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APPLYING A GENDER LENS  
TO IMPACT MEASUREMENT & MANAGEMENT

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- EXTENDED VERSION -



A programme by



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## MYTHS ABOUT GENDER

There are many myths and misconceptions when it comes to gender. Some of them are:

- Gender is solely about women while men's needs, and perspectives are not relevant
- Gender-lens impact management is only for those Impact Enterprises that are offering products or services that specifically target women
- Gender lens in impact management is only relevant for women-led enterprises.
- Gender lens in impact management is only about ticking boxes and not about holistic action.

## ARE YOU READY FOR THIS PHASE?

This toolkit is about replicating ideas that we can learn from as well as finding innovative approaches. We will be guiding you on this journey step by step. But let's first check where you are:

- *Do you feel well equipped for Impact Measurement and Management (IMM) but don't see any connections between IMM and gender lens?*
- *Are you relatively new to the topic of gender and IMM and want to learn where to start from, which tools to use and what strategic options are available for you?*
- *Are you already thinking about how to apply a gender lens to your product, service or program and are interested in learning how to deepen your understanding and strategies regarding gender and IMM?*

*Even if you tick only one box, you are ready for this phase.*

## APPLYING A GENDER LENS TO IMPACT MEASUREMENT & MANAGEMENT

Impact Entrepreneurs (IE) create impact by serving the unmet needs of traditionally marginalized population groups. Therefore, it's important to talk about gender equality and social inclusion (GESI), putting the concept of "inclusiveness" at the core. **A GESI lens** emphasizes the inclusion of women, girls and other vulnerable populations such as youth, the elderly, persons with disabilities, the very poor, minority groups, displaced and conflict-affected populations, migrant workers and employees of hazardous or informal industries.

In this chapter, we focus nearly exclusively on the gender aspect from the perspective of working with people who identify as women and men. The chapter emphasizes tips and strategies to better understand and measure the impact that your products or services have on both women and men from your target groups, allowing for a better design and delivery of these products and services. In addition, the chapter provides some initial suggestions for developing a gender-inclusive organizational culture, both as Service Providers (SPs) and as IEs. **Let's begin by gaining a better understanding of gender related concepts!**

**Experts largely agree on the below definitions of the terms “sex”, “gender” and “gender identity”:**

- Sex refers to a person’s biological status and is generally based on their external anatomical features. Common categories of sex are male, female and intersex.
- Gender may be defined as a social construct of norms, behaviours and roles that varies between societies and over time. Common categories of gender are men, women or nonbinary.
- Gender identity refers to one’s own internal sense of self and gender, whether that is man, woman, neither or both. It differs from gender expression as it is not outwardly visible to others.

We will now provide a snapshot of applying a gender lens to IMM practice. This chapter wants to support enterprises in the early stages of introducing a gender lens into their organizations, products and services. Therefore, we focus only on areas specific to the needs of this stage. We suggest implementing the actionable items according to the level of preparedness of each enterprise. So we advise IEs and SPs to be mindful of how experienced the enterprise is with respect to applying IMM in practice and then choose the gender lens related practices accordingly.



**REMEMBER:** To summarize, this toolkit will guide you on the journey of uncovering how your activities are experienced and can affect men and women differently.

## INTRODUCTION

What is a gender lens and how does this lens make us see things differently?

When it comes to an enterprise, the first step is to understand how a certain program, product or service impacts men and women differently. The second step is to identify these points of difference. And the final step is to find solutions that successfully address this difference in experience of male and female users. The most reliable way of achieving this is by identifying and redressing the underlying causes as much as possible.

**How is applying a gender lens to IMM beneficial for deepening impact and financial sustainability of an enterprise? There is a multitude of benefits and some of the major ones are:**

**BETTER DATA FOR DECISION-MAKING:** The collection of gender-disaggregated data enables an IE to better understand the users’ different usage patterns and experiences of a product or service. It involves collecting feedback from different users with gendered perspectives. This is where IMM and its importance for including a gender lens come in: A gender lens assessment begins by seeking to understand the differences that may exist between ways that men and women experience and articulate the impact of a product or service<sup>1</sup>. Such data can provide new insights into what is working for men and women and can reveal problems as well as identify solutions. Equipped with this information, we become empowered to start new conversations, revisit and revise old strategies, and make better decisions that lead to better outcomes for all stakeholders.<sup>2</sup>

1 Acumen (2019): A lean data how-to guide. Understanding gender impact. Phase 2.

2 Acumen (2018): A lean data how-to guide. Understanding gender impact. Phase 1.



**INCREASED PROFITABILITY AND STRONGER CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIPS:** Refining products or services and their delivery in such a way that they capture and reflect the needs of female users can open new avenues for deepening impact as well as reaching a larger set of customers. Female customers control an estimated global consumer spending of about \$40 trillion - yet they are often underserved. Fulfilling unmet demands of women in sectors such as water, contraception, telecommunications, energy, and childcare represents an additional annual market of \$300 billion by 2025. Therefore, applying a gender lens in designing products and services makes sense from a commercial as well as an inclusion perspective. In addition to the immediate business benefits, including women as clients is also a long-term bet for companies and society at large. Female users are often those that make the purchasing decisions within the households. This makes them an important customer base. Unilever, for example, describes such a business case on the company's [website](#).

**SOCIAL IMPACT:** Companies with better environmental, social and governance standards, solutions, and practices are equally or even more profitable than others and may trade at a premium to their competitors. For example, research<sup>3</sup> shows that responsible practices have a direct link to the financial performance of large businesses. A gender lens application alone is one of the many forms of social impact that an IE can generate.

In sum, focusing on female users has significant social benefits and allows IEs to improve their access to one-half of the population, which further deepens their impact. Potential cascading effects include increased profitability, provided that the right approaches are being used.<sup>4</sup> **Therefore, it's high time for a mindset shift: Gender and business must no longer be viewed as two competing areas, but as closely interconnected units that provide for sustainable long-term benefits.**

## HOW TO GET STARTED

Closing the gender gap, -whether through the work of corporations, impact investors, IEs, SPs, governments, or donors-, simply cannot happen without useful, practical, and accurate tools for measuring gender-specific metrics.<sup>5</sup> The resources captured in this toolkit have proven to be effective when applied by other IEs or SPs. To guide you step-by-step on this new and exciting journey, we have narrowed them down to two categories:

### FOR BOTH SERVICE PROVIDERS AND IMPACT ENTREPRENEURS:

You will receive suggestions and examples on the application of an initial gender lens to your IMM journey to better understand the needs of female customers and collect relevant data to manage your impact. This includes aspects such as providing access to products or services to a broader group of end customers, product or service design, monitoring of customer satisfaction, as well as product or service delivery. If you are interested in the product and service level, you can go straight to [Section A](#) of this chapter.

Another important aspect covered by this chapter pertains to creating an inclusive organizational culture by applying a gender lens. WE include tips on strategies for improving the participation of women colleagues and

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3 <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2340943615000791>

4 SPRING Accelerator Toolkit (2018): <http://spring.tsic.hk/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/A4-SPRING-toolkit-oct2018-WEB-FINAL.pdf>

5 Acumen (2018): A lean data how-to guide. Understanding gender impact. Phase 1.

ensuring an equal distribution of similar jobs across both genders within the organization. You can go straight to [Section C](#) of this chapter if you would like to know how to create an inclusive organizational culture.

#### EXCLUSIVE FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS:

For SPs, an additional area of focus is the programme level. This chapter provides suggestions on applying the gender lens in different phases of a programme, such as recruitment of impact entrepreneurs and programme design, delivery, and monitoring. You can go to [Section B](#) of this chapter if you are interested in understanding gender lens application in programmes.

The focus areas of the gender chapter are organised into three parts:

- A. Introducing the gender lens to IE product and services;
- B. Introducing the gender lens to programs and
- C. Creating an inclusive organizational culture.

“ In sum, focusing on female users has significant social benefits and allows IEs to improve their access to one-half of the population, which further deepens their impact. ”



## (A) INTRODUCING A GENDER LENS TO PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

Applying a gender lens will allow an IE to effectively serve all users within its target groups, irrespective of their gender. Here are some common pitfalls of failing to apply this lens in product and service delivery:

- An incomplete understanding of the needs of female users, leading to lowered market access;<sup>6</sup>
- Lack of data on gender-disaggregated consumer behaviour and perceptions;<sup>7</sup>
- Ineffective communication and marketing strategies due to the lack of (1) and (2)

With the 'whys' already listed, let's start with some key steps to applying a gender lens.

### A.1. UNDERSTAND THE EXPERIENCE OF WOMEN USERS THROUGH THE CUSTOMER JOURNEY

Customer Touchpoint Approach to Data Collection is an IMM methodology that helps you create a data collection experience that is seamless, operationally efficient, and cost effective for your clients and your IE. Gender-disaggregated and gender-sensitive data can also be obtained via this resource-efficient approach. While developing a customer journey is a key part of the IMM training already, here are some considerations to understand how you can better include female users.



**BONUS:** Get inspired by this female user-centric customer journey map by [Misfit Ray Smartband](#).

By introducing a gender lens to your customer journey, you will strive to answer the following questions and find solutions to gaps that you have identified:

1. **Is your product or service designed in a manner that women can have equal access to it as similarly situated men?** Put differently: Can men and women within the target group find out about the product/service without incremental access barriers for women? This ease of access can relate to the ability to gather information about your product or service, the ability to purchase/subscribe to the product or service, and finally the opportunity to make use of the product or service. Consider the different social and economic barriers that may be at play in a particular scenario. For example, imagine that an IE offers educational content that can only be accessed through a mobile application. In this scenario, it may become relevant to assess if men and women from the target user group have comparable access to smartphones. Is the proportion of mobile phone owners and users the same across men and women in your target group? Factors that influence mobile phone ownership and use can be linked to both, social barriers such as the freedom to use a personal mobile device, or financial means which limit their ability to buy a mobile phone.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/ru/Documents/public-sector/gender-dividend-en.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Id.

- 2. Is the product or service going to be experienced differently by men and women, even when they have equal access?** Ask your users questions to learn if the product or service is somehow better suited for men than women (while it is supposed to be gender neutral in its application). For example, imagine that an IE offers fitness and self-defence training to young people between 15 and 35 years. While nearly an equal number of men and women enrolled for the programme, after six months more than 50% of the women stopped attending, while more than 90% of the enrolled men continued to attend the training. Concerned by this trend, the IE asked its women enrollers about the reason for their behaviour. In the survey, more than 50% of current and past female users explained that they skipped the training because the centre does not have female trainers. They do not feel free to share their problems in the training process and often do not get the necessary hands-on guidance since male trainers don't understand posture correction for women and thus can't offer adequate assistance to female trainees. Therefore, their experience was not very satisfying.
  
- 3. Do your products or services generate an overall less positive impact for a female user than for her male counterparts, although both have equal access to your products or services and continue using them over prolonged periods?** For example, imagine an IE that has created a meal supplement for children aged 5-15 years. The supplement is supposed to help them to get holistic nutrition, which leads to a lower chance of experiencing mineral deficiencies. However, after 5 years of regular use, only 30% of female users experience no mineral deficiencies on average, while the equivalent result for male users is 80%. This could be an indication that female users have other nutritional needs (for example, higher iron consumption for menstruating women) that your product does currently not provide. Therefore, you may have to revisit your product formulation and identify gaps in your product that are making it less impactful for women users.

While these examples may seem straightforward, IEs can fail to reach or create an impact for more than half of the population if they are not mindful of the differences in access, experience and outcome for women (no matter how well-intentioned these IEs may be). But what can we learn from the answers to the three questions above? This is where the role of gender-disaggregated data from customers kicks in. In the following sections, you will learn more about the relevance of gender-disaggregated data in each of these aspects and how they can improve the impact of your products or services on female users.

## A.2. UNDERSTANDING THE EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN: THE ROLE OF DATA

The first and most important step to apply a gender lens to a product or service is to learn about the experience of female and male users in detail. This is where collecting disaggregated data by gender becomes relevant. It can help an IE assess and address issues that may be leading to a systemic exclusion of certain target groups.<sup>8</sup>

### A.2.1 TYPES OF DISAGGREGATED DATA

#### A.2.1.1 DISAGGREGATED QUANTITATIVE DATA

Disaggregated quantitative data is the starting point for understanding how your IE's products or services are used by men and women.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://data2x.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/MeasuringFemalesFinInclusion-ValueofSexDisaggData.pdf>



### A.2.1.2 DISAGGREGATED QUALITATIVE DATA

Qualitative data helps you to understand the story behind the numbers and to find actionable inputs from your customers themselves.

Aside from basic information such as percentage of users by gender, examples of interesting insights can be:

1. **Helping you to identify target groups for different product lines:** Gender-disaggregated data can provide deeper insights into who is accessing which kinds of products or services.
2. **Helping you to understand and streamline channels for access:** What kinds of channels are being used by men and women (e.g., branch, ATM, social media), how and when?
3. **Helping you understand whether certain buying channels or products are accessible to an intended user group**
4. **Helping you to find insights that may create leads for greater research through engaging your users and addressing a gap that may be affecting women users disproportionately.**

### A.2.2 COLLECTING DISAGGREGATED QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE DATA

This approach is similar to the Customer Touchpoint Journey Approach to Data Collection captured in Phase II Impact Measurement & Management:

1. Firstly, **map out the entire customer journey from a gender lens perspective:** This means mapping it from the very beginning when a female user experiences an issue or situation that draws them to use your products or services. For example, a woman may feel insecure about using traditional transportation, which causes her to consider your women-oriented transportation services. This is your instigating incident. Then continue your mapping exercise until the last “touchpoint” is reached, for example, the point in time when your female customer no longer has a need for your products or services.
2. Then **identify all the interaction points, especially with respect to your existing data collection, between women users and your IE.**
  - a. *Disaggregated quantitative data*  
For example, if you have a mobile app-based service, you may already have started collecting client-related data, for example sign-in details or the preference selection on a driver’s gender.
  - b. *Disaggregated qualitative data*  
For example, you may have already started to conduct surveys, interviews, reviews, polls, desk reviews, household interviews, or focus group discussions with your customers or target groups.
3. **Based on these existing touchpoints, identify gender disaggregated data collection opportunities.**
  - a. *Disaggregated quantitative data*  
For example, sign-in details may require your client to make his or her gender known. This allows you to examine gender-based user behaviour and to gain insights that are gender-disaggregated. In another situation, you may find that you can disaggregate data for men and women at the usage level. For example, a user is registered as a man, while he often uses services or seeks products that are typically meant for women. Take the example of an app-based healthcare service: If a user

registered as a male asks questions related to women-specific health issues such as menstruation or breast cancer, it implies that you are serving a woman. Take note of these patterns: This is essential for gathering gender-disaggregated data as well as for seeing why and how you can bring your “dormant” female clients (who use a male person’s account) to your directly served clientele.

#### b. *Disaggregated qualitative data*

For example, you can conduct household interviews that focus on understanding client behaviour about your IE’s products or services. You can also adjust your interview setting in a way that provides female respondents with the psychological safety to give genuine feedback, frames their thinking and gives context to their responses. All of these setting features help to generate some of the richest insights for your enterprise. While men and women may indicate a similar change in the quality of life as a result of a programme, product or service, the core question we seek to answer is this: Are there fundamental differences in the way women and men define and describe these changes?<sup>9</sup>

### A.2.2.1. OTHER SOURCES OF DISAGGREGATED DATA

1. **Beyond enterprise-driven data, you can access disaggregated quantitative data that are often available at national and sub-national levels.** Such data can be found in the form of census data on basic demographic factors (e.g., education, religion etc.), which you may find helpful for your programme, products or services. Similarly, gender-disaggregated qualitative data can also be accessed via existing research that is conducted by civil society organizations such as NGOs and women’s groups, who are gathering information about the potential or actual impact that your programme, products or services may have.
2. **Identify convenient touchpoints where it is possible to engage your male and female customers and learn about their experiences.** For example, you can examine if you have already been gathering data at these touchpoints and have the possibility to gender-disaggregate this information. If you already conduct user surveys at the time of purchase of your products or services, you may be able to adjust the survey to ask for the gender of the respondents.



**REMEMBER:** While collecting primary qualitative data (through surveys or interviews etc.), be mindful of the target group that you are seeking to engage. Make them feel comfortable and welcomed so they are open to sharing useful insights. Factors such as who conducts the survey and where it is conducted can have a major impact on the comfort and consequently on the possibility of receiving honest responses from the survey takers.



**BONUS:** If you want to go further, read Acumen’s guide. It captures insights from measuring gender impact across five projects in four countries. This guide provides you with approaches such as surveys and the Lean Data methodology, while giving insights both on a project- and consolidated level across all analyzed projects. You can read more here: [Acumen Lean Data Gender Tool](#).

### A.2.3. PRODUCT OR SERVICE DELIVERY

With all the disaggregated data that you collect, you may already have some ideas for areas where you can improve or for channels and aspects of your product or service delivery where you need to make changes. A key question to be answered from the gender lens perspective is whether the product or service can be delivered by different people in different formats through different channels (e.g., online, face-to-face, etc.) and in a manner that allow you to reach the desired outcome for all users within your target group, whether men or women. For example, if your product can only be accessed through a smartphone application, then you may inadvertently exclude potential female users simply due to the fact that mobile phones are differently spread between men and women on a demographic level in your country.

### A.2.3.1. APPLYING A GENDER LENS TO PRODUCT AND SERVICE DELIVERY

- 1. Ensure diversity among people who are delivering your products or services:** Be mindful of as many socio-economic factors (and their combinations) as applicable to your target group, such as, age, gender, geographical location, and many more. For example, if you provide birth-control advice to married, middle-aged women, consider engaging women of a similar demography in the process of awareness creation regarding your service. This could help you to create a more inclusive space for women to ask questions, share their concerns, and similar forms of interaction.
- 2. Pay attention to the context and ensure friendly technical support, preferably from the local community:** Depending on the context, there may be a need to translate marketing materials into local dialects or to pay attention to adequate explanations of technical terms. This also extends to ensuring that the language used is not exclusionary, sexist, or biased. For example, if you provide refurbished bicycles to customers, take care of including a representation of both men and women as customers in your marketing materials, and include female customer relations managers or salespersons so that customers of both genders feel welcome to share their concerns.
- 3. Create a safe environment when sharing details of your products or services:** This is particularly important if the marketing effort or customer onboarding for your product or service is conducted one-on-one or in groups. Having this aspect in mind will ensure that everyone feels comfortable to contribute and ask questions without feeling intimidated. By creating a safe environment, we mean considering which location, timing and setting you choose to make your customers feel more comfortable. For example: If your target audience are middle-aged women with children going to school, maybe a one-on-one session delivered by a woman going to the customer's home will be a more convenient option for this specific target group.



**BONUS:** Go to the Exercise Sheet a and work on identifying and defining your IMM gender lens goals.



**CASE STUDY:** Instellar works towards scalable and sustainable social impact through incubation, advisory, and investment in mission-driven companies in Indonesia. Within their portfolio, they found a majority of female entrepreneurs, yet also large gaps between male and female entrepreneurs in terms of soft skills, which affected their achievements in business leadership. Read how they explored the potential of nurturing female entrepreneurs, how they ran a female-focused incubation program and which lessons they have their lessons learned:  
[Case study: Instellar.](#)

## (B) INTRODUCING A GENDER LENS TO PROGRAMMES (FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS)

For a service provider, running a programme is the key product or service. Although such a programme can vary in design, it tends to involve a mix of education, mentorship, networking and direct or indirect financing opportunities. How these components are delivered can also differ depending on the organization, with programs varying in duration, structure, and mode of delivery.

Ensuring that all entrepreneurs and clients, regardless of gender, have an equal opportunity to access and engage with your programme is key to your organisation's ability to offer valuable support, thus achieving your business and social impact objectives and outcomes.

### B.1 DELIVERING A GENDER-INCLUSIVE PROGRAMME

It is important to create a safe and inclusive space for all entrepreneurs or clients. This ensures that everyone has an equal opportunity to engage with the content that is being delivered. Remember that it is not enough that your programme accepts female entrepreneurs: this will not necessarily make you achieve equity of access<sup>10</sup> as there are other factors at play that may prevent female entrepreneurs from participating in your programmes or from making the most of the opportunities that your programme offers. We will illustrate some of these other factors in this section.

#### **B.1.1. GENERAL GUIDELINES TO DELIVERING A MORE INCLUSIVE PROGRAM**

**1. Ensure that there is diversity in the people who are delivering your programme content:**

For starters, ensure that there are strong female facilitators who can not only deliver technical content, but also understand where the entrepreneurs, especially women, are coming from. This creates role models for all entrepreneurs but also levels out power dynamics and provides a more comfortable environment.

**2. Be intentional about including diverse examples and ensure that the language used is not sexist or biased:**

As an SP, aside from imparting practical skills, you are probably also affecting the morale and self-belief of early-stage entrepreneurs. Therefore, language, examples and the presentation style of your ideas should be designed with this sensitivity in mind. For example, try to include an equal share of examples of women-led enterprises in the content of your programme, and try to include pronouns for women (she/her) when you discuss examples and topics.

**3. Be mindful that entrepreneurs may have diverse educational and professional backgrounds:**

Some of the content delivered may be technical and include specific terms from the business or financial sectors, which is why you shouldn't assume equal prior knowledge among all participants. Rather explain ideas in a manner that they can be well received by all. Depending on the cohort, this could also mean translating your content into local dialects or being prepared to explain technical terms in the local language.

**4. Create a safe learning environment in the programme:** This ensures that everyone feels comfortable to contribute and, more importantly, to ask questions and share problems. For example, acknowledge

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<sup>10</sup> <https://smartygrants.com.au/help-sheets/gender-lens>



where power lies in a room with different genders, be deliberate about your aim for creating space so that everyone feels invited to speak and to be heard. Encourage IEs to feel that they are all doing meaningful work and all of them are here to learn more.

## **B.1.2. SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF AN SP'S PROGRAMME THAT CAN BENEFIT FROM A GENDER LENS**

In this section, we offer some suggestions to re-think aspects of your programme in a way that it becomes more inclusive towards women. Note that not all aspects need to be addressed at the same time and depending on the time and resources available, SPs may prefer to focus on areas that they have identified as 'quick wins' or those that are likely to lead to a strong return on investment.

### **B.1.2.1: GENDER-INCLUSIVE FACILITATING AND MENTORSHIP**

The role of facilitators and mentors is to facilitate ideas from those who are closest to the issue - the entrepreneurs. Therefore, to support ideal growth of entrepreneurs, it is important to have a healthy mix of male and female facilitators. In addition, it is critical that your facilitators and mentors understand where their support role starts and where it ends. They need to become aware of any (gender-related) power dynamics that may be at play and consider the following initial steps to ensure the same:

- 1. Invest in creating a gender-diverse pool of mentors and facilitators:** It's good advice to remember that the medium of message delivery can sometimes be as powerful as the message itself. You should consciously reach out to female mentors and facilitators and include them in your programme delivery. This can create an additional support system for female participants of your programme.
- 2. Develop a clear mentor-mentee code of conduct and let both parties sign it:** It's important to consider power dynamics that may occur when pairing different genders to learn from each other, so it's better to make them explicit. Ensure regular check-ins for both facilitators and participants with the HR team of your organization to identify and address potential negative power dynamics. Here you can find an example of a good [Mentor-Mentee Code of conduct](#).
- 3. Have relevant training for mentors, facilitators, and all other content deliverers so that they can create a safe and inclusive learning environment:** Despite the best of intentions, facilitators may conduct their sessions in a manner that has an adverse impact on the morale and learning opportunities of the participants. Example: if there are a few participants who are more forthcoming in the sessions and the facilitator is not mindful of actively offering opportunities to the other participants to speak, then some of them may feel left out in the sessions. These key ideas on good facilitation practices can be easily learned through relevant trainings.



**BONUS:** If you want to focus on equipping your trainers to deliver an inclusive programme then get inspired by this [Awareness Training](#) example content!

### B.1.2.2. INCLUSIVE EVENTS AND PROGRAMME FORMATS

As an SP, you should be mindful that event formats or competitions that you conduct as part of your programme are adequate for showcasing the value of the ideas and work of different IEs and the men and women that are a part of their teams. This becomes especially relevant when one discounts for other socio-economic factors such as age or wealth. In the following suggestions, we will try to highlight the implications of this idea.

#### 1. Pitching Events:

Many SPs hold pitching events throughout or towards the end of their programmes. These can take different forms (e.g., one-on-one or cohort pitches in front of an audience) and provide an opportunity for entrepreneurs to present their ventures to relevant ecosystem stakeholders.

Typically, these events aim at 1) **IEs presenting their ventures and asking for required support (such as funding, access to customers, partnerships, mentorships)** or 2) **allowing the SPs an opportunity to raise awareness around their brand and showcase their work.**

A typical pitch leverages very specific skills that are often not fully relevant to being an effective impact entrepreneur. A successful pitch relies on the presenter's confidence, persuasiveness and engaging style. It is often culturally more accepted for men to possess and display these attributes, whereas women may not feel as comfortable speaking in public in such a way. Additionally, there is typically a power dynamic at play in favour of investors who can 'choose' successful ventures. As a starting point, consider the following options to turn pitching events into a more positive experience for all of your participants:

##### a. *Pick a more neutral name for these kinds of events.*

If the name doesn't resonate with both genders, use alternative designations such as 'showcase'. This can reduce the notion of competition and be perceived as an equal opportunity for all entrepreneurs. Furthermore, use this rebranding to think of more holistic formats that may help to better assess the IEs to be funded. For example, Village Capital **conducts peer assessments for picking enterprises for funding**. This helps in eliminating a pattern recognition bias that motivates investors to only pick enterprises similar to the ones they have already invested in (typically founded by men). As a result, Village Capital has found that 46% of its funding goes to female founders who raised 2.9X more capital than the control group that did not experience such a peer evaluation.<sup>11</sup>

##### b. *Be deliberate about calling out the power dynamics at the event.*

For example: The organiser of the event could open the evening with a statement such as: "For impact entrepreneurship to succeed, we need all these ventures to win. Tonight is not about one being better than the other, but about how we can support all these important ventures so they can thrive and collectively create the impact we wish to see". Calling out certain unconscious biases at the start of the event helps everyone to be aware of how their judgement might be affected. This can be done in a light and playful way or in a more serious manner, depending on what is appropriate in the specific context.

##### c. *Adapt the format of the event*

For example: if you have a voting at your event and this voting privileges a certain gender, it should be taken out. Instead, the audience can be asked to make support offers and suggestions to the

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11 <https://vilcap.com/entrepreneurs/peer-selected-investment>

entrepreneurs, which can be followed up after the event. This way, the event is designed to be only one of the many steps for investors, funders or other stakeholders to learn about the entrepreneurs. You could also consider having a mid-programme pitch event plus one at the end so that the audience has a chance to see the progress that the entrepreneurs have made. This can allow entrepreneurs to show what they're capable of and reduce bias against them. Simply running events as discussions rather than presentations (and arranging the room accordingly), can also change the power dynamics. Another option is to send the profiles of the ventures to the audience to read before the event but remove the gender of the entrepreneurs. This allows investors and other stakeholders to assess a venture based on its ability to solve a problem and without gender bias that impacts their judgements.

*d. Take steps to ensure that all entrepreneurs can make the most of the opportunity.*

Have one-on-one chats with the entrepreneurs at the start of your programme to fully understand their expectations. Ask as many pointed questions as you can think of so that you can have a clear picture of what they expect and what the programme can offer them.

*e. Make entrepreneurs aware of the gender biases that the audience may have.*

This will prepare them to handle the situation directly or indirectly, but right at the beginning of their presentations. In addition to presentation skills training, other types of training can focus on personal growth, for example improving confidence or managing imposter syndrome.

## **2. Improving access to funding for female entrepreneurs:**

By enabling the growth of both enterprises and intermediaries, especially in their early stages, funders play a key role within the ecosystem and are critical to ensuring the growth of IEs. Access to the right funders and funding opportunities is often linked to the ability to participate in the right events and programmes. Therefore, as an SP, it is valuable to curate events and connect a network of philanthropic funders and impact investors to your cohort, whose goal is to also achieve greater social impact and gender equality.

Consider the following ideas to improve funding for female entrepreneurs:

*a. Think of creative approaches to make funds accessible to entrepreneurs of both genders.*

Women are often disadvantaged and left behind when it comes to funding and investment. To address this problem, think of creative ways to make funding available to female participants. For example, consider building a seed fund for IEs that are a part of your programme. This way, all entrepreneurs have a better chance of receiving a more holistic assessment of their own and their IEs potential. This will also result in a fairer chance of getting initial funding.



- b. *For entrepreneurs with lower financial literacy, provide additional support so that they are confident in presenting themselves and requesting funding.*

This can be achieved by building their technical expertise or by developing high-quality documents for support.

- c. *Incentivize key financial decision-makers in the communities of the entrepreneurs.*

This can create an important buy-in from these communities and can be aimed at supporting the founders in accessing funding for their ventures. One idea is to demonstrate the ‘win-win’ for the community by showing that if the IE is successful, the community will reap the benefits. An example: If IE A provides cheaper sanitary napkins and becomes able to expand its impact with the new funding, then more women in the community will be able to access IE A’s services and can enjoy the health benefits of the improved hygiene.

- d. *Translate investor language so that it is better understood by all participants.*

Below are some examples of typical gender-related due diligence questions that investors ask before providing funding. Try to educate the IEs on financial and business terminologies so that they can respond to investors in a better (and timely) manner.

What investors may ask	What investors want to hear	What investors want to learn
Who is on the Board of Directors? How does the management team look?	Not just how many and the ratio of women, but who and what? Is the management consciously thinking of the perspectives of all genders in designing products and services that will positively impact them?	Can the ratio shift or is it shifting?
What are the policies and practices demonstrating gender equality in the business?	What does the IE think about issues such as pay equity, shared parental leave, recruitment, promotion, and retention?	Are they self-aware? Are they already great? What are they committed to shifting?
Do you collect gender- and age-disaggregated data on clients, suppliers, and employees?	What does the IE know and see?	Where can they improve? What’s their commitment?

### 3. Creating an inclusive and supportive alumni network

When IEs have completed the programme and become a part of the alumni network, SPs have the opportunity to continue to support these ventures. This support can help ventures become successful and serve as an incentive for them to report back on their impact and business performance and stay engaged to support subsequent cohorts. To ensure equal participation of men and women in these alumni activities, consider the following options:



- a. *Aim to provide continued support for your alumni enterprises* (e.g., workshops, events, online resources). Conduct workshops and explore gender-related topics that could impact the growth of their ventures. Remember that due to social limitations (such as going out in the evening or limits on socializing for work) or family obligations (such as caregiver responsibilities at home), it is often difficult for women to spend time networking and attending events. Therefore, design and plan these events in a manner that they provide convenient and meaningful networking opportunities, especially for female alumni. Consider hosting specific events within larger alumni gatherings that are dedicated to women.
- b. *Include gender lens metrics as part of your own impact measurement framework.*  
This ensures that you collect gender-related data which will enable you to advance your programme and support your alumni. It may also help you craft a convincing narrative on GESI impacts. Allow comfortable sharing of sensitive information by using varied data collection methods (e.g., phone calls, anonymous surveys, site visits). Use these insights to finetune your programme and tailor it to the needs of female entrepreneurs.
- c. *Contract your alumni as facilitators, mentors, recruiters and/or supporters for your next cohorts.*  
Find ways of including participating entrepreneurs in the subsequent cohorts of training. This will create a platform for underrepresented genders to become role models within your ecosystem.



## (C) CREATING INCLUSIVE IMPACT THROUGH AN INCLUSIVE ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

### C.1. WHY THE ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL MATTERS

A message to both IEs and SPs: Your board, your team, and your organizational culture play a big role in several aspects relating to product and service creation and delivery. They encompass how work is done and decisions are made within your organisation. Therefore, addressing gender issues within these areas has the potential to create and deepen the impact that you can have on your target groups.

### C.2. CULTURE IN PRACTICE

Your organisational culture refers to the way things are done in and around your organisation. It encompasses the set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterises an institution or organization.

#### C.2.1. WHY DOES IT MATTER?

A shared belief system can guide people's behaviours and result in an inclusive environment where all team members can thrive. This in turn allows the IE or SP to deliver on the vision of an inclusive product or service that positively impacts all members of the target groups, irrespective of gender.



**BONUS:** JupViec is a highly successful on demand cleaning service that matches women skilled at cleaning with clients looking for services. They call themselves a company for women, by women, although JupViec has a male CEO. Why is this so? It is because most of the C-suite and managerial positions in the company are held by women. They are actively involved in enforcing a culture of thinking of the women who find work through their platform as their main stakeholders.

#### C.2.2 INITIAL STEPS TO BUILDING A MORE INCLUSIVE CULTURE

1. Equip all team members with awareness training so that they understand the organization's commitment to fostering gender inclusivity.

This can be used to learn practical ways of applying a gender lens to their work. Find an example of awareness training [here](#).

2. Consider what can make your culture more inclusive.

Identify where including team members with diverse identities can have a better outcome for the customers of your product or service. Identify gaps or issues and whenever possible, build team compositions in a manner that there is a healthy mix of genders.

3. Look at the daily language and day-to-day interactions, and recognize patterns of inequality.

Is there a pattern in the type of work that women team members are assigned? Is it common that female colleagues must take care of the additional administrative and operational tasks? Do women consistently get fewer opportunities to speak when the team is discussing strategic issues? Identify

and break these patterns by simply being mindful of them. For example: Are women in the team quieter when there's a business meeting that is predominantly comprised of men? Try to recognize these patterns and create unobtrusive prompts and other mechanisms (such as small breakout groups) so that all members of the team can participate freely in the discussion.



**BONUS:** For more insights on creating an inclusive organizational culture, take a look at the checklist for creating an inclusive culture [here](#).

### **C.2.3. VALUES AND POLICIES**

Your organisational values and policy document serve as an outline of your organisation's core principles. It establishes the culture and serves as an indicator for all the policies that are and will be put in place. Your team and stakeholders might already have deeply held values around gender, which may or may not align with your gender lens goals. This is why this articulation of shared values can help in better alignment of values within the team. Expressing a clear stand around inclusion signals to your team and to the world that you are willing to walk the walk while you talk the talk, and that only inclusive behaviour is welcomed and tolerated in your organisation. It can help to attract, hire, retain, and align the beliefs of a gender-diverse team and board as well as to attract diverse clients, stakeholders, and supporters. Therefore, it is recommended that your organization embraces gender diversity and proactively shares this commitment with the team and stakeholders through the values and policies of your company.

### **C.2.4. INITIAL STEPS TO BUILDING A GENDER VALUES POLICY**

- 1. Build a value around gender by articulating the vision that you have for a gender-inclusive team as well as the standard of inclusive conduct to which your organisation holds itself accountable. Include this in an Organizational Code of Conduct.**

This gives a clear message to potential employees, partners, and customers that you are a committed organization. It also creates clear goals that your organization can pursue.

- 2. Share your values in all marketing activities.**

Make your values visible on your website, social media, and job publications. This creates clarity on your organizational goals and culture.

- 3. Design new and existing policies to be appealing to different genders.**

For instance, maternity leave can be framed and offered as 'parental leave', making it accessible to both men and women.

## **C.3. TEAM**

### **C.3.1 TEAM COMPOSITION**

A team must have the right mix of skills, abilities, experience, and backgrounds to achieve an organisation's goals. As an IE or SP, to ensure the best possible outcomes, you should strive to equally distribute decision-making authority between both genders.



**BONUS:** Research has shown that diverse teams lead to improved organisational performance and financial success. Striving for a diverse team also sends a message to your employees, your clients, and the ecosystem in which you work that gender matters to your organisation. Having a gender-diverse team can increase your insight into the needs and motivations of the entrepreneurs (or clients) you're supporting and inform the development of your programmes (or products and services) in order to attract and cater to both genders. It is especially important for your leadership team to be gender-diverse, so that bias can be reduced when key decisions are being made.

### **C.3.2. INITIAL STEPS TO BUILDING A GENDER-DIVERSE TEAM**

#### **1. Analyse your team's composition:**

Evaluate the distribution of gender amongst key decision-makers and which voices are being heard throughout different processes. Subsequently, put strategies in place to achieve a gender-balanced team, such as hiring female members to new positions as much as possible.

#### **2. Don't forget to monitor:**

Establish quarterly or bi-annual reporting practices that look at the gender composition of the organisation in terms of staff numbers and positions, analysing part-time vs full-time equivalents and ultimately salary distribution. Think of sharing the insights internally and externally.

#### **3. Consider creating channels (even anonymous, if required) where team members can share their experiences and issues, as well as give suggestions to create an inclusive space that is representative of all team members.**



**REMEMBER:** The idea of creating a gender-diverse team is to do away with power dynamics. This enables members of both genders to actively participate and contribute, but the fact that you have created a gender-diverse team is just the first step. Engaging male and female colleagues regularly is imperative as this allows for the best pay-offs from a diverse team.

## **C.4. BOARD**

### **C.4.1. BOARD COMPOSITION AND PROCESSES**

Board processes need to be inclusive so that different perspectives, experiences, and skills of the board members are utilised. This contributes to a well-functioning board that is greater than the sum of its parts.

### **C.4.2. INITIAL STEPS TO CREATING AN INCLUSIVE BOARD**

#### **1. Try including as many female board members as possible.**

This will bring a diversity of thought as well as create a culture where persons of both genders feel secure in their positions and are equally heard.



2. **Carefully consider the timing and location of your meetings, while ensuring meetings are equally accessible.**

Think of weekdays or weekends as well as online solutions to increase accessibility. Shorten your meetings and offer options to engage in discussions in written form (e.g., by email).

3. **Alternate the board chair position between genders.**

If someone does not feel comfortable or experienced enough to take on this role yet, consider having two board chairpersons.

4. **Rotate administrative duties** (e.g., minute taking) **between genders** to not perpetuate social norms. You may even consider delegating administrative duties to a specific role coupled with decision-making authority.

5. **Ensure that both the board chair as well as the agenda document encourage all members to speak equally at all meetings.**

As Board chair, repeat your statement at the beginning of every meeting to encourage all attendees to speak. Think of other prompts that may help in inviting everyone to participate in discussions.

6. **Clarify what is appropriate versus inappropriate behaviour for every board member** by creating an organisational code of conduct.



**RESOURCE:** If you want to learn how an organisational code of conduct with a gender lens looks like, check out this example: LSE Generate in partnership with Genderscope created an example of an organisational code of conduct. Genderscope is a gender consultancy that targets the private sector. Check out this [Organisational code of conduct](#).

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“Women constitute half the world’s population—nearly 4 billion people. They produce about 37 percent of global Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and more than half the world’s food supply. In some countries, women constitute nearly half the labour force. Therefore, broadscale restrictions on this group’s economic participation would necessarily have a massive effect on national (and global) prosperity.”<sup>12</sup>

- Linda Scott, USAID

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12 <https://banyanglobal.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Gender-Inequality-Causes-Poverty-Briefer.pdf>

