

Global Distributors Collective



VALUE
FOR
WOMEN

Gender inclusion and last mile distribution

15th October 2020

Photo credit: Pollinate Group



**Practical
ACTION**

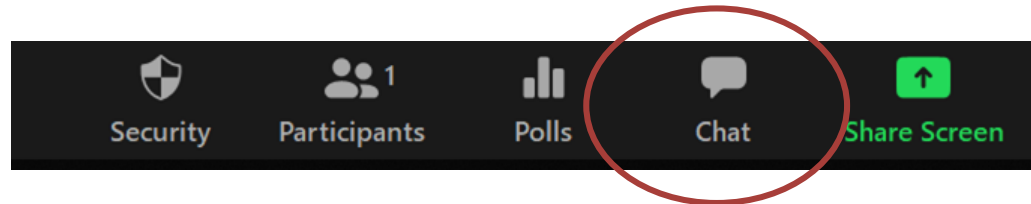
HYSTRA
hybrid | strategies consulting

**bop
inc**

The GDC is hosted by Practical Action, alongside implementing partners Hystra and Bopinc

Agenda

- Scene-setting
- How and why can **using gender lens solve business challenges** and drive business and social impacts?
- Overview of strategies
- Q&A
- Wrap up and close



What do we already know?

- Last mile distributors are well-positioned to help further gender inclusivity.

Target
customers at
the last mile

Female sales
staff

- Barriers exist that prevent more distributors from adopting increasingly inclusive practices.

High short-term
costs involved

Few resources,
tools and
guidance



What we do

Value for Women is a specialized advisory firm that helps organizations advance gender inclusion.

We work at the intersection of **gender, business, and investing.**



SMEs and Gender Inclusion

1. Why should companies promote gender inclusion?
2. What are the specific steps they could take?

What do we mean by “gender inclusive business”?

Businesses that are **recognizing constraints faced by women** (i.e., as **employees, clients, suppliers, distributors**, etc.), and trying to address these constraints to **unlock their economic potential**.



Ways that LMDs can support gender inclusion: Two entry points



Leadership and Workforce Level

Why is investing in women as employees and leaders good for the business?

- Higher than average performance in terms of revenues and profitability.
- Higher employee satisfaction and retention.
- Increase of available talent pool.
- Improved employee performance and productivity.
- Improved innovation capability.

Market Level

Why is investing in women as customers good for the business?

- Tap into an underserved market resulting in increased revenues and higher market reach.
- Better alignment of company products and services to client needs and wants, resulting in better client satisfaction, retention, and referrals.
- Improved brand recognition.

Gender Inclusion Strategies

For Last Mile Distributors

Goals of Gender Inclusion Strategies

All strategies in this presentation seek to simultaneously advance two goals:

- ★ Improved gender inclusion
- ★ Improved business performance

What each strategy covers

- 1. The business challenge
- 1. The strategy
- 1. Potential business and gender impact
- 1. Time and resource requirements

Framework for evaluating gender strategy impacts and required resources

Expected Impacts		Resources Required (Estimate)		
<i>Business Impact</i>	<i>Gender Impact</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Cash Expenses</i>	<i>Proximity to Current Business Practice</i>
Low: Minimal business impacts	Low: Minimal gender impacts	Low: 1-2 hrs/week	Low: <500 USD	Low: Minimal departure from current practices
Medium: Moderate business impacts	Medium: Moderate gender impacts	Medium: 3-4 hrs/week	Medium: <10K USD	Medium: Slight departure from current practices
High: Significant business impacts	High: Significant gender impacts	High: 5+ hrs/week	High: >10K USD	High: Significant departure from current practices

DATA STRATEGY

Strategy I: Sex-disaggregated data collection and tracking

Summary of Business Challenge

- Lack of sex-disaggregated data related to employees, customers and suppliers/vendors
- Gaps in the understanding of gender-specific performance challenges, retention issues, customer preferences & pain points

Summary of Proposed Strategy

- Use/develop tools to disaggregate existing data
- Systematically track sex-disaggregated data on metrics related to employees, customers, suppliers and producers

Expected Impacts	
Business Impacts	High
Gender Impacts	High
Expected Costs	
Time Investment	Low
Cash Investment	Low
Departure from current business practices	Low/Medium

Human Resources Strategies

HUMAN RESOURCES STRATEGY

Strategy 2.1: Strengthening recruitment of women field agents

Summary of Business Challenge

- Low representation of women among sales agents due to social norms/barriers
- Intense demands of the sales agent role deter women from applying
- Men tend to refer other men for the sales agent position
- Missed customer opportunities

Summary of Proposed Strategy

- Build an understanding of the barriers women sales agents face
- Review training materials
- Based on the findings, address these issues by adapting the content of recruitment messaging and recruitment channels

Expected Impacts	
Business Impacts	Medium/High
Gender Impacts	High
Expected Costs	
Time Investment	Medium
Cash Investment	Medium
Departure from current business practices	Medium

HUMAN RESOURCES STRATEGY

Strategy 2.2: Strengthening retention of existing women field sales agents

Summary of Business Challenge

- Low retention rate of women among sales agents due to safety, mobility constraints, etc
- The low retention rate may result in missed opportunities with customers

Summary of Proposed Strategy

- Build an understanding of the barriers women sales agents face
- Review training materials
- Address these issues by providing accommodations to women sales agents (like transit options), conduct sales at strategic locations
- Training and recruitment of agents

Expected Impacts	
Business Impacts	High
Gender Impacts	High
Expected Costs	
Time Investment	Medium
Cash Investment	Medium
Departure from current business practices	Medium

Strategies to Support Sales Agents

SALES AGENT STRATEGY

Strategy 3.1: Gender-focused training & skills transfer on best practices and effective sales pitches

Summary of Business Challenge

- Women sales agents are often more effective at marketing/selling products
- Businesses don't capitalise on this by studying best practices & effective pitches or creating processes for peer-to-peer transfer of skills

Summary of Proposed Strategy

- Collect information on effective practices and pitches from top-performing agents (often women)
- Study the data to gain insights on best practices and effective pitches
- Facilitate transfer of skills between agents, develop scripts for pitches, decide training content

Expected Impacts

Business Impacts

High

Gender Impacts

Medium

Expected Costs

Time Investment

Low/Medium

Cash Investment

Low

Departure from current business practices

Low/Medium

SALES AGENT STRATEGY

Strategy 3.2: Operational support for sales activities in the field

Summary of Business Challenge

- Women sales agents face gendered constraints in carrying out sales activities (mobility challenges, limited time availability, etc.)
- Impacts sales performance/ability to hit targets

Summary of Proposed Strategy

- Provide operational/logistical support to women sales agents, (transportation allowances or reimbursements, company transportation, etc.)

Expected Impacts

Business Impacts

High

Gender Impacts

High

Expected Costs

Time Investment

Medium

Cash Investment

Medium/High

Departure from current business practices

Medium

Results we have seen before:

Case study of a Sales Strategy from Shell Foundation Pilot

- **BUSINESS OVERVIEW:** India-based company selling household use clean energy products via direct sales force (or both men and women agents), to low-income customers in rural India
- **BUSINESS CHALLENGE:** Women sales agents not meeting sales goals
- **GENDER DIAGNOSTIC FINDINGS:** Women sales agents faced operational challenges male peers did not - specifically:
 - (1) access to capital to purchase Demonstration Kits for use during sales, and
 - (2) mobility restrictions due to cultural and security issues, limiting the number of customers women agents can reach

Results we have seen before:

Case study of a Sales Strategy from Shell Foundation Pilot

INTERVENTION (STRATEGIES) TESTED, RESULTS and KEY LEARNINGS:

Strategy 1: Providing access to capital for women agents to purchase demo kits for use during sales

- **Results:** Avg. of **85% increase** in sales by participating direct sales agents
- **Key Learning:** Up-front investment to address women's needs lead to ROI-positive results for the company

Strategy 2: Training conducted and logistics designed to allow women to sell in group settings (ie. at schools, bus stops, markets) instead of being limited to door-to-door sales

- **Results:** Avg. of **73% increase** in sales by participating direct sales agents
- **Key Learning:** Core sales methods may need to differ for men and women to address cultural/security challenges

Digital Marketing and Sales Strategies

DIGITAL MARKETING AND SALES STRATEGY

Strategy 4.1: Social media user engagement analysis

Summary of Business Challenge

- COVID-19 has hit sales activities in the field for sales teams
- No systematic tracking of gender-specific engagement with marketing posts on social media/digital platforms
- Missed opportunities for improving sales through these platforms

Summary of Proposed Strategy

- Track gender-specific engagement with product posts on social media and digital platforms
- Analyse the gendered preferences, interests and buying patterns of customers/users
- Improve targeted marketing online

Expected Impacts	
Business Impacts	High
Gender Impacts	Medium
Expected Costs	
Time Investment	Low
Cash Investment	Low
Departure from current business practices	Low

DIGITAL MARKETING AND SALES STRATEGY

Strategy 4.2: Targeted marketing & sales strategies for social media/digital platforms

Summary of Business Challenge

- Missed opportunities to develop targeted marketing strategies for women customers
- Opportunity to improve sales through digital platforms during and after COVID-19

Summary of Proposed Strategy

- Develop gender-specific messaging and marketing content targeting women for social media platforms like Facebook, Whatsapp and Instagram

Expected Impacts	
Business Impacts	High
Gender Impacts	Medium
Expected Costs	
Time Investment	Low
Cash Investment	Low
Departure from current business practices	Low

DIGITAL MARKETING AND SALES STRATEGY

Strategy 4.3: Social media/digital marketing and sales by agents

Summary of Business Challenge

- COVID-19 has exacerbated gender-specific challenges faced by women sales agents
- Impacts ability to meet sales targets
- Hits the company’s overall sales and revenues

Summary of Proposed Strategy

- Facilitate access to smartphones and digital marketing platforms like WhatsApp and Facebook for women agents
- Provide training and support in conducting sales activities online

Expected Impacts	
Business Impacts	High
Gender Impacts	High
Expected Costs	
Time Investment	Medium
Cash Investment	Medium/High
Departure from current business practices	Medium

Customer-Focused Strategies

CUSTOMER FOCUSED STRATEGY

Strategy 5.1: Customer preferences tracking and analysis

Summary of Business Challenge

- Companies often fail to systematically track/collect data on gender-specific customer preferences, needs, etc.
- A missed opportunity to better market products to different segments, improve product uptake, etc.

Summary of Proposed Strategy

- Undertake customer surveys with the help of sales agents to systematically track this data
- Use insights to develop targeted marketing strategies, optimise product development, etc.

Expected Impacts	
Business Impacts	High
Gender Impacts	Medium
Expected Costs	
Time Investment	Low/Medium
Cash Investment	Low/Medium
Departure from current business practices	Low/Medium

CUSTOMER FOCUSED STRATEGY

Strategy 5.2: Customer education and post-sales support

Summary of Business Challenge

- No systematic tracking/collection of data on gender-specific customer pain points
- Missed opportunity to improve customer education at the point of sales

Summary of Proposed Strategy

- Conduct a short customer pain point survey with women and men customers, disaggregating responses
- Use these insights to inform customer education undertaken by sales agents at the time of a sale

Expected Impacts	
Business Impacts	High
Gender Impacts	High
Expected Costs	
Time Investment	Low
Cash Investment	Low
Departure from current business practices	Low/Medium

CUSTOMER FOCUSED STRATEGY

Strategy 5.3: Customer repayment/debt collection

Summary of Business Challenge

- Lack of understanding of any specific challenges related to debt repayment for women customers
- Challenges in customer interactions around debt collection for women agents

Summary of Proposed Strategy

- Conduct a light-touch customer survey to understand the different challenges that women in fulfilling regular payments
- Tailor repayment plans/solutions for them accordingly
- Provide women agents with training on debt collection best practices & tackling challenges women may face

Expected Impacts

Business Impacts

High

Gender Impacts

High

Expected Costs

Time Investment

Low/Medium

Cash Investment

Low/Medium

Departure from current business practices

Low/Medium

Q&A with Value for Women

Poll time!

- ❖ Where do you see most scope to implement similar strategies within your business?
- ❖ What would you need in order to implement these strategies?

Interested in learning more? Links to relevant publications

VfW has been designing, testing and measuring the impact of intermediaries' (such as donors and investors') and investees' approaches for gender inclusion in clean energy SMEs and climate smart agribusinesses and with a series of partners, (Shell Foundation, Walmart Foundation, Root Capital, Vuna/DfID UK, and AlphaMundi Foundation):

Relevant examples include:

- [Gender Inclusion in Clean Energy SMEs](#)
- [Gender Inclusion in Climate Smart Agribusinesses](#) of Root Capital investments with a gender lens in Kenya and Peru
- [Gender Inclusion in Climate Smart Agriculture](#) of how SGBs can integrate gender into climate smart agriculture

What next?



Photo credit: Bopinc

- Summary document and recording
- Gender strategies webinar with GDC members, early 2021
- Credit risk management workshops coming up

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Thank You!