engagement**

**Purpose of research question:** To get an idea of the transactional relationship between the interviewee and both women and men – this question is purely about the business relationship with women and whether it is new or pre-existing.

5 minutes **Questions:**

- Does your business engage with other women as producers and value chain actors?
  - Does your business engage with men as producers and value chain actors? For example, do women and/or men buy your product, sell you goods, work in your establishment, etc.?
  - Was this always the case or as a result of the programme?
-

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### **Barriers / Challenges re participation**

**Purpose of research question:** To understand the interviewee's challenges as a woman in business. We are thinking about both pragmatic issues (finance, access to markets, skills) and also more social issues (mobility, attitudes, preferences) but we get more into supports and sanctions following.

5minutes

#### **Questions:**

- What specific challenges do you think you face as a woman in this business?
- Is it more difficult for you than for men to be active in this business?
- Are there differences when you work with women and men producers and value chain actors?
- Do men or women prefer to work with women or with men business operators? Please explain.

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### **Advantages / Opportunities**

**Purpose of Research Question:** To understand the interviewee's opportunities as a woman in business in practical terms

5 minutes

#### **Questions:**

- What specific advantages/opportunities do you think you have as a woman in this business?
- Are these different from the advantages/opportunities that men in business experience?
- Are there advantages for your business to engage with women and/or men?
- Do women or men prefer to work with you because you are also a woman? Please explain.

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### **Overcoming barriers re participation**

**Purpose of research question:** To determine if either the value chain actor or the programme did something different to overcome barriers to their business growth (and to leverage other women's contribution). As a business, we are not thinking of the interviewee as being motivated by social justice goals, but by business objectives. Although as a woman, she will be impacted by social issues.

5minutes

#### **Questions:**

- If you have faced challenges as a woman in business how have you overcome these?
  - Did you have to do something different from men to overcome the challenges?
  - If you had specific challenges around engaging with women versus men, how did you or the programme overcome these challenges?
  - Was the solution different when you engaged with women versus with men? For example, did the programme talk to families or community leaders, did you adapt your product or service, did you change your hours or location or hire new people?
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**Sanctions (social)**

**Purpose of research question:** To explore any sanctions faced by the business owner as a woman in business. You do not need to use the term 'sanctions' but you can think about social sanctions from boycotting the business to teasing and comments. We have to consider not only her business engagement with other women but also her engagement with men (suppliers, customers and employees). As well, we are interested if the business has noted any negative outcomes for women suppliers, customers and employees.

5 minutes

**Questions:**

- Has your business suffered any sanctions from others in business, your household or community for you as a woman carrying out this business?
- Have you suffered any sanctions for engaging with men versus women (e.g. gossip, teasing, refusal to work with you)?
- Have you observed any negative backlash for women or their households when they engage with your business?

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**Supports (social and economic)**

**Purpose of Research Question:** To understand the supports that the business has received from the programme, the business community, the community as a woman in business and how this has impacted her ability to establish and grow her business. For example, did the programme support her in accessing finance or equipment that might not have been available to her as a woman in business otherwise? Or did the programme work on gender sensitization with the community?

5 minutes

**Questions:**

- Have you received any support for your business from others in business, your household or community or the programme around the issues that challenge you as a woman in business?
- Have you observed any support for women or their households when women engage with your business?
- Have there been any other positive outcomes for your business?

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**Overall and wrap-up:**

Are you satisfied / happy with the programme and involvement of yourself as a women in business?

5 minutes

Are you dissatisfied or do you wish something would change for you or for the women and men with which you engage?

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**Objective: Understanding social or other concerns of male market actors who engage with women programme/intervention clients/beneficiaries.**

**Introductions and purpose of the interview** – to understand the challenges and benefits around women’s involvement in the chain and specifically with the male market actor (I would not use ‘social norm’ language with the market actor unless it feels right to do so.)

2 minutes

We are attempting to understand the following from a business perspective not a social justice perspective (although ultimately we may be interested in this, it is not how we approach the interview).

Try to use business language (market segments, profitability, volume, quality etc.) and not social language (women’s rights, poor women).

---

**Business**

**Purpose of research question:** To understand the line of business of the interviewee and what product/service they offer to other VC actors including producers. Also to determine if this is a new line of business that came about as part of the project or if the interviewee had been doing this already.

3 minutes

**Questions** (adapt as needed but stick to this as much as makes sense (keep focused as this is an interview not an FGD):

- What is your line of business?
- Please describe range of products and services and how these fit with the programme/intervention.
- Have you been engaged in this business for a long time or is this new – in particular, did you become involved in this line of business as part of the intervention?

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**Women’s engagement**

**Purpose of research question:** To get an idea of the transactional relationship between the interviewee and women – this question is purely about the business relationship with women and whether it is new or pre-existing. We are not concerned about the business owners attitude towards women doing the same work as he is – we are thinking about his engagement as a business person with women as suppliers, customers and employees

5 minutes

**Questions:**

- How does your business engage with women? For example, do women buy your product, sell you goods, work in your establishment, etc.?
  - Was this always the case or as a result of the programme?
  - Have you always engaged with women or did something lead you to become more involved with women in business?
-

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**Barriers / Challenges re participation**

**Purpose of research question:** To understand the interviewee's challenges working with women as suppliers, customers or employees. We are thinking about both pragmatic issues (women's skill level, women's access to finance) and also more social issues (mobility, attitudes, preferences) but we get more into supports and sanctions following.

5minutes

**Questions:**

- Is it more difficult for you to work with women than men?
- Is this related to the type of business you run, your employees, women's capacity or willingness to engage, the attitudes of their families, location, etc.? Please explain.

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**Advantages / Opportunities**

**Purpose of research question:** To understand the interviewee's perceived advantages and opportunities in working with women as suppliers, customers or employees. We are thinking about both pragmatic issues (women's capacity for certain work, validity as a market segment) and also more social issues (community attitudes, support) but we get more into supports and sanctions following.

5 minutes

**Questions:**

- Are there advantages for your business to engage with women?
- Are they better employees, buyers, sellers, producers?
- If so, please explain. Do families or communities promote women's involvement? What about the programme?

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**Overcoming barriers re participation**

**Purpose of research question:** To determine if either the value chain actor or the programme did something different to overcome barriers to leverage women's contribution. As a business, we are not thinking of the interviewee as being motivated by social justice goals, but by business objectives.

5minutes

**Questions:**

- If it is advantageous for your business to engage with women, but there were challenges, how did you or the programme overcome these challenges? For example, did the programme form women's groups or talk to families or community leaders, did you adapt your product or service, did you change your hours or location or hire new people?

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**Sanctions (social)**

**Purpose of research question:** To explore any sanctions faced by the business for working with women. You do not need to use the term 'sanctions' but you can think about social sanctions from boycotting the business to teasing and comments. We are also interested if the business has noted any negative outcomes for women suppliers, customers and employees.

5 minutes

**Questions:**

- Has your business suffered any sanctions from others for engaging with women (e.g. gossip, teasing, refusal to work with you)?
  - Have there been any other negative outcomes for your business?
  - Have you observed any negative backlash for women or their households when women engage with your business?
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**Supports (economic and social)**

**Purpose of research question:** To understand the supports that the business has received from the programme, the business community, the community to work with women as suppliers, customers and employees. For example, if the cost of developing women as a market segment was too high, were there any start-up contributions from the programme?

5 minutes

**Questions:**

- Has your business received positive support from the programme, the business community, the women's community for engaging with women?
- Have there been any other positive outcomes for your business?
- Have you observed any support for women or their households to engage with your business?

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**Overall and wrap-up:**

5 minutes

Are you satisfied / happy with the programme and involvement of women?  
Are you dissatisfied or do you wish something would change?

## Annex 4: The SDVC M&E framework overview

### Strengthening the Dairy Value Chain Project (SDVCB-II) M&E framework overview

Value chain node	Key Milestone	Indicator coverage/ monitoring subject	Tracking tool	Frequency	Sampling	Responsibility	Update	Remarks
Producer	1.1 Dairy producer HHs' daily milk Production increased by 60% by EOP.	Herd demographics Productivity levels, Farming practices, Programme participation, Gendered assets, Milk sales, Milk consumption, Relationships with other value chain actors	Producer's profile	Need based	All 30000 individual producers	Field staff M&E team	All of the 12255 producers for 1st slot of SDVC II (New- 6147, Old-6108)	
	1.2 Milk fat increased by 20 percent							
	1.3 Continue working with 17,500 farmers from SDVC to integrate them into Dairy Hubs.							
			GPF (Baseline Survey)	Semi-annually	Panel Survey of 1,360 treatment and 1,301 control group producers.	SDVC M&E team and consultant	1st round data collection completed draft baseline has report published	Next round data will be collected on September 2014
			FF Checklist	Monthly	All FF must be reported using this format	Field facilitator SDVC M&E team	Since April 2014, data collection is going on	
			DFT Real-time data collection	Monthly	All producers who sell milk to DFT collection point	SDVC M&E team External team (Consultant)	Consultant procurement process is going on	





Value chain node	Key Milestone	Indicator coverage/ monitoring subject	Tracking tool	Frequency	Sampling	Responsibility	Update	Remarks
			eMIS with sales form, clients form, scorecard form	Weekly for sales, Monthly for income progress, Six months for scorecard for clients	All shops	Field Staff KU Staff SDVC M&E team	Concept developed Had initial discussion with managers and KU team	
Collection point	2.1 89 DFT systems installed in 22 chilling plants and 73 collection points of BRAC dairy in the project area  2.2 Milk (litres) aggregated at collection point level.	Volumes Milk sales Fat content CLR rate Producers engagement (SDVC/Non-SDVC) HH engagement Gender	Collection point data collection format  DFT Generated Producer data	Monthly  Monthly	All collection points  All producers who sell milk to DFT collection point generated by the DFT machine	Field Staff SDVC M&E team  DFT Staff SDVC M&E team	Since April 2014, data collection is ongoing  All of the past data (SDVC I & piloting) has been collected from BRAC and the process is smoothly going on. Besides the analysis is going on through the external consultant	
Chilling plants		Total volumes Avg. fat content CLR % of total milk coming from DFT Difference in DFT vs. non-DFT fat content and CLR Commissions paid / received	Chilling plant data collection format	Monthly	All Chilling Plants	Project Officer SDVC M&E team	Since April 2014, data collection is ongoing	
LHWs	3.4 50% increase in AI tech and 100% increase in LHW sales	Service coverage by gender Income Linkage Services provided Knowledge Awareness Product range	Service provider Progress Format	Bi-monthly	Census	Field Staff/ KU Staff SDVC M&E team	Since April 2014, data collection is ongoing	

Value chain node	Key Milestone	Indicator coverage/ monitoring subject	Tracking tool	Frequency	Sampling	Responsibility	Update	Remarks
AI Technicians	3.4 50% increase in AI tech and 100% increase in LHW sales	Service coverage by gender Income Linkage Services provided Knowledge Awareness Product range	Service provider Progress Format	Bi-monthly	Census	Field Staff/ KU Staff SDVC M&E team	Since April 2014, data collection is ongoing	
Market prices		Input market price list	Calendars	Monthly	All the SDVC working areas	BRAC management Field Staff SDVC M&E team	Collected BRAC milk price chart and sent for complex analysis. Besides, informal market price have been collected through a simple format.	
Dairy Hub	3.2 Linkages established between 70 shops, 30,000 producers and a network of LHWs and AI Technicians (at least one shop, AI tech and LHW per 300 producers)  3.5 Partnerships established between input supply shops and key dairy sector companies ensuring access to high-quality inputs and services for 30,000 producers.  4.1 Dairy hub model solidified and shared with key stakeholders	Frequency of Interactions Quality of Interactions Trust Levels between nodes	Aggregation of quantitative data above	Semi-annually	All of the project stakeholders/beneficiaries	SDVC management M&E team	Not yet started	

			KII	Semi-annually	All of the project stakeholders/ beneficiaries	SDVC management M&E team	Though the general guideline yet to be developed but the data collection is going on as per plan	
			Focus Groups	Semi-annually	All of the project stakeholders/ beneficiaries	SDVC management M&E team	Though the general guideline yet to be developed but the data collection is going on as per plan	