**LEO: SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES**

*(October 2013 – September 2016)*

Leveraging Economic Opportunities (LEO) is a three-year contract to support programming that fosters inclusive growth through markets. Building on USAID’s value chain approach, LEO focuses on:

- **a systems approach** to markets, acknowledging the complex interrelationships among market actors, market and household systems, climate change, nutrition, the policy environment, and sociocultural factors, including poverty and gender; and
- **inclusion**, recognizing the role that a spectrum of actors—from resource-poor households and small-scale enterprises to larger and more formal firms—play in catalyzing market change and growth that benefits the poor.

LEO has developed an inclusive market systems framework that places value chains in the broader context of markets, communities and households (see figure 1). An inclusive market system development approach focuses on building the capacity and resilience of local systems, leveraging the incentives and resources of the private sector, ensuring the beneficial inclusion of the very poor, and stimulating change and innovation that continues to grow beyond the life of the project.

**THE LEO LEARNING AGENDA**

Building on this framework, LEO has pursued a comprehensive learning agenda that includes the following; all resources are available at [www.microlinks.org/leo](http://www.microlinks.org/leo), with direct hyperlinks below.

- **Multiplier effects**—LEO is investigating how agricultural value chain development can promote and be supported by on- and off-farm employment creation and entrepreneurial activity.
  - A literature review entitled *Agricultural Transformation in Sub-Saharan Africa and the Role of the Multiplier* examines the connection between agricultural development and economic growth, and explores the programmatic implications of the multiplier effect.
• **Private-sector engagement**—LEO is providing recommendations for how to ensure the development impacts of engagement with local firms and multinational corporations.
  - Duke University conducted three case studies of USAID and other donor engagement with private-sector firms designed to produce development results. These cases—horticulture in Kenya, cocoa in Indonesia, and coffee in Rwanda—were used to develop a set of recommendations on how to structure public-private partnerships to ensure that economic results also translate into significant and sustained benefits for the poor. The highlights of the report, *Public-Private Partnerships in Global Value Chains: Can They Actually Benefit the Poor?*, were presented at an unprecedentedly well-attended Microlinks seminar.

• **Monitoring and evaluation**—LEO is addressing specific challenges associated with monitoring and evaluating market systems facilitation interventions.
  - In coordination with the BFS evaluation team, LEO developed a *taxonomy* of distinct groups of market actors who are potential beneficiaries from interventions that facilitate market system change.
  - *Evaluating Systems and Systemic Change for Inclusive Market Development* is a literature review that highlights empirical approaches for identifying and monitoring systemic changes. Based on this literature review, LEO is developing a *monitoring, evaluation, and learning framework* for interventions aiming to facilitate inclusive market systems development as well as a *Domains of Systemic Change* paper that will explore key indications that systemic change is underway.
  - Building on the Uganda assignment (see below under Facilitation), LEO is working with 10 projects to develop practical, field-tested indicators of systemic change in markets. Field-testing is co-funded by DFID through the BEAM Exchange. Building from this webinar, three tool trials were conducted (SenseMaker in Mozambique, Social Network Analysis in Sierra Leone, and Outcome Harvesting in Georgia) and a *synthesis report* will summarize findings and comparative merits of each tool.
  - *Scale of Outreach in Market Systems Development: Building the Evidence Base* looks at the evidence on outreach from eleven market system facilitation projects designed to promote inclusive growth in agricultural value chains. A supporting blog post was published, entitled *Question: How many farmers does the Feed the Future initiative benefit worldwide?*
  - LEO collaborated with the DFID-funded BEAM Exchange to design the Evidence track of the BEAM Conference scheduled for May 2016; and presented on *systemic change tool testing* at the DCED conference in Bangkok, March 14-16.
  - LEO and BEAM co-hosted several workshops at the 2016 SEEP Network Annual Conference, sharing research and practical resources around conceptualizing and monitoring systemic change.

• **Facilitation**—LEO is sharing tools and practical examples of facilitation in the field, encouraging peer-to-peer learning, and documenting approaches to build transformational capacities such as trust and innovation.
  - Two peer learning events were held in October 2014 in Zambia and Ethiopia. Fifty-four USAID mission and implementing partner staff from eight countries attended. Highlights of these events were presented to representatives from USAID’s Bureau for Food Security. This presentation, *Regional Peer-Learning Events Highlights and Recommendations*, together with other event resources were posted to the Market Facilitation Peer-Learning Event Materials page on Microlinks.
  - The *Peer-Learning Events Organizers’ Guide* is based on lessons learned during the East Africa regional peer-learning events.
The *State of the Sector* report and interactive map describe USAID- and other donor-funded facilitation initiatives.

The Market Systems Development Cartoon-Based Learning Tools are a set of cartoon-based materials designed to explain facilitation in practice to field-based implementation staff. The tools, which are accompanied by a *Training Facilitators’ Guide*, have been field-tested in seven countries as well as promoted through practitioner trainings at the 2015 and 2016 SEEP Network Annual Conferences. This [blog post and video interview](https://www.microlinks.org/blogpost/348) on Microlinks Market Systems Blog series highlighted the tools.

Over 60 facilitation tools have been gathered by SEEP’s Market Facilitation Initiative (MaFI) and are being shared with practitioners worldwide. A selection of the tools are being highlighted in a series of webinars entitled “Learning with the Toolmakers.” Six webinars have been hosted to date:

- [The Offer Arsenal](https://www.microlinks.org/blogpost/348)
- [Market Actors Self-Selection Management](https://www.microlinks.org/blogpost/348)
- [Anecdote Circles: Monitoring Change in Market Systems Through Storytelling](https://www.microlinks.org/blogpost/348)
- [Using Systemic M&E Tools in Feed The Future Uganda](https://www.microlinks.org/blogpost/348)
- [Using Systemic M&E Tools in Feed The Future Uganda: Network Mapping](https://www.microlinks.org/blogpost/348)
- [Using Systemic M&E Tools in Feed The Future Uganda: SenseMaker®](https://www.microlinks.org/blogpost/348)

*Pathways out of poverty*—LEO is learning from projects that use a set of diverse activities to create a pathway for the poor to profitable market engagement.

- A [call for project examples](https://www.microlinks.org/blogpost/348) of using push/pull approaches to inclusive market system development resulted in an overarching analysis of these cases, published as *Meeting in the Middle: Linking Market Development and Livelihood Support for a More Integrated Approach* and a series of webinars:
  - [Including Labor in our Systems View of Markets and Poverty](https://www.microlinks.org/blogpost/348)
  - [Integrating Push into Pull: Experience from Practical Action and Vintrac](https://www.microlinks.org/blogpost/348) and
  - [Pathways to Market Inclusion for Women: Experience in Gender-Sensitive Push/Pull Strategies from CARE and ACDI/VOCA](https://www.microlinks.org/blogpost/348)

LEO collaborated on the push/pull track at the SEEP annual conference held in Washington DC in 2014. The findings from these conference sessions were published in *Combining Push and Pull Strategies for Greater Scale and Poverty Outreach: Key Takeaways from the 2014 SEEP Annual Conference*.

- Based on a literature review and interactions with a wide range of practitioners, LEO developed *A Framework for a Push/Pull Approach to Inclusive Market Systems Development*.

- LEO conducted a literature review and gathered input from a range of technical specialists to produce the paper *Wage Labor, Agriculture-Based Economics, and Pathways out of Poverty: Taking Stock of the Evidence* and an accompanying [infographic](https://www.microlinks.org/blogpost/348) on the importance of rural wage labor for reducing extreme poverty.

- This paper formed the basis for a seven-part [blog post series](https://www.microlinks.org/blogpost/348) on rural wage labor; a [webinar](https://www.microlinks.org/blogpost/348) and a month-long [e-consultation](https://www.microlinks.org/blogpost/348) on topics related to wage labor, which attracted hundreds of diverse global participants. The e-consultation was distilled into a [synthesis paper](https://www.microlinks.org/blogpost/348).

- At the request of the World Bank, and with funding from USAID/Ethiopia, LEO conducted an assignment with the government of Ethiopia to strengthen the Employment pathway track of the $2.6 billion, multi-donor Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP IV). As summarized in this [blog post](https://www.microlinks.org/blogpost/348), following primary field research, the Employment...
chapter of the PSNP IV implementation guidelines was drafted and finalized following a consultative workshop with key PSNP IV stakeholders. A strategic guidance document was also developed for Ethiopian government policymakers.

- **Resilience**—LEO is investigating how market systems can contribute to household resilience and can themselves be made resilient.
  - The *Market Systems for Resilience* report draws from resilience literature and market systems thinking to describe the interaction of market systems and resilience; proposes a framework to strengthen resilience through market system engagement; and identifies promising market systems interventions for strengthening resilience.
  - Through ODI, LEO developed a multi-country research initiative to investigate the individual-, household- and country-level factors that enable people to avoid impoverishment, and in particular, sliding back into poverty after having graduated out of it. A *synthesis* brief summarizes the research into sustainable poverty escapes with a particular focus on transitory poverty escapes as a unique and concerning subset of impoverishment. Country-specific reports are available for *Uganda, Rural Bangladesh*, and *Rural Ethiopia*, along with an *infographic*. A subsequent report comparing findings using monetary poverty versus a multi-dimensional poverty index will be published soon.
  - The *implications* of this research for the policy- and program levels will be summarized in a brief and discussed at a high-level event on *Sustainable Poverty Escapes: What Resilience and Risk Matters Really Matter?* at USAID.
  - The blog post *Sustaining Poverty Escapes: The Holy Grail of Development, and Why Resilience Matters* addresses the evidence related to sustainable poverty escapes, and the relevance of the resilience agenda and systems thinking to this concept. A second post, *The Art of Collecting Qualitative Life Histories, and What They Can Teach Us About Resilience*, provides insights into an important tool used in this research. A *Methodological Note* on conducting research into poverty dynamics further expands on the process.

- **Women’s economic empowerment**—LEO is supporting efforts to identify interventions that empower women through market development.
  - The *Intervention Guide for the Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI): Practitioner’s Guide to Selecting and Designing WEAI Interventions* provides missions and implementers with an easy-to-use resource to implement, monitor, test and adapt market systems interventions to address context-specific empowerment gaps identified by the WEAI. The revised version of the Guide incorporates extensive peer review feedback. The team also developed an *infographic* in collaboration with KDAD to accompany the Guide.
  - *Women’s Economic Empowerment: Pushing the Frontiers of Inclusive Market Development* draws on a literature review and case studies to identify and analyze various strategies currently being used by market systems development projects to empower women.
  - *Making the Business Case: Women’s Economic Empowerment in Market Systems Development* provides the rationale market systems facilitation practitioners can use to engage private-sector firms in efforts to empower women, and offers guidance and real-world examples.
  - Through SEEP, LEO launched a *Women’s Economic Empowerment* working group for practitioners to support learning, dialogue and documentation of evidence. This
working group served as a sounding board for three briefs: *Promoting Women’s Economic Empowerment Beyond Production: Engaging and Working with Men; and Unpaid Care Work.*

- LEO co-hosted (with UN Women) a learning series entitled *From Theory to Practice: Women’s Economic Empowerment in Inclusive Market Systems Development:*
  - *The Theory Behind the Approach: Women’s Economic Empowerment in Inclusive Market Systems Development* discussed the LEO framework and its potential implications. This was followed by a three-week e-discussion.
  - *Inclusive Business and Women in Market Systems,* and the subsequent e-discussion, identified strategies, barriers, and lessons learned concerning support to companies seeking to empower women within their core business.
  - *Empowering Women - Why Quality Jobs Matter,* and the related e-discussion, looked at wage labor issues from a women’s economic empowerment perspective.
  - *Measuring Women’s Economic Empowerment in Market Systems,* also followed by an e-discussion, examined lessons learned and good practices on implementing gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation systems.

- The blog post *The Cost of Missed Opportunity is Borne on Women’s Shoulders* is based on lessons learned through value chain analyses in Sierra Leone and Guinea.

- LEO is finalizing a literature review of women’s economic empowerment (WEE) interventions in horticulture, maize and groundnut value chains beyond the production stage. LEO is also conducting a landscape mapping and analysis of Feed the Future (FTF) initiatives in all 19 focus countries aimed at WEE in roles beyond agricultural production.

- *Cultivating Women’s Empowerment: Stories from Feed the Future 2011-2015* is an evidence-based narrative of how FTF has contributed to WEE, using quantitative data, case studies, personal stories and quotations. The report will be introduced by a series of blog posts through Microlinks written by Mission and implementing staff from projects featured in the report. Case studies submitted for the development of the report were also published. Building on this, to support USAID’s own internal processes in data collection associated with women’s economic empowerment, LEO conducted ‘deep dive’ assessments at two missions (Bangladesh and Tanzania); a report summarizing findings and job aides for USAID is forthcoming.

- **Models for reaching scale**—LEO is identifying models that link farmers to inputs, markets and services, and understanding the factors that enable them to succeed.
  - *Applying a Market Systems Lens to Technology Scale-up: A Brief Literature Review* provides insights into how to use market systems development to improve the scaling up of technologies for the benefit of food security and poverty reduction.
  - The research paper *Scaling Impact: Preliminary Findings on Extending Input Delivery at Scale to Smallholder Farmers* describes models, principles, and lessons learned from nine projects strategically selected from a set of 47 projects gathered through a competitive call for papers.
  - A complimentary paper, *Scaling Impact: Improving Smallholder Farmers’ Beneficial Access to Output Markets,* analyzes strategic approaches employed in the field to address barriers to smallholder access to output markets.
  - *Scaling Impact: Zambia PROFIT Case Study* describes lessons learned and implications for future project design based on primary research on models for scaling impact in Zambia introduced through the Production, Finance and Improved Technology (PROFIT) activity. The results of the PROFIT Case Study via a webinar entitled *Scaling Up Input Technology and...*
Youth

In four countries—Tanzania and Ghana, Zambia and Cambodia—studies in Zambia and Cambodia will be published soon.

A synthesis of the input and output papers (see above), along with findings from the cases studies in Zambia and Cambodia will be published soon.

An opinion paper, *Reconsidering the Concept of Scale in Market Systems Development*, explores the implications of shifting the definition of scale as a useful concept for systems project design and as a measure of impact. Two blog posts—*Unintended Consequences of Scale* and *Seeking Indicators of System Health*—are intended to generate discussion on how the concept of scale is defined and applied. Based on ideas proposed in the opinion paper, LEO is conducting a collaborative research initiative with the USAID/Bangladesh Agricultural Value Chain activity. This brief and recent webinar on *Practical Tools to Monitor Market Systems Dynamics*, summarizes several of the tools that are being piloted on the AVC program to better explain, monitor and track changes in system dynamics.

**Policy**—LEO is promoting understanding of the role of policy in systemic change.

- LEO has undertaken a *policy landscape analysis* of USAID-funded value chain activities in which (i) policy is/was a constraint to investment by private-sector actors along the value chain, and/or (ii) resolution of a policy constraint opened up new private-sector investment opportunities. The team is also conducting primary research to understand USAID’s role in stimulating private sector investment due to policy reform in three countries: Ethiopia, Tanzania and Ghana.

- In four countries—Senegal, Ghana, Zambia, and Rwanda—LEO conducted research to understand USAID’s role in stimulating systemic change in agricultural market systems in three countries. The case study report is forthcoming and key findings were summarized in a webinar.

- LEO conducted a *study of sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS)-related constraints* to trade in the maize and livestock/animal-sourced products value chains in East Africa. Similar studies are currently underway for maize and livestock in West Africa; and maize, groundnuts and soy in Southern Africa, as presented in an Ag Sector Council webinar.

**Youth**—LEO is exploring the ways in which youth are engaged in and benefit from investments in agricultural market systems by USAID.

- LEO is conducting a landscape analysis of youth engagement in agriculture across the Feed the Future portfolio and conducting in-country research in four countries (Guatemala, Uganda, Liberia, and Nepal) with particularly engaged portfolios. This blog post highlights some initial findings from the field work; the full synthesis, along with country-level case studies and success stories will be published soon.
• **Nutrition**—LEO is collaborating with the Strengthening Partnerships, Results, and Innovations in Nutrition Globally (SPRING) project to identify strategies to ensuring positive impact on nutrition from market systems activities.
  
  - LEO and SPRING collaborated on the *Integrating Agriculture and Nutrition Project Design Roundtable* attended by 39 USAID staff and consultants. The roundtable discussed various aspects of how to design a nutrition-sensitive value chain development project.
  - *Designing a Value Chain Project* was developed for USAID staff and consultants involved in the design of nutrition-sensitive agricultural development projects taking a value chain or market systems facilitation approach.
  - *Convergence and Tension in Nutrition-Sensitive Agricultural Market Development Activities* discusses areas of convergence and areas of tension between market system facilitation and nutrition-sensitive approaches to agricultural development. The paper was presented and well received at the Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Strategy Global Learning and Evidence Exchange in Ghana in January, and at a [SPRING webinar](#) in April.
  - LEO also provided technical support to SPRING on the following draft papers: *Behavior Change for Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture, Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture: Applying the Income Pathway and Gender in Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture*.

• **Learning process**—LEO is collaborating with other initiatives to strengthen USAID and practitioner learning throughout the project cycle.
  
  - *Designing a Value Chain Project* provides guidance on how to integrate and apply key principles of the value chain approach at different stages and across various aspects of the design process. *Value Chain Selection in the Context of Inclusive Market Systems Development* provides guidance to donors, implementers and practitioners on value chain selection within activities seeking to develop inclusive market systems. These and other LEO resources have been integrated into the [Value Chain Development Wiki](#).
  - A forthcoming meta-analysis of value chain and market system assessments from over a dozen projects will explore the utility of these standard analyses for practitioners and reflect on improvements to the emphasis and components.
  - LEO developed six textboxes with accompanying graphics and country examples as input to USAID’s Activity Design Resource. The content drew from the LEO Market Facilitation Peer-Learning Events in Zambia and Ethiopia in 2015.
  - LEO provided a half-day of training at the USAID Advanced Agriculture Course on the future of agricultural value chains; market systems development; increasing productivity at scale; and integrating labor into value chain programming.
  - LEO presented a plenary (From Farms to Market to Table: The Value Chain Approach) and two breakout sessions (Reaching the Very Poor through Markets and Value Chains: Measuring and Understanding Scale) at the Feed the Future Global Forum.
  - LEO contributed to the development and delivery of the [Women's Economic Empowerment & Equality (WE3) workshop](#) in March 2016.
  - LEO presented learning at the Expert Group Meeting on Inclusive and Sustainable Value Chain Development, in Vienna, Austria in December, hosted by the UN Agency Group on Value Chain Development.
  - LEO delivered three sessions—on market systems, scaling-up input delivery, and driving innovations to scale in agricultural market systems—at the *Advancing the FIELD* conference.
  - LEO holds annual learning events to take stock of what had been learned to date under the
project, cross-pollinate various streams of research, and discuss priorities for research moving forward. Synopses for *Year I* and *Year II* are available.

- LEO presented “Alternative Approaches to Assessing Systemic Change” as part of the online training for the DCED Standard for Results Measurement.
- LEO presented its labor research at the Women’s Leadership in Small and Medium Enterprises Community of Practice meeting in Peru, which included representatives from USAID, the World Bank, and the Inter-American Development Bank, amongst others.
- LEO provides regular content for the Microlinks Market Systems Blog.
- The team coordinates activities with the DFID- and SDC-funded BEAM Exchange to ensure synergy and shared learning, particularly around women’s economic empowerment (WEE), labor and M&E. LEO participated in an external expert advisory group to support development of BEAM evaluation guidelines, and supported the design and budgeting of M&E-related research.
- LEO provided technical assistance to USAID/PPL in the area of sentinel indicators.
- LEO promotes practitioner learning through the annual SEEP conference, and through collaboration with SEEP working groups.
- The LEO team has presented to the USAID Knowledge Management Reference Group and the Local Systems Community, and provides content for the Learning Lab.

**LEO SERVICES TO MISSIONS**

In addition to pursuing this ambitious learning agenda, LEO is providing a range of services to USAID missions and operating units, including the following:

- **USAID/Afghanistan**—LEO conducted in-country training for mission personnel and for implementing partner staff on the value chain approach; and explored with implementers how to adopt more of a facilitation approach within the constraints of the Afghanistan context. Also at the request of the mission, LEO developed a [training on applying a gender lens](#) to pro-poor value chain project design.
- **USAID/Cambodia**—LEO conducted an analysis of [three commodity value chains](#): rice, horticulture, and aquaculture.
- **USAID/DRC**—LEO conducted a [study of 10 agricultural crops](#) to inform value chain selection in North Kivu, South Kivu and Katanga provinces.
- **USAID/East Africa**—LEO provided a post-harvest handling and storage expert to participate in the evaluation of the Market Linkages Initiative.
- **USAID/Ethiopia**—As referenced above, at the request of the World Bank, and with funding from USAID/Ethiopia, LEO provided [technical assistance to the employment pathway](#) of the government of Ethiopia’s Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP IV).
- **USAID/Guinea**—LEO conducted [agricultural value chain analyses](#) for eggs, small ruminants, maize, rice and groundnuts. A subsequent consultancy is supporting the GoG’s Ministry of Elevage’s efforts to launch an abattoir system through a commercially-driven, public-private partnership.
- **USAID/Malawi**—LEO conducted an [assessment of the small and medium enterprise (SME) sector](#) in Malawi, with a focus on agribusinesses and access to finance for SMEs. A [synthesis of this report](#) was also published.
- USAID/Mozambique—LEO conducted an analysis of conservation-friendly livelihood alternatives in and around protected areas in Mozambique. LEO also conducted an analysis of agricultural value chains in Mozambique, including soybean, sesame, groundnut, beans, cowpeas, pigeon peas, and bananas.
- USAID/Serbia—LEO conducted the Serbia SME Competitiveness Assessment and Political Economy Analysis, which will determine and prioritize the major factors influencing the Serbian private sector’s ability to grow, export and compete in the EU and global markets. LEO also conducted a separate Organizational Network Analysis to assess the nature and context of relationships between actors mandated to support MSME development at national and local levels.
- USAID/Sierra Leone—LEO conducted agricultural value chain analyses for eggs, small ruminants, maize, millet, groundnuts, pigeon pea, and select vegetables.
- USAID/Timor-Leste—LEO carried out value chain analyses of the candlenut, mobile finance and tourism sectors. Later, LEO conducted an aquaculture assessment.
- USAID/Uganda—In collaboration with evaluation experts from BFS, LEO conducted an assignment to provide training in market systems facilitation to mission staff; explore the challenge of monitoring and evaluating facilitation activities; and make recommendations for improving data collection methods used to measure Feed the Future and other indicators for facilitation activities.