



# Gender in Business:

## Lessons Learned for Last Mile Distributors

The GDC is an initiative by:

# Contents

ii	<b>Preface</b>
iii	<b>Acknowledgements and Project Partners</b>
1	<b>Introduction</b>
4	<b>Why Is Gender Inclusion Good Business for LMDs and SMEs?</b>
5	<b>5 Entry Points for LMDs and SMEs to Promote Gender Inclusion in Their Businesses</b>
6	<b>Strategy 1: Mainstreaming Women Agents' Best Practices</b>
7	Case Study: Deevabits
10	<b>Strategy 2: Operational Support to Women Agents to Overcome Mobility and Asset Limitations</b>
12	Case Study: WANA Energy Solutions
15	<b>Strategy 3: Promoting Women Sales Agents' Safety</b>
16	Case Study: ImpiPower
19	<b>Strategy 4: Digital Marketing to Women Customers</b>
20	Case Study: Econome
23	<b>Strategy 5: Gender-Inclusive Recruitment of Women Sales Agents</b>
24	Case Study: Yellow
28	<b>Conclusion</b>
29	<b>Appendices</b>

This material has been funded by UK aid from the UK government via the Transforming Energy Access platform; however, the views expressed do not necessarily reflect the UK government's official policies.



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## Preface from the Global Distributors Collective

The Global Distributors Collective (GDC) exists to represent and support last mile distributors (LMDs) to reach underserved people with life-changing products. These consumers are often overlooked by the mainstream private sector because they are low income, live in remote areas, or both. For LMDs, women constitute a significant target market, and more and more evidence demonstrates that women sales agents are highly effective at achieving last mile sales. GDC members are therefore uniquely positioned to empower women as consumers, employees, and leaders – and the GDC is committed to equipping its members with the skills, tools, and confidence to do so.

A number of GDC members have a strong focus on gender inclusion and/or women’s empowerment, and have provided us with insights into how to create inclusive LMD models. Anecdotally, across our membership we believe there is commitment and willingness to adopt inclusive practices; but there is still a long way to go to truly mainstream gender in the sector. Existing barriers for LMDs include the relatively high short-term costs often involved in meaningful organisational change (particularly for companies that are not yet proven viable) and the lack of practical, sector-agnostic resources and training, knowledge, tools, guidance, and mentoring available to support LMDs on this journey. That is why we are so thrilled to have had the opportunity to work with Value for Women (VfW) to provide dedicated technical assistance to four GDC members, and, through this guide, to share the learnings from these pilots with other LMDs and the wider sector.

## Acknowledgements

This material has been funded by UK aid from the UK government via the Transforming Energy Access platform; however, the views expressed do not necessarily reflect the UK government's official policies.

VfW and the GDC would also like to thank the teams at the four participating GDC members: Deevabits Green Energy, Econome, ImpiPower, and WANA Energy Solutions (WES). They showed dedication to the implementation of these pilots even when the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns in their countries created immense challenges in sustaining operations on the ground.

## Project Partners



The **Global Distributors Collective (GDC)**, hosted by Practical Action alongside implementing partners Hystra and Bopinc, is a collective of over 150 LMDs operating in more than 50 countries around the world that reach millions of underserved customers with beneficial products.



**Value for Women (VfW)** is a specialised advisory firm helping organisations advance gender inclusion. VfW works with a range of partners and institutions, including small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), investors, and financial institutions across Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Pacific, to promote gender-forward practices within their operations. VfW's role was to provide gender technical advisory to the participating companies, to measure and document impacts and learnings, and to develop this report.



**Transforming Energy Access (TEA)** is a research and innovation platform supporting the technologies, business models, and skills needed to enable an inclusive clean energy transition. TEA works via partnerships to support emerging clean energy generation technologies, productive appliances, smart networks, energy storage, and more. It increases access to clean, modern energy services for people and enterprises in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, improving their lives, creating jobs, and boosting green economic opportunities.

## Introduction

Much has been written on the business case for companies to pursue gender equality. There is good data that shows that both gender diversity internally and a gender-diverse customer base can improve business performance (we summarise this data in the next section because it provides a strong case for businesses and last mile distributors to focus on gender.) As a result, today more and more businesses and funders are clear on the “why” for pursuing business actions that contribute to gender equality. Yet, few studies delve into the “how”, specifically, how businesses can embed gender into their operations.

**This guide is unique in that it explores in depth the actions that five LMDs have taken to improve gender equality. For each of the five businesses, the guide identifies the exact actions they took and the results they saw. Additionally, this guide is hands on, providing other LMDs with evidence-based, practical guidance and step-by-step implementation tips to embed gender inclusion into their own business operations.**

The primary audience of this guide is LMDs and small and medium enterprises (SMEs) more generally. In addition, this guide is useful for funders, investors, and business support organisations that partner with and support LMDs on their gender inclusion journeys.

The guide centres on five business strategies to improve gender equality, from workforce to customer-facing strategies, and includes an illustrative case study for each one with the results it achieved.



**The case studies demonstrate that there are multiple high-impact ways to begin applying a gender lens to business practices.**

## 5 Featured Business Strategies to Improve Gender Equality

- 1. Increase women agents' sales by sharing their best practices and effective pitches;**
- 2. Increase women agents' sales by giving them stipends that reduce transportation and resource barriers;**
- 3. Improve agents' safety and retention by reducing sexual harassment risks;**
- 4. Improve sales through digital marketing that targets women customers;**
- 5. Attract the best talent by adopting inclusive recruitment practices to ensure that women can fully participate in your workforce.**



Each of the strategies begins with gender-responsive data collection, by which we mean collecting data (i.e., via surveys, interviews, focus groups) from the target women stakeholders – be they sales agents or customers – and designing strategies on the basis of what the data reveals. The appendices at the end of this guide provide further step-by-step guidance for implementing gender-responsive data collection and analysis.

This guide offers an abundance of ideas, best practices, and tips for getting started or going deeper on gender work in order to promote both business profits and social impacts. Here are some of the results we saw:

- **Increased sales**, such as a 41% increase in sales the month after women sales agents received access to motorbikes to be able to reach customers more easily;
- **Improved social media engagement**, including a 115% increase of Facebook page followers (from 422 to over 1000) following the rollout of an ad campaign that took women's interests into account;
- **Improved ability to attract female talent**, including an 8.5x increase in new women sales agents recruited (from 11 women agents in 2019 to 94 in 2020) as a result of new practices implemented to increase appeal to women job seekers.

Four of the five case studies here come from gender pilots implemented under Transforming Energy Access, with support from Value for Women and the Global Distributors Collective. The four LMDs, based in Kenya, Zimbabwe, and Uganda, implemented these pilots from October 2020 to March 2021. Due to COVID-19 travel restrictions, VfW delivered the technical assistance (TA) virtually.

The programme included, for each LMD, a comprehensive gender diagnostic, mapping of gender and business opportunities, and support to implement several gender-forward business actions. The fifth case study comes from a gender project carried out by the LMD Yellow, with funding from the Norwegian government's Energy and Environment Partnership Trust Fund (EEP Africa).

The pilots described here were implemented with external support, so not all activities may be within the reach of resource-limited LMDs. While the strategies are aspirational, this guide seeks to provide a detailed enough blueprint for motivated LMDs to pursue all or components of these strategies themselves. However, moving forward, we hope that funders and business support organisations reading this guide recognise the business and impact potential of applying a gender lens to business operations and are inspired to target funding towards these types of gender actions in the future. This type of funder support will help to universalise gender practices among the broadest set of LMDs.

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# Why Is Gender Inclusion Good Business for LMDs and SMEs?

## Investing in Women in the Workforce Enhances Business Performance

Evidence shows that **gender-diverse companies are more productive and perform better on multiple dimensions, including in decision-making, innovation, customer acquisition and retention, and talent recruitment and retention.**<sup>1</sup>

Women sales agents are often better able to connect with women customers. A recent ICRW study with last mile distributor (LMD) Solar Sister showed that **women entrepreneurs achieved higher sales than men entrepreneurs**, due to “women’s convincing power, their large networks, and their ability to talk to fellow women customers and relate to their energy needs”.<sup>2</sup> Applied research carried out by VfW as part of gender projects has shown that support to commission-based women agents resulted in a strong positive impact on sales and other business metrics.<sup>3</sup>



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## Women Are a Key Customer Segment

Women make the majority of household purchasing decisions, and as such, should be a key focus for any sales by LMDs.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, data from VfW’s work with SMEs shows that **when agents focus their customer engagement efforts on women**, such as targeting customer education calls to women, **the SME saves time and money.** This is because women are often the end users of clean energy products and are the ones contacting customer care representatives for after-sales support.<sup>5</sup>

1 Morgan Stanley [2016]. “The Gender Advantage: Integrating Gender Diversity Into Investment Decisions”. Retrieved from: <https://www.morganstanley.com/pub/content/dam/msdotcom/ideas/gender-diversity-toolkit/Gender-Diversity-Investing-Primer.pdf>

2 Soria, L. et al. [2016]. “With Solar Sister, Forward We Go: A Qualitative Assessment Exploring How Solar Sister Brings Light, Hope, and Opportunity to Women in Africa. International Center for Research on Women”. Retrieved from: <https://www.icrw.org/publications/with-solar-sister-forward-we-go/>

3 Value for Women [2018]. “A Business-First Approach to Gender Inclusion”. Retrieved from: <https://v4w.org/resource/a-business-first-approach-to-gender-inclusion/>

4 ENERGIA [2019]. “Supporting last-mile women energy entrepreneurs: What works and what does not”. Retrieved from: <https://www.energia.org/cm2/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Supporting-Last-Mile-Women-Entrepreneurs.pdf>

5 Value for Women [2018].



# 5 Entry Points for LMDs and SMEs to Promote Gender Inclusion in Their Businesses

Being persuaded by the business and impact case for gender inclusion does not automatically mean that businesses are experts in gender inclusion – or know where to start. It is natural and common to feel overwhelmed when beginning to develop business strategies that improve gender equality. Our goal in this guide is to demystify gender inclusion in business.

## Key Terms

By “**gender inclusion**”, “**gender-responsive**”, and “**applying a gender lens**”, we mean taking steps to improve gender equality. This often, but not exclusively, means focusing on women as women often face structural barriers to accessing opportunities. Gender inclusion can take the form, for instance, of taking steps that help more women enter your business’s workforce or ensuring that your products or services cater to women customers as well as to men customers. Gender inclusion does not mean prioritising women over men, but does mean understanding that women and men may have different preferences and needs — and acting on that understanding so that women and men both benefit. We also refer in this guide to “**gender-forward business practices**”, by which we mean intentional steps taken by businesses to improve gender equality.



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## STRATEGY 1: Mainstreaming Women Agents' Best Practices



### ? The Business Challenge

Many LMDs that distribute products via commission-based agents struggle with uneven performance across their sales force. While women agents often achieve the highest sales, there also tend to be women sales agents who are less successful. In business-as-usual, the high performers and low performers rarely interact and share lessons. This means that there is a missed opportunity to share and implement best practices and effective pitches across the company.

### 💡 The Proposed Strategy

The strategy is to mainstream the sales practices of high performers. The first step in this strategy is to analyse and document the best practices of high-performing women sales agents. The assumption here is that best practices of the women high performers are less studied, and therefore not mainstreamed across the sales force. Once best practices are identified, the company can socialise these in order to effectively build agents' capacity to improve their sales, including lead generation and conversion.

### 👥 Expected Impacts

- Improved overall **sales performance** (e.g., increased number of sales leads)
- Improved agent **motivation, work satisfaction, loyalty, and retention**
- Increased product purchases and improved **customer satisfaction**

### 💰 Expected Resource Requirement:

- During a 3-12 month implementation period:
  - 4-8 hours per week by managers, sales leads, and trainers
  - 3-4 hours per week for oversight from middle/upper management
- Relatively low cash investment (<\$1,000 USD) towards training logistics

## Case Study: Deevabits

### Company intro

Deevabits Green Energy provides solar products to off-grid rural regions in Kenya. Its commission-based agents, Village Solar Entrepreneurs (VSEs), are central to Deevabits' distribution model. The majority of VSEs are women.



### Business challenge

Women VSEs were experiencing uneven sales performance, with some sales agents performing well and others lagging behind. Deevabits had not analysed the factors predicting success, and had not systematically tried to improve performance for sales agents who were behind.

### Strategy

Deevabits, with technical assistance from VfW, sought to improve agents' sales performance by equipping all agents, and especially women agents, with the skills to market to women and men customers effectively. The idea was to facilitate knowledge transfer from high to low performers, and to focus especially on effective sales pitches, best practices for customer interaction, and best practices for generating and converting leads with men and women customers.

### Key activities

- In-person/phone interviews with the ten top-performing agents (all women) and five underperforming agents (all women), and recording of their customer pitches.
- Analysis of interview data and development of sales pitch key messages and techniques.
- Development of additional agent training content, including: a recommended sales pitch script for men customers and one for women customers; guidance on effective schedules and locations for boosting sales; and strategic use of WhatsApp for marketing and selling. *Refer to **Appendix 2** for an optimal pitch structure and best practices that Deevabits identified for its agents.*
- Training of 24 women agents and 4 men agents, using these materials.
- Administration of pre- and post-training surveys with agents to assess their satisfaction with the training and changes in knowledge of, and confidence in, best practices as a result of the training. They then analysed these responses by gender.
- Compilation of pre- and post-training sales data and then analysis of this data to identify changes in performance following the training.

### Results

Improvements were seen in multiple areas, as reported by the 28 sales agents who participated in the training. Scores below are based on a 1-5 rating scale where 5 is the best.

#### Selling to women customers

- Agents reported increased **confidence to sell to women customers** (from an average of 4.5 to 5).
- Agents reported increased **familiarity with the most convincing arguments for women customers** (from an average of 4.2 to 4.7).

## Boosting women and men agents' performance

- Agents reported increased **comfort using WhatsApp for marketing and selling products** (from an average of 2 to 4.6)
- Agents reported an increased **ability to plan weekly sales activities to maximise sales** (from an average of 3.6 to 4.4).

## Company bottom line

Deevabits anticipates that the agent training **will result in increased customer satisfaction and improve payment collections**. The company plans to replicate the training with the rest of the sales force, including new agents.

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*“[Post training] most agents earned more commission, made more sales, and were more motivated. Agents also now have weekly target plans... They also do not sell for the sake of closing a deal, like before, but rather they focus on products that are needed by women and men clients.”*

**— Hannah Kirubi & Mercy Mwirigi, Deevabits**

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## How to Implement

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- 1. Identify your top-performing sales agents.** Analyse earnings per hour worked (rather than comparing total earnings). This is important so that you do not leave out top-performing part-time agents, many of whom are women who have excellent performance and also have other commitments.
- 2. Document best practices and effective sales pitches used by these top-performing sales agents** for different products, markets, and client segments. This can be done through a combination of focus groups and/or one-on-one interviews with these agents.
  - Identify **the most convincing arguments and talking points** used to engage and convince men and women customers, recognising that men and women will typically respond to a different set of motivators in the final decision to purchase.
  - **Identify other best practices used by high-performing sales agents.** This can include deliberate time planning, formal greetings and introductions, how someone presents themselves, and follow-up with prospects.
- 3.** Analyse what you documented to identify key trends across these practices and pitches, and **incorporate these into standardised sales guidance and sales pitches/‘scripts’.**
- 4. Mainstream this knowledge through sales agent training modules and tools.** Provide these to new and existing agents at the time of onboarding and in annual refresher sessions. Role-playing is particularly effective for training on these topics. For example, if efficient use of time is identified as a potential area of support, the LMD could provide agents with a weekly sales activity planner or template, and train them to use it. The tool and activity should help agents think through and write down their sales plans vis-a-vis their daily schedule for domestic tasks, and accommodate these activities in the design of their sales schedule.

- **Note: Schedule and conduct agent training in a gender-responsive way, considering women agents' time availability, access to training locations, and literacy level.** For example, schedule training sessions either virtually (if possible) or at locations close to women agents' homes, and during school hours if that is when women have fewer childcare and home responsibilities.

## Tips to Overcome Possible Challenges

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### Data collection

If women agents have limited mobility and time to participate in interviews and training, conduct interviews remotely via telephone or video, where possible.

### Training

If it is not possible to convene the group at a common time or location, deliver training online and ensure that agents have the necessary technology (e.g., internet, smartphone, computer, access to online meeting platform). Explore options to facilitate virtual role-play and group work. Online self-paced modules may also be a viable option.

### Survey questionnaire design and analysis

If your organisation does not have experience developing survey questions for sales agents, analysing data, and using the insights to develop solutions, you can refer to the sample questionnaire and guidance in **Appendix 1**. You could also engage a consultant or agency to support you, if resources allow.



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## STRATEGY 2: Operational Support to Women Agents to Overcome Mobility and Asset Limitations



### ? The Business Challenge

**Mobility in the field** is a common challenge for women agents due to the social norms and constraints to which women are subject; women have less access to personal transportation such as motorcycles and bicycles. In addition, public transport is often expensive, unsafe, or unavailable in remote areas. This limits women to undertaking sales activities only within a small geographic area. It also makes it difficult for women to visit customers frequently or to repeatedly follow up on leads due to the travel time required. Domestic care work and the lack of safe and affordable accommodation in the field also constrain women's ability to travel for days at a time.

With less access to personal assets and savings, women agents are also more likely to have more **limited financial resources for conducting their business** than their men counterparts. For example, if the company does not provide agents with free product demonstration samples, women may not be able to meet the upfront cost to purchase the demo kits needed to convert sales.

### 💡 The Proposed Strategy

This strategy centres on giving women the financial support they need to increase sales and profits. This involves analysing the challenges faced by women agents, designing solutions to resolve them, and piloting these. Under this strategy, the company makes an upfront investment (i.e., providing targeted financial support to the sales agents to resolve a business challenge, such as limited mobility or money for product demos) to test whether the returns on investment are higher than the initial investment. If the pilot shows this to be the case, the company can scale the financial support across its sales agent force.



## Expected Impacts

- Improved **sales performance** by women and other agents with limited financial resources
- Increased company **revenues**
- Lower **out-of-pocket spending** for agents
- Improved **recruitment and retention** of women agents



## Expected Resource Requirement [Medium/High]

- During a 3-12 month implementation period:
  - 3-4 hours per week from Sales Leads and Sales Agent Managers for strategy implementation and monitoring
  - 3-4 hours per week from middle/upper management for oversight
- Moderate to high cash investment (as high as +\$10,000 USD) towards operational support, depending on the type (e.g., travel allowances, company vehicles, airtime, demonstration kits, etc.)

## Case Study: WANA Energy Solutions

### Company intro

WANA Energy Solutions (WES) is a Uganda-based company that sells Liquefied Petroleum Gas as a clean and accessible source of energy for cooking. WES's distribution model involves commission-based sales agents, 61% of whom are women.



### Business challenge

WES women agents' mobility was constraining their sales performance. Men agents often rode their own motorbikes, but women typically did not ride motorbikes due to gendered cultural norms. As a result, women depended on paid motorcycle rides, adding financial burden and restricting their travel for sales presentations. In remote areas where public transportation was not easily available, women traveled on foot to make their sales presentations, further limiting the number of customers they could reach and, ultimately, reducing sales.

### Strategy

WES, with technical assistance from VfW, implemented a multi-faceted solution to facilitate the travel of all sales agents and particularly that of women sales agents, offering a travel facilitation allowance and access to company-owned motorbikes with a driver.

### Key activities

- Launch of travel facilitation strategy with all WES agents. This consisted of a prepaid travel allowance for agents to cover the costs of private transport (such as motorcycle and bicycle taxi rides). This was given based on each agent's submitted weekly sales activity plan.
- Subsequent analysis of agent sales data to track the strategy's impact on sales performance, as well as interviews with agents to collect feedback.
- Broadening of the strategy in three select branches, to also directly provide transportation, through WES purchasing three motorbikes and hiring motorbike drivers. These motorbikes and drivers were available to transport agents (particularly women) from the select branches to distant markets and sales presentation sites.

### Results

- Women agents experienced a **41% increase in their total sales** in the month after the motorbikes launched.
- **Agents, particularly women agents, were able to travel longer distances and to more remote areas.**
- **Agents were better able to keep their appointments with customers**, thanks to having more flexible transportation.
- Agents, particularly women, were able to **visit new potential customers (including in new geographic areas)**, resulting in increased sales. Nevertheless, following the implementation of the travel allowance specifically, **the rise in sales was lower than expected**. Interviews with sales agents and supervisors found **gaps in internal communication**, leaving some branch coordinators and agents unaware of the support available, while other branch coordinators reported confusion between the post-sale commissions and the advance travel allowance for agents.
- Going forward, WES will continue to provide travel allowances and is fundraising to purchase motorbikes for seven additional branches.



## Learnings

- **Implementation and supervision of a decentralised strategy** like travel facilitation, which is managed by branch coordinators in different regions, **can be challenging. Company headquarters' monitoring is important, and this is easier to do for motorcycles than cash stipends.**
- **The pilot affirmed the importance of data collection at all stages of solving a business challenge.** After the initial pilot, gathering feedback from agents and branch coordinators allowed WES to analyse what was not working, and to design a new solution accordingly.

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*“Before... it was difficult to get agents to come to the company. They felt they were not valued. They now [after the provision of travel allowances and motorbikes with drivers] feel more valued and feel that the company considers them as staff. They are now better able to share work plans, call the company to report on results, and call and visit more customers.”*

**— Dr. Emmy Wasirwa, Chief Executive Officer, WES**

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## How to Implement

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- 1. Research the challenges faced by women agents**, through focus groups or one-on-one interviews. Ask follow-up questions about specific challenge areas and the support required. *Refer to Appendix 3 for a sample data collection questionnaire.*
- 2. Gather data** (i.e., your baseline) **on the following key metrics:**
  - number of sales activities undertaken by women agents per week;
  - number of sales closed by women agents per week;
  - weekly/monthly commissions earned by women agents;
  - out-of-pocket spending by women agents per week/month.
- 3. Analyse the data to understand trends (i.e., gaps in women's sales performance and large out-of-pocket spends), and develop a list of solutions.** Ensure that women agents are included in the brainstorming process. Solutions might include transportation support (such as allowances or company vehicles), financial support towards phone airtime, or free or partially subsidised demonstration kits.
- 4. Assess the financial investment required for each solution** and how much sales would need to increase to make the upfront investment worthwhile. Shortlist one or two options.
- 5. Carry out a pilot for selected solution(s)**, ideally with a group of at least 10 women agents (depending on the size of the sales team). Include men if that is appropriate or important.

6. **Analyse changes in sales performance** by monitoring participating agents' sales data on a weekly/monthly basis, and interview agents on how the solution is working for them, what is not working, and what needs to be improved.
7. Assess how the solution needs to be adjusted (e.g., higher transportation allowances), and **improve the solution** as necessary.
8. **Continue to periodically assess** sales performance and other metrics to determine impact.

## Tips to Overcome Possible Challenges

### Financial management

If the strategy fails to yield sales numbers that justify the financial investment, try to make adjustments to the travel allowance or other support before deciding to discontinue implementation.

### Coordination of support

If leads or managers are miscommunicating or not communicating information on the available support to agents or relevant stakeholders, then host formal training sessions and produce structured communications. It can also be useful for leadership to hold regular check-ins with leads and managers as well as directly with agents. Regular issuance, filing, and verification of receipts for allowances are other ways of ensuring accountability.

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## STRATEGY 3: Promoting Women Sales Agents' Safety

### The Business Challenge

Women sales agents often face safety risks, notably the risk of sexual harassment<sup>6</sup>. They also often face gender-based discrimination

from customers, colleagues, or managers; a common example is people not acknowledging women as capable sales agents and therefore distrusting their product knowledge.

The presence of sexual harassment and gender-based discrimination negatively impacts women agents' ability to perform sales activities effectively and safely, lowering women agents' job satisfaction and affecting their wellbeing, confidence, and sales performance.

Harassment, including sexual harassment by customers, is difficult for agents to address when they are conducting sales activities in public spaces. However, companies are well-placed to proactively promote the safety of their agents and employees.

### The Proposed Strategy

The strategy promotes women agents' safety by instituting an anti-sexual harassment policy, creating a protocol or roadmap for the prevention of harassment, and building the capacity of both management and the wider team to proactively tackle gender-based harassment. These steps should be based on a consultation process with women sales agents and company management and/or the core operational team.

### Expected Impacts

- An **inclusive company culture**
- Improved **safety of agents**
- Improved **motivation, work satisfaction, loyalty, and retention** of commission-based agents

### Resource Requirements:

- During a 3-12 month implementation period:
  - 3-4 hours per week by agent managers and sales leads for implementation and ongoing monitoring
  - 3-4 hours per week by middle/upper management for policy development, sign-off and launch, implementation of action points and ongoing monitoring
- Very minor cash investment (i.e., <\$100) if company wants to print out policy and training materials

<sup>6</sup> The term 'sexual harassment' (as used in this guide) includes unwanted touching or assault.

## Case Study: ImpiPower



### Company intro

ImpiPower is a Zimbabwe-based company providing affordable renewable energy solutions, including off-grid solar lighting. ImpiPower's distribution is handled by a team of agents who operate as independent business persons, purchasing products from ImpiPower and selling them at a profit.

### Business challenge

Interviews with sales agents revealed that sexual harassment, discrimination, and disrespectful behaviour from customers were major challenges for many women agents. Men customers harassing women agents is common in many contexts<sup>7</sup>, and the problem is not unique to Zimbabwe nor ImpiPower's areas of operation.

In many instances, this affected ImpiPower women agents' ability to carry out sales activities safely and effectively, impacting their sales performance and general well-being, and as a result, the company's retention of women agents.

### Strategy

With technical assistance from VfW, ImpiPower implemented an Anti-Sexual Harassment Policy and Protocol as well as an Action Plan for operationalising the policy and practices, and trained the team members in charge of implementing these.

### Key activities:

- Interviews with women and men agents to identify challenges faced by women in the field.
- Determination of how to address the identified challenges in a way that would both support agents and improve their performance.
- Creation of an Anti-Sexual Harassment Policy and Protocol to prevent and address sexual harassment of agents in the field. The document defined sexual harassment and outlined forms of misconduct, the company's principles on the subject, the grievance mechanisms being implemented, the disciplinary consequences of harassment, and a suggested implementation plan.
- Carrying out of an online training and design workshop for ImpiPower's leadership, HR, and agent management teams, including collaboratively developing an Anti-Sexual Harassment Action Plan. The action plan included suggestions such as training for employees, agents, and managers; posting an anti-harassment policy statement at the office and shops; offering options for women agents to travel with others; check-ins from managers; bystander intervention training for witnesses; collaborations with women's and community organisations; video cameras at the office; and, legal support available to agents.

### Results:

The strategy is still in the process of being implemented. The expected impacts include improved reputation of ImpiPower as a company committed to women agents' safety and welfare, improved performance by women agents, and improved recruitment and retention of women agents.

<sup>7</sup> For example, please see: <https://nextbillion.net/off-grid-solar-women-sales-agents/>

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*“If [the Anti-Sexual Harassment Policy is] clearly implemented and rolled out, there will be an increase in sales and women agents coming on board, because this is a barrier for them to work in the field. This will then increase sales for agents and the organisation.”*

**– Hope Nyasha Mawerera, Admin Manager, ImpiPower**

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## How to Implement

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- 1. Conduct an assessment of field-level challenges and barriers that women agents face**, including any forms of sexual harassment and discrimination. The assessment can, for instance, cover: sources, locations, occasions, times, and forms of harassment, discrimination, or abuse. This includes data collection with women agents and other relevant staff members (e.g. HR, agent managers), as deemed appropriate and culturally sensitive. Above all, ensure the confidentiality of any information shared in this assessment (e.g., use anonymous tools, such as online surveys that do not request identifying information). Conversations with agents could be led by women team members.
- 2. Analyse data<sup>8</sup> to identify key challenges faced by women agents in the field.** This includes, but is not limited to, details of incidents and forms of sexual harassment and discrimination. It includes both measures taken by the company in promoting women agents’ safety and challenges faced by the company in doing so.
- 3. Develop a policy and accompanying action plan** that responds to the specific forms of harassment identified in the assessment, including harassment by customers. *Please refer to Appendix 4 for a sample policy and action plan.*
- 4. Provide in-depth training and annual refresher training** on the new or existing policy and protocol with the entire team, including agents. The HR lead or an external agency or expert should deliver this training.
- 5. Consider introducing operational solutions**, such as agents working in pairs or groups (particularly in less safe situations and areas, for example deserted places or at night), purchasing airtime for agents and staff as a security measure and to report any incidents, and exploring operational support for women agents to travel more safely to sales locations (*see Strategy 2*).
- 6. Undertake a biannual or annual assessment** (including women and men agents and other relevant stakeholders such as agent managers) to measure the impact of these actions. This may include assessing changes in agents’ experiences, perceptions, and behaviours. If gaps exist, take appropriate measures, which might include: facilitating the reporting of incidents more safely and easily, training relevant stakeholders to address incidents, introducing bystander training for women and men agents and staff, and connecting with local NGOs and support groups working in the field of sexual harassment for learning and resources.

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<sup>8</sup> This analysis should be conducted by someone with expertise in human resource management, and in the area of gender-based violence or sexual harassment in particular. If you are seeking external support, you should find someone with this profile or at least with human resources expertise. This is particularly relevant in cases where allegations concern staff members.

## Tips to Overcome Possible Challenges

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### Reluctance to speak up and report incidents

If women and men hesitate to speak up about forms of violence and harassment experienced, particularly due to fear of stigmatisation or retaliation from co-workers, clearly establish zero tolerance for sexual harassment as a core company value. This should be emphasised in periodic HR and management communications to the team. Next, operationalise this, which can include: creating anonymous mechanisms for reporting harassment, ensuring that all necessary information about these mechanisms is clearly communicated to agents, and underlining that measures are in place to ensure anonymity and protect from retaliation those who speak up. Fostering trust in the system is also critical; this can be achieved by promptly and comprehensively addressing complaints against staff.

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## STRATEGY 4: Digital Marketing to Women Customers

### The Business Challenge

Today, many LMDs are under-utilising digital marketing for reaching potential customers, and especially women customers. LMD marketing has traditionally relied on face-to-face interactions. While effective, this in-person marketing can be costly and time-consuming. **Digital marketing<sup>9</sup>, which can replace or supplement in-person sales interactions, represents an exciting market opportunity;** particularly as more and more low-income customers come online and use social media to learn about and purchase products.

### The Proposed Strategy

This strategy centres on deploying targeted digital marketing to women customers. It begins with conducting a sex-disaggregated analysis of key metrics for each of the platforms used by the company (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp) as well as doing market research with a gender lens. The business then leverages the findings to design targeted marketing strategies for women and men. The business can also further segment its analysis and marketing, rolling out distinct messages for sub-groups of women and men users, by age, urban vs. rural, or other characteristics.

### Expected Impacts

- Increased **sales** via digital platforms
- Improved online **brand image**
- **Improved outreach to and customer engagement** of targeted segments

### Resource Requirements

- During a 3-12 month (or longer) implementation period:
  - If done in house: 4-8 hours per week by the social media/marketing team and 3-4 hours per week by middle/upper management for supervision
  - If external support: 3-4 hours per week by middle/upper management for supervising the external expert's work, and 4-8 hours per week for subsequent learning and application of content by the in-house team
- Cash for social media analysis and strategy development and implementation, if the business hires external support
- If paid posts are used, the company can pay at least USD 50 per week

<sup>9</sup> The GDC's Digital Services Catalogue includes a range of third party platforms that can help with LMD communications, marketing and other customer-facing activities.

## Case Study: Econome



### Company intro

Econome seeks to improve the lives of millions of households across Sub-Saharan Africa through sales of quality, affordable, and socially and environmentally beneficial products for lighting, cooking, sanitation, clean water, and productive use. The company's distribution model consists of commission-based sales agents, the majority of whom are women.

### Business challenge

COVID-19 lockdowns kept agents from pursuing in-person customer interactions and sales presentations, reducing the company's overall sales and revenues. Though this came to light due to the pandemic, Econome also realised that it was a broader business challenge. The company saw the importance of digital marketing as a way of reducing sales costs and expanding their customer base.

### Strategy

Econome, with technical assistance from VfW, developed and piloted a targeted Facebook marketing strategy that used differentiated messaging for women customers. The idea was to deploy digital marketing to partially replace or supplement traditional in-person marketing both during the pandemic and in the future.

### Key activities

- Creation of a database showing social media metrics, such as page likes, post likes, post comments, queries regarding products and product orders; each disaggregated by sex where possible).
- Engagement of a local digital marketing expert to analyse the metrics in depth using the Facebook Insights analytics tool and, from this analysis, to develop a targeted online marketing strategy.
- In-house development of targeted content that included images featuring women agents and customers, and product messaging aligned with women's known interests in and reasons for choosing different products (e.g., from sales trends and observations, the company knew that women were more interested than men in cookstoves).
- Piloting of content via unpromoted and promoted Facebook posts to both women and men, with continuous tracking and analysis of user engagement data to assess impact (e.g., views, engagement, likes, comments, and leads on paid ads).

### Results

- Over the first four weeks, during which five paid posts and six organic posts were rolled out, **the number of people reached through Facebook rose from 74 to 20,993** and **the number of post engagements from 9 to 870**. The ad spend during the first two weeks was just over USD 60. Previously, Econome had spent USD 200 but did not receive the same traction as they lacked knowledge on how to target specific customer segments with the ads.
- After six weeks of rollout, user engagement on Facebook increased remarkably. The **total number of page followers increased** approximately **115%**, from 422 to over 1000.



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*“VfW’s support helped us rethink digital marketing and sales. We are seeing tangible results... On Facebook, we are now worlds apart and we have a lot more visibility... We are no longer strangers in people’s minds.”*

**– Linda Wamune, Founder, Econome**

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## How to Implement

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- 1. Track key metrics<sup>10</sup> to identify products and messages that appeal more to women than to men.** For a complete list of key metrics to track, please see **Appendix 5**. Several platforms are useful for this tracking. Hootsuite is a dashboard that allows you to track metrics across all your social media accounts and has both free and low-cost account options (there are also other such tools available). If your only social media is a Facebook business page, Facebook has a built-in Facebook Audience Insights tool. Alternatively, a digital marketing expert can undertake this analysis.
- 2. Gather and review insights from any market research you have done with women.** If you have not yet done such research, see **Appendix 6** for guidance on how to apply a gender lens to market research.
- 3.** Based on analysis of these key metrics, other market research, and the company’s experience and knowledge of women customers’ preferences and what messaging appeals to them, **develop a targeted marketing strategy for specific customer segments**, including gender-specific market segments (i.e., men and women). Please refer to **Appendix 7** for guidance on developing gender-responsive social media marketing.
- 4. Develop marketing content.** Develop the posts themselves, be they paid or organic (free), for the specific customer segments. The messaging, photos, graphics, and/or audio-visual content of each post should be based on analysis of women customers’ product preferences and requirements, and the pitches that appeal to them. Please refer to **Appendix 7**.
- 5. Pilot targeted posts** on social media. Testing a minimum of 3-5 promoted posts, with each live on the page for 5-10 days is recommended to understand viewers’ responses to different types of content. Ad spend vs. reach and the number of post engagements (clicks) are good metrics to evaluate the performance of adverts (promoted posts) at the end of this period.
- 6. Consider how this same content can also enhance sales agents’ success.** For example, agents can be trained to use WhatsApp and then each social media post can be shared with them via a single WhatsApp “broadcast list”; each agent can then forward the post to their prospects and customers.
- 7.** Regularly track engagement metrics, **analyse the impact of the digital marketing strategy on sales** (lead generation and conversion), and revise the approach as needed. This data can be analysed in Hootsuite or a similar tool, or within a company’s Facebook or Instagram account. If using WhatsApp Business, an expert can set up a company’s WhatsApp Business API to measure live chat statistics and chat to conversion rate, amongst other metrics.

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<sup>10</sup> Examples: Number of page likes, followers or fans, number of post engagements (clicks), audience insights by region/city, gender and age group, ad spend vs. reach

## Tips to Overcome Possible Challenges

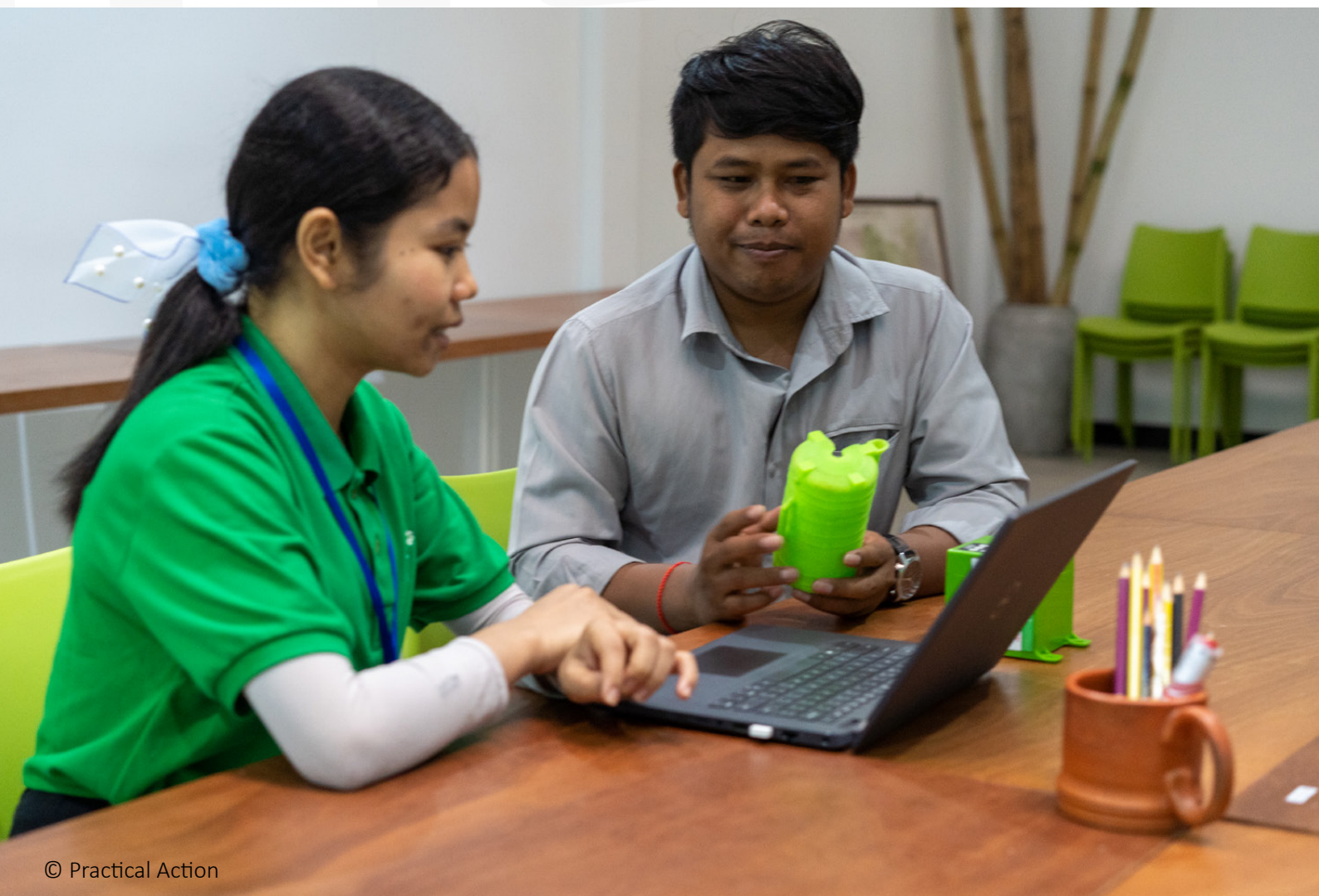
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### A lack of in-house social media expertise

If the LMD lacks a social media team or experience analysing social media engagement metrics, **consult Annex 6 for tools and guidelines**. Alternatively, if resources allow, the company could engage the services of a local digital marketing agency to conduct the analysis, design a targeted social media strategy for men and women customer segments, and potentially even support strategy implementation or train the in-house team.

### Insufficient resources for promoted adverts or posts

The company may lack the financial resources required for regular paid advertising on social media platforms, resulting in a low number of views. Please note: Posts that are not paid receive much lower traction than paid posts because the algorithm prioritises paid posts. In this case, plan the use of available resources for strategic paid (also called “promoted”) posts that go to the heart of the company’s sales priorities. An expert can help identify optimal advert placement timeframes that can achieve results while minimising ad spend. It may also be possible to seek external funding to support the digital marketing strategy.





## STRATEGY 5: Gender-Inclusive Recruitment of Women Sales Agents

### The Business Challenge

LMDs often struggle to recruit and retain women sales agents. Sales is a public-facing job — which is often seen as a man’s role — and requires interaction with male customers/strangers. Companies can also find it difficult to effectively on-board and retain women applicants due to women facing barriers of more limited mobility, higher risk of harassment, and time poverty due to disproportionate household labour.

Despite these challenges, LMDs stand to benefit from improving the proportion of women in their sales forces. As discussed in the introduction, women agents often achieve superior performance compared to their men counterparts, improving the company’s bottom line.

### The Proposed Strategy

The strategy is to ensure that the recruitment process for field-level sales agents addresses specific barriers that women agents may face, as well as adopts best practices in identifying potential women candidates. Furthermore, it ensures that after selection, women agents enter into a receptive environment, are given training, capital, and ongoing support for their role, and are duly recognised for good performance.

### Expected Impacts

- Higher percentage of sales agents with superior **performance**, leading to increased **sales and revenues**
- Higher **retention** of women sales agents

### Resource Requirements:

- During a 3-12 month (or longer) implementation period:
  - 4-8 hours per week by managers involved in the recruitment process (including time spent on unconscious bias training, creation or iteration of hiring tools and documents, etc.)
  - 3-4 hours per week by middle management and 3-4 hours per week by upper management, for recruitment process supervision
- No cash investment is required for the gender-inclusive recruitment process, if done by the in-house team and if partnerships with networks and organisations are leveraged for sourcing applications
- Company can consider offering cash incentives for referrals from current sales agents

## Case Study: Yellow

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### Company intro

Yellow distributes solar home systems in Malawi and Uganda, via its team of over 900 sales agents. Yellow also facilitates access to other key products and services, including smartphones and solar-powered televisions.

### Business challenge

In Malawi, very few women applied for the solar sector sales agent job. This was attributed to women lacking access to a smartphone (a prerequisite for the job), the common perception that it was a man's job, unsupportive attitudes amongst spouses and community members, and challenges in using functional clothing (trousers) in the field due to cultural norms and prohibitive costs. That said, Yellow women agents performed outstandingly compared with their men counterparts.

### Strategy

In 2019, Yellow rolled out an “agent scouts programme”, rewarding agents and recruiters who referred candidates successfully hired as agents. They published the programme through posters that included both messages on recruiting more women agents and key statistics on female applicants and contracting rate. The next year, with funding from the Norwegian government's Energy and Environment Partnership Trust Fund (EEP Africa), Yellow implemented a large-scale digital inclusion programme called Project Khumbo, offering digital skills training to young women and girls in various regions. Through the training programme, participants were encouraged to apply for solar agent opportunities at the company. Four female agents served as “Project Khumbo Ambassadors”, providing ongoing support to the participating young women and girls. Furthermore, many in the agent scouts programme leveraged Project Khumbo to more effectively recruit women sales agents.

### Key activities

- Creation of “agent scout” financial incentives and launch of “agent scouts” programme.
- Revision of incentive amount offered to scouts to further increase the success of the referrals programme.
- Selection of Yellow women agents as “Project Khumbo Ambassadors”.
- Gender-inclusive job advertisements for sales roles (i.e., pictures of women agents in action and a statement encouraging women to apply).
- Digital skills training to 592 young women and girls (conducted by project ambassadors and the operations team), and distribution of nearly 400 smartphones to programme participants.
- Support to all women sales agent candidates through Project Khumbo, provided by current agents and the operations team, for candidates to better understand training content and the sales role as well as overcome challenges candidates may face, such as in using smartphones and sending GPS coordinates.
- Running competitions and publicly recognising top-performing agents, including women agents.

### Results

- In 2018, Yellow had just one woman agent in Malawi. After the 2019 roll-out of the gender-inclusive recruitment strategy, **the company recruited 11 women agents in 2019, 94 women agents in 2020 and 88 women agents in the first half of 2021.**

- To date, the company has **185 contracted women agents** in Malawi, which represents **22% of the total sales force**. These women serve as role models for other women in the community. Over time, Yellow aims to increase this percentage to at least 30%.
- Women agents are strong performers. Between June 2020 and May 2021, women agents contracted through Project Khumbo **closed over 11,500 sales deals**, amounting to USD 113,000. **Eight of the sales team's 18 top performers** (defined as having closed 500 sales or more each) are women, representing far beyond the 22% of Yellow's sales force that women constitute.

## Learnings

- **Basic literacy is necessary** for young women to learn to use smartphones productively and conduct sales activities. Furthermore, building **digital skills and digital inclusion (including smartphone access) is often critical** to bringing more women into field-level sales agent roles, particularly after COVID-19. This needs to be done intentionally, in a way that may not be required for men because of the pre-existing gap between men and women's access to digital technologies<sup>11</sup>.
- **Adapting the company's recruitment strategy and processes is key.** This includes having gender-inclusive job descriptions, as well as adapting recruitment and on-boarding processes to address challenges faced by women agents.
- **Creating a democratic, inclusive organisational culture that values empathy and teamwork** helps men agents to respond positively and support recruitment efforts targeting women. When men are bought-in and are actively supportive of specifically recruiting women, the process of bringing more women into the sales force becomes easier.
- In addition to **training, mentoring and one-on-one support to women agents by existing agents** or the operations team at company headquarters ensures that women are able to be effective sales agents in contexts where it is considered a man's job. **This support must take into account requirements more specific to women**, such as the need for instruction in local languages and technical support related to smartphone use.

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*“Becoming more gender-inclusive, specifically in the renewable energy sector, requires great intention, passion, and focus...we've seen what such intention can yield through the strategies we have implemented.”*

**– Cynthia Makunganya, Head of Malawi Operations, Yellow**

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<sup>11</sup> See Global Distributors Collective's webinar on “Gender-smart strategies in last mile distribution” for more information from Yellow and Deevabits on how to enable women sales agents' access to smartphones and digital skills development.



## How to Implement

- 1. Set explicit hiring targets for women sales agents** and ensure these are communicated internally and externally.
- 2. Draft gender-inclusive job descriptions and advertisements for open roles.** This includes using inclusive language, publishing the salary and benefits, outlining key skills and preferred skills separately, highlighting the ability to maintain work-life balance, screening for discriminatory criteria that can create bias in the selection process, and including an equal opportunities employer statement. The **Gender Decoder** is a free online tool that can be used to automatically review a job description using a gender lens.
- 3. Advertise through channels that reach women**, including local NGOs and women's groups and networks.
- 4. Ask existing agents for referrals** and offer incentives (e.g., bonuses) for successful referrals of women candidates.
- 5. Collect sex-disaggregated data on where women candidates saw the job posting.** Analyse trends and use this information to maximise reach to women candidates in future recruitment cycles.
- 6. Ensure that the screening and shortlisting process is inclusive and free of bias.** To achieve this, create a diverse hiring committee, set targets for women candidates to be shortlisted, eliminate interview questions seeking personal information (such as marital status and family situation), create an inclusive evaluation rubric, and provide hiring managers with unconscious bias training.
- 7. Highlight all company protocols and practices that logistically support women agents in the field and ensure their safety** (see **Strategies 3 and 4**). Highlight these while seeking applications from women and during the selection process, including in interviews.

## Tips to Overcome Possible Challenges

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### Pushback from men sales agents

If men agents feel that deliberately seeking to recruit women for a certain position is unfair and discriminatory against men, this could impact the company's ability to recruit women. It could also potentially lead to a disharmonious workplace environment after women are on-boarded and limit women's ability to pick up crucial skills and tips from colleagues (especially if most of the work force is men).

To address this, companies can explain how important it is to ensure equal opportunities for women (and that it is not discrimination against men), emphasise the business case for bringing more women into the sales team, undertake continuous awareness-building and conversations with men agents to reduce misconceptions, build a sense of company values and culture, and involve men in the recruitment and training of women agents to foster a sense of responsibility and buy-in. Companies should also ensure that in their quest to close the gender gap, standards are not lowered in sales force recruitment and performance assessment.

### Resistance from women candidates' spouses, family members, or community

Whether a passive lack of support or overt resistance, this can negatively affect women applying for roles, accepting job offers, performing effectively, and staying on at the company. Addressing this can be very difficult, but there are steps an LMD can take. Company awareness-building activities in the community and with families are key, as is involving families in the recruitment process to instil greater confidence in the company and the sales agent role. (*For best practices for these activities, we recommend page 64 of "Gender Equity and Male Engagement: It Only Works When Everyone Plays".*<sup>12</sup>) Companies can emphasise the economic and social value of women's participation in paid work for the family and the community. This includes, for example, women's impact on the well-being of their immediate and extended family members (e.g., educational outcomes) as well as acting as role models within their communities. To build confidence and cooperation, spouses can also be invited to participate in and contribute to the sales agents' work activities.

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12 "Gender Equity and Male Engagement: It Only Works When Everyone Plays" published by the International Center for Research on Women in collaboration with Cartier Philanthropy is available at <https://www.cartierphilanthropy.org/uploads/media/5acb7ba53fb8f/icrw-maleengagementbrief-webready-v5-150dpi.pdf>.

## Conclusion

The guidance here demonstrates the multiple and varied entry points for LMDs and SMEs to apply a gender lens to their business operations and shows that lean experimentation and iteration are often useful when piloting new strategies. We hope this guide and the included resources are helpful to LMDs, SMEs, partners, and funders, providing inspiration and ideas for starting or expanding gender lens activities. Funders have a key role to play in directing further resources to LMDs to support continued innovation and adoption of gender lens activities.

Going forward, we invite readers of this guide to engage with the GDC platform, fellow GDC members, and other practitioners to build our collective knowledge of how to promote gender inclusion in business and to contribute your own examples and experiences as you proceed. When gender equality becomes a core part of business operations, all of us – businesses, individuals, and society at large – stand to benefit.

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# Appendices

## APPENDIX 1 (FOR STRATEGY 1):

# Tool for Collecting and Using Data from Women Sales Agents to Develop Training Materials

## Sales Agent Interview Guide on Best Practices in Selling and Pitching to Men and Women Customers

### How to use this interview guide

In order to understand the differences in sales approach/practices between top performers and other agents, **use this questionnaire to conduct interviews with top-performing women sales agents** as well as with sales agents with lower sales performance.

### How to analyse and use the insights

Scan the interview responses to identify key insights for each of the main research questions, looking for **common responses among the top performers** that differ from the responses of lower performers. For example:

- What are the main assertions used in the sales pitch for men customers and women customers, respectively?
- Are there **gender-specific product preferences**, and if so, what are they?
- Are there **gender-specific differences** in pitching strategies? This includes differences in pitching strategies employed by women rather than men agents (language, approach, behaviour employed, persuasion tactic, etc.) and differences in agents' interactions with women and men customers. If so, what are they?

Insights you develop from the top performers' common responses should be listed in one document and incorporated into standard sales scripts and related training modules. For specific best practices identified, if a skills/capacity gap exists in the broader sales team, **training modules and content should be developed to mainstream the best practice** across the team.

### Interview guide

1. Which products do you sell?
2. Imagine that I am a prospective customer and perform your sales pitch for each product that you sell. (Note to interviewer: Please take notes on the content of the pitch, as well as your observations on other aspects of pitching, such as the opening line/introduction, line of initial questioning, other specific behaviours, body language, etc.)
3. Which products do men typically buy? Which ones do they usually ask you about?
4. Which products do women usually buy? Which ones do they usually ask you about?
5. What are the reasons for these preferences among each gender group?

6. If you have noticed any such differences, have you used this to tailor the way you do your sales pitch/ conduct your sales activities? In what way have you done this?
7. Do you pitch the product differently to men and to women? That is, do you ever say something different to women (or alternatively, to men) in order to make a product appeal to them more/convince them to buy?
8. Have you noticed any specific product preferences among men and women?
9. In your experience, what strategy works best in convincing men to buy a certain product? This could be a sales approach, language, persuasion tactic, etc. Which products does this apply to – all products or specific ones?
10. Similarly, what strategy has worked best for you in convincing women to buy a certain product? This could be a sales approach, language, persuasion tactic, etc. Which products does this apply to- all products or specific ones?
11. Are there any behaviours or practices that have worked well with women customers specifically?
12. Similarly, are there any behaviours or practices that have worked well in your dealings with men customers?

## APPENDIX 2 (FOR STRATEGY 1):

# Step-By-Step Sales Pitch and Best Practices for Women Sales Agents

## Step-by-Step Sales Pitch

### Preparing for sales activities

- Always **wear company merchandise** (t-shirts, caps, etc.) during sales activities in order to appear professional and earn the trust of prospective customers.
- If you are meeting a group (such as a women's savings group), **approach your point of contact in the group ahead of time** in order to plan a meeting, so that the members are expecting you.

*Note: This document was developed on the basis of best practices used by women sales agents but can be used for men as well. In addition, the guidance is general for women and men customers, although included are specific tips for selling to women customers.*

*While this document relates specifically to the sale of energy access products, due to the portfolio of the company involved (Deevabits), the principles apply across sectors and other product categories.*

### Understand the customer

- Try to assess if the individual fits your target customer profile. Before approaching a customer or visiting a house, ask yourself: **Is this a household with limited access to electricity (because of expense or other factors)?**
- After approaching the customer or knocking on their door, try to **understand the following through the sales interaction/conversation** with them:
  - What source(s) of energy do they use for cooking, lighting (household or business), operating machinery, etc.? What are the challenges they are facing with these source(s) of energy?
  - Do they have access to grid-based electricity or off-grid sources of power?
  - Do they face challenges around power cuts?
  - What is their specific need? What problem are they trying to solve?
  - Is there a need for reliable lighting for their family or business?
  - Do they have enough cash for a deposit?
  - Do they have enough income to make payments?
  - Do they have the power to make the final purchasing decision, or at least influence it directly (especially women)?
  - Have they used this, or similar products before? (If not still using, why wasn't this product successful?)

### This will help you understand if:

- They fulfill all/some of the criteria for your target customer profile
- Their need fits the products that your company can offer
- They are involved in the decision-making process about purchasing electricity
- If you determine through your assessment that the customer is actually not a good fit for your product, be sure to:

- Close the conversation politely and efficiently; you don't want to spend excess time with a customer who you know is not a fit, although you want to ensure you are leaving a good impression of yourself and the company regardless of the outcome of the conversation with any potential customer.
- Thank the customer for their time.
- Ask the customer if they know of anyone who may be interested in the product – family members, neighbors or friends? If possible, get contact information.
- Be sure to keep a record of the customer's name/address, and why they were determined not to be a fit. Gathering and sharing that information internally is important for the company, as it can help clarify who the ideal customer is, as well as identify possible gaps, which the company may want to consider for future sales iterations.

### Open the conversation

- **Start by greeting the customer/group properly**, and introduce yourself and the company. The person – regardless of the gender – can be considered a customer if they meet the target criteria and are involved in the decision-making about electricity purchasing. Tell the customer your name, where you come from, what you do, and about the company you represent. Tell the customer what kind of products you are selling and introduce the products to them briefly.
- Then, **ask the customer if they have time to speak to you**, and offer to contact them at a different time if they do not (you can ask if they would be interested in hearing more, offer them your card, and ask for their number).

### If the customer is interested, you can introduce the pitch

- **Explain the disadvantages of using traditional sources of energy** and compare them with your clean energy product(s). Explain how your products solve the challenges that come with traditional energy sources like kerosene, wood, charcoal, etc. Talk about the cost difference/savings, positive health impacts, advantages for children's studies, etc. tied to your products.
- **Talk about the features and benefits of your product(s).**
  - Talk about the USP— pricing, battery life, etc. and explain how your product compares with that of competitors to demonstrate why the customer should choose your product.
  - Talk about the warranty and after-sales service you offer.
- **Tell them about the pricing and payment plan.** This includes the deposit amount and daily payment rate(s).
  - Emphasise the affordability of your pricing.
  - If relevant, talk about the advantages of your payment methods (such as the advantages of mobile money).
- After talking about the different products and their prices, **ask the customer which one they like the most.** This will give you a sense of their interest.
- If the customer is interested but does not have money upfront for a deposit, **advise them on their options for raising money to pay the deposit.**
- While pitching to men and women, **use information or hooks that typically appeal to each group** based on the experience of top-performing sales agents from your team (see Appendix 1).
- If the customer is interested and/or wants to know more, **share your phone number** with them.
- If there is interest, **demonstrate the product and how it works** using demo samples or short video clips of the product in use.

- **Tell the prospective customer how other people have benefited from the product.** Offer to connect them with people in the community who have used the product and can speak about its benefits. Ideally, you should ensure they speak to people they are acquainted with – their neighbours, friends, relatives, and fellow members or leaders of savings groups, church groups, or other local cooperative associations they may be part of – as this will inspire greater confidence in the product. If this is not possible, show them short video/audio recordings of clients speaking about a product’s benefits or how it has helped them.

### Tips for pitching to women

- Often, women are able to make purchasing decisions for low-priced products but must consult male family members (e.g., their husband) before deciding to purchase more expensive products.
  - **For product purchases for which women are the sole decision-makers,** ensure that you pitch these products to as many women as possible.
  - **If the woman must consult someone else before deciding to make the purchase:**
    - Guide her on how to approach the topic and direct the decision-making within the family. Focus on highlighting the benefits/convenience of the payment and pricing plan and payment methods. This is also a useful strategy for future collections, as women are more likely to be responsible for repayment.
- While pitching to women who are dependent on their husband’s decision/resources for the purchase of a product, ensure that the prospective customer has understood the product’s features and how it works, so that she is able to explain it to her partner. Find the best time to call her and help her explain the product to him, if necessary. The evening is often the best time to call, because the whole family is together.
- Focus on **the family aspects** and the benefits of the product for children’s schoolwork.
- Talk about **the health benefits** both for women and children, in particular.
- Talk about **the usefulness of the product for income-generating activities,** especially for their shop/kiosk if they have one.
- Emphasise that **clean energy/solar power is the modern way** of lighting homes and shops.
- **Provide a calculation of the savings** the customer can make in comparison to their current energy expenditure.
- Talk about any **security-related benefits.**
- Talk about any entertainment-related benefits.

## General Best Practices for Sales Activities in the Community

### Tips for the week ahead

- Approach sales activities in a structured way by **creating a schedule for yourself.**
- **Set weekly and/or daily targets for yourself;** for example, a target for the number of households that you want to visit in a day for door-to-door sales.
- **Make a plan for market sales, women’s groups, and door-to-door activities,** defining the days of the week on which you will visit each. To do this, consider your own daily schedule, daily/weekly targets, availability for sales activities and how to build these around your non-work related commitments, and the following:
  - When are people more likely to be at home? Are people likely to be at home (on their homesteads or working on their farms) in the morning?
  - When are most people likely to be at the market? Are most people likely to be at the market in the afternoon and evening?

- When are women's groups meeting, i.e., which days of the week and at what times? Which ones do you want to visit?
- Which days are market days in your town/area? Can you spend the entire day or most of the day at the market on these days of the week? Do you want to cover multiple markets?
- Would you like to spend specific days of the week at market(s) and specific days of the week conducting door-to-door sales?
- Would you like to spend specific days attending women's group meetings?
- **Plan regular product demonstrations**, such as at the market/on market days, and plan additional product demonstrations if customers request them.
  - Attending markets or other convening areas for sales consistently (at the same time/day each week, for example) is important, as many customers may need time to make decisions, or may need to view multiple demonstrations to be convinced of the sale. Consistency also builds a sense of reliability and trust with customers and helps legitimize your company, and product, to a new customer.
- If you are unable to attend a market day or spend time at your stall while at the market, **is there someone there who can help you and step in for you?** If you can identify a trustworthy person whom you know well and who is willing to help, train them to sell the products and undertake demonstrations when you are not there. You can split the commission from the sale with them as an incentive.

### Tips for sales-related interactions with prospective customers

- **Ensure that your product knowledge is flawless**, and seek support from the head office team if you need help improving.
- **Dress smartly and in company merchandise** (t-shirts, caps) to appear professional to customers.
- **Demonstrate confidence** when you approach prospective customers.
- **Pay attention to the customer**; listen to their questions, ensure you are addressing their doubts and concerns in order to be convincing.
- **Follow-up** with interested customers.
- **Proactively seek referrals** from your clients and contacts. Incentivise existing customers for referrals by, for example, offering to cover one of their installments if they make a referral that results in a sale.
- **Train your women customers to be ambassadors** for referrals of family and friends in exchange for an incentive or reward. Ambassadors could be a point of contact at a women's savings group, or a well-known and able woman customer in a particular neighbourhood or community.

### Tips for effectively closing a sale

- **Collect contact details if the sale is not closed.** If you cannot close the sale at the time, ask your prospect for their contact details and set up a follow-up time.
- **Be proactive in following up.** Call them or visit them in order to close a sale. Always ensure that you follow up. The number of follow ups, or time needed, will depend per product (as some products typically require a longer sales cycle); learn from other sales people within the company what an average amount of time or number of follow ups is needed to achieve success and tailor your approach based on this data and experience.

## APPENDIX 3 (FOR STRATEGY 2):

# Tool for Collecting Data on the Challenges and Barriers Faced by Women Sales Agents

## Interview Guide to Conduct Conversations with Women Sales Agents

### How to use this interview guide

Identifying the main operational challenges and barriers that women sales agents face can help them to reach their full sales potential, meet their targets, stay on at the company longer, and improve their wellbeing. Use this questionnaire to conduct interviews with women sales agents to better understand the challenges they face.

### How to analyse and use the insights

Analyse the interview responses to identify common challenges, barriers, and support requirements. The key challenges identified and suggestions or requirements for support put forward by agents should be carefully considered and used to develop additional ideas for support.

### Interview guide

1. What specific challenges do you and other women agents face in conducting sales activities? What prevents you from increasing your sales numbers or meeting your sales targets? Please provide details and examples.
2. Prompts for interviewee: access to transport/high costs of transportation, availability of food, accommodation, cultural norms, fear of violence and harassment, discriminatory attitudes, restrictions imposed by family or objections from family members/husbands, household duties that leave no time for sales, etc.
3. Have you observed any differences between your own experience of being a sales agent for this company, and your male colleagues' experiences? Do people (staff and/or customers) treat you the same?
4. What specific challenges are you facing right now in conducting sales activities and in meeting your sales targets, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic?
5. What forms of material support from the company would make it easier for you to perform your job as a woman sales agent? [Material support can include, for instance, phone credit or other allowances that facilitate your sales activities.]
6. What forms of training support from the company would make it easier for you to perform your job as a woman sales agent?
7. In your experience, what are the most common reasons for women agents to join the company? Are there different reasons why men and women agents join?
8. In your experience, what are the most common reasons for women agents to leave the company? Are there different reasons why men and women agents leave?
9. Do you have any other feedback for the company, particularly on how it could support you better?



## APPENDIX 4 (FOR STRATEGY 3):

# Anti-Sexual Harassment Policy and Action Planning Tool

*Note: This appendix has two parts, the Sample Anti-Sexual Harassment Policy and the Action Planning Tool. The Sample Anti-Sexual Harassment Policy should be amended based on your company's context and employment structure.*

*To effectively use the Anti-Sexual Harassment Policy, your company should also dedicate resources to building buy-in and commitment among management, communicating with all staff using various channels, and delivering staff training. The Action Planning Tool is meant to facilitate the policy being put into practice, and to guide companies on tangible steps for addressing sexual harassment in the workplace.*

## Sample Anti-Sexual Harassment Policy Table of Contents

38	1. The Policy Statement
38	2. Purpose
39	2.1 Definitions
41	3. Grievance mechanisms for harassment, including sexual harassment
42	4. Investigations of harassment and sexual harassment allegations
43	5. Disciplinary consequences
43	6. Non-retaliation stipulation
44	7. Grievance mechanisms, investigations, and consequences for (sexual) harassment against a third-party (including customers and vendors)
44	7.1. Grievance mechanisms
44	7.2. Investigations and consequences
45	8. Resources Consulted

## 1. The policy statement

At [Name of Company], we value all employees as unique individuals, and we welcome the variety of experiences they bring to our company. [Name of Company] is committed to providing a safe environment for all its employees free from discrimination on any ground<sup>13</sup> and from harassment at work including sexual harassment. [Name of Company] will operate a zero-tolerance policy for any form of sexual harassment. Any person found to have harassed another will face disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from employment.

All complaints of sexual harassment will be taken seriously, promptly investigated, and treated with respect and in confidence. No one will be victimised<sup>14</sup> for making such a complaint.

[The employer] believes that sexual harassment is unacceptable, undermines the dignity of an individual, is morally wrong, unlawful and has a detrimental impact on individuals, on the workplace and for the organisation. Sexual harassment is unethical, unprofessional and undermines [the employer's] organisational values and aims of [insert key aims and values]. For these reasons, [the employer] takes a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment.

[The employer] is committed to promoting an environment free from all forms of sexual harassment and recognise that it is responsible for protecting all workers from sexual harassment.

Any instances of sexual harassment, including those carried out by clients, customers, casual workers, contractors or visitors, as well as employees of [employer] will be dealt with in accordance with this internal policy.

This policy covers full-time and part-time workers, night staff and those working atypical hours, consultants as well as freelance, temporary, or agency contract workers. Sexual harassment can occur in a work situation, during any situation related to work such as at a social event, outside of the workplace such as a site visit or visiting a client's home or place of work, and on social media or any online communication such as emails, video conference calls, phone calls, or instant messaging platforms.

## 2. Purpose

This policy describes how we aim to protect our employees, agents, customers, vendors, and any other stakeholders<sup>15</sup> from harassment, including sexual harassment. It includes addressing employee and agent harassment coming from people outside of our company. It encompasses harassment taking place in-person, over the phone, via email, or through a messaging app. It includes harassment taking place within company premises or outside, including company conferences or training but also at agents' shops, in public spaces, and at customer premises.

In this policy, we indicate how to recognise harassment and how to report incidents. We also explain how we investigate claims and protect victims. We will make every reasonable effort to train and inform all employees regarding these policies.

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13 Including but not limited to on the grounds of race, sex, gender identification, sexual orientation, national origin, ethnicity, native language, religion, age, disability, economic status, marital status or other relationship status, citizenship, genetic information, pregnancy, health (including – suspected or confirmed – HIV status) or any other characteristics protected by law.

14 Victimisation is when someone treats another badly because of complaining about discrimination or of helping someone who has been the victim of discrimination (source)

15 Regardless of level, function, seniority, status, or other characteristics like race, gender, and sexual orientation.

## 2.1. Definitions

**Harassment** includes bullying, intimidation, direct insults, malicious gossip, and victimisation. This is not an exhaustive list, but here are some instances that we consider harassment:

- Sabotaging someone's work on purpose
- Engaging in frequent or unwanted advances of any nature, including sexual
- Commenting derogatorily on a person's ethnic heritage or religious belief
- Starting or spreading rumours about a person's personal life
- Ridiculing someone in front of others or singling them out to perform tasks unrelated to their job (e.g., bringing coffee) against their will

Any employee that makes a bad faith complaint of inappropriate behaviour (discrimination or sexual harassment) toward another employee is considered to be undertaking harassment. A bad faith complaint is one where the complainant knowingly lies or misrepresents that situation to accuse a co-worker, damage someone's reputation, or for personal gain.

The [Insert employer] recognises that false allegations of sexual harassment are rare, that victim-blaming is common and that victims are often worried they will not be believed because of biases and myths in our society, or that they will be punished if an investigation does not conclude there was sufficient evidence to make a finding. The [insert employer] will always assume that reports have been made in good faith unless there is evidence to the contrary.

**Sexual harassment** is unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature, which makes a person feel offended, humiliated, and/or intimidated. Sexual harassment can involve one or more incidents and actions constituting harassment may be physical, verbal, and non-verbal. Anyone can be a victim of sexual harassment, regardless of their sex and of the sex of the alleged harasser. Sexual harassment may also occur between people of the same sex. What matters is that the sexual conduct is unwanted and unwelcome by the person against whom the conduct is directed.

Sexual harassment takes many forms. Examples of sexual harassment include insinuating, proposing, or demanding sexual favours of any kind as well as stalking, intimidating, coercing, or threatening another person to get them to engage in sexual acts. Other examples of conduct or behaviour that constitute sexual harassment include, but are not limited to:

### Physical conduct

- Unwelcome physical contact including touching, patting, pinching, stroking, kissing, hugging, fondling, or inappropriate touching
- Physical violence, including sexual assault
- The use of job-related threats or rewards to solicit sexual favours

### Verbal conduct

- Comments or jokes on a worker's appearance, age, private life, etc.
- Sexual comments, stories and jokes
- Sexual advances
- Repeated and unwanted social invitations for dates or physical intimacy
- Pursuing or flirting with another person persistently without the other person's willing participation.
- Insults based on the sex of the person
- Comments on sexuality or gender in a derogatory or objectifying manner
- Sending sexually explicit messages (e.g., by phone)

### Non-verbal conduct

- Display of sexually explicit or suggestive material or messages
- Sexually suggestive gestures
- Whistling or leering
- Prolonged staring/ogling
- Taking photographs or videos of another person without their knowledge or consent, where the purpose of taking a photograph of someone is to "obtain sexual gratification, or to cause humiliation, distress, or alarm"<sup>16</sup>

The most extreme form of sexual harassment is sexual assault<sup>17</sup>, rape<sup>18</sup>, and assault by penetration<sup>19</sup>. These are serious crimes, and our company will support employees who decide to press charges against alleged harassers.

**Alleged harasser** refers to any person who has an allegation made against them. The alleged harasser cannot be described as an "alleged harasser" until after there has been a formal disciplinary decision. Using the word "alleged" does not imply that the victim has made up an accusation.

**Victim** is used to describe a person who has decided to share their experience of sexual harassment, whether informally or formally in the form of a complaint. At [name of employer] we do not refer to people who make reports of sexual harassment as "complainers" or "complainants" because we welcome their reports and we reject the all too common characterisation of reporters as "trouble-makers". When people decide to report sexual harassment they normally do so out of a sense of wanting to make the workplace better for themselves and for others.

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16 Ministry of Justice. "Upskirting' law comes into force." GOV.UK. April, 11, 2019. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/upskirting-law-comes-into-force>

17 Sexual or indecent assault are defined as an act of physical, psychological, and emotional violation in the form of a sexual act, inflicted on someone without their consent. It can involve forcing or manipulating someone to witness or participate in any sexual acts. Consent requires both people agreeing to what's happening by choice, and having the freedom and ability to make that choice.

18 Rape is when a person intentionally penetrates another's vagina, anus or mouth with a penis, without the other person's consent.

19 Assault by penetration is when a person penetrates another person's vagina or anus with any part of the body other than a penis, or by using an object, without the person's consent.

### Key principles pertaining to sexual harassment

We take all allegations of sexual harassment and sexual assault extremely seriously. We uphold the following principles in this regard:

- **No one has the right to sexually harass our employees.** This includes customers, vendors, or other stakeholders.
- **Sexual harassment is never too minor to be dealt with.** All complaints will be taken seriously, promptly investigated, and treated with respect and in confidence.
- **Sexual harassment is about how we make others feel.** Many do not consider behaviours like flirting or sexual comments to be sexual harassment, thinking they are too innocent to be labelled that way. This doesn't make the alleged harasser any less responsible for their actions. If something you do makes your colleagues uncomfortable, or makes them feel unsafe, you must stop.
- **We assume every sexual harassment claim is legitimate unless proven otherwise.** We listen to victims of sexual harassment and always conduct our investigations properly.
- **Harassed employees will not be further victimised or penalised.** We will fully support employees who were sexually harassed and will not take any adverse action against them. For example, we will not move them to positions with worse pay or benefits or allow others to retaliate against them.
- **Enablers of sexual harassment are as much at fault as alleged harassers.** Managers and HR are obliged to prevent sexual harassment and act when they have suspicions or receive reports. Allowing this behaviour to persist, or encouraging it, will result in disciplinary action. Anyone who witnesses or suspects an incident of sexual harassment should report it via one of the specified mechanisms in section 3.

### 3. Grievance mechanisms for harassment, including sexual harassment

We acknowledge it's often hard to come forward about these issues for fear of not being heard; upsetting managers, colleagues, or friends; and challenging company culture. Our company will do everything possible to stop sexual harassment and any other kind of harassment from happening, while supporting victims of harassment. By raising your voice on this issue, you are helping our company build a fair and safe workplace for you and your colleagues.

If you (or someone else) are harassed or sexually harassed via email/phone/in-person by **a colleague (for all cases against a third-party, including customers and vendors, please refer to section 7)**, you can choose to speak with any of the following individuals:

- **Alleged harasser:** If you feel comfortable to do so, and suspect that an alleged harasser does not realise they have committed harassment, you could talk to them directly in an effort to resolve the issue (e.g., explain why their behaviour was unacceptable, and how it made you feel, and that you would like them to stop it). This may not be feasible in unequal relationships (e.g., between a supervisor and her/his employees).
- **HR:** Feel free to reach out to HR in any case of harassment, no matter how minor it may seem. For your safety, contact HR as soon as possible in cases of serious harassment, if feasible, and if your manager is involved in your claim. Anything you disclose will remain strictly confidential.

- **External, neutral resource:** If you do not feel comfortable reporting your complaint to HR (for example, because someone from HR is involved in the incident), then you should contact the designated external resource person who is tasked with dealing with such incidents.

You also have the option of filing an anonymous complaint via a letter, email, or other communication to HR or the company's anonymous grievance mechanism. Please be as specific as possible with regard to the allegation, to allow this complaint to be properly investigated.

#### **Examples of types of information to include:**

- Date, time, and location of incident (estimates/approximates are fine if you do not have exact details)
- Name of alleged harasser (and victim, if you are a witness)
- Description of the event, to the best of your memory/ability
- Any potential witnesses or if you think the incident might have been captured on CCTV
- Any other relevant evidence (e.g., screenshots of emails or text messages, any photographic evidence, audio recordings, etc.)

***Please note that this list is for guidance only; it is not a checklist. You should always report a grievance even if you do not have all of this information.***

In particularly serious cases, (e.g., if you are a victim of or witness sexual assault or in case of a life-threatening situation), and you want to report to the police, our company will provide any possible support until the matter is resolved. In any case, we will ensure that you are not victimised and that you have access to relevant evidence admissible in court, such as office security video footage, if needed/available, or emails (without revealing confidential information about other employees).

#### **4. Investigations of harassment and sexual harassment allegations**

In case of complaints involving [name of company] employees (***for all cases against a third-party, including customers and vendors, please refer to section 7***), including complaints received from external sources (e.g., customers or suppliers), once the complaint has been received, [*HR or person designated by company*] must carry out the required investigations and follow-up. The process will be carried out according to the following guidelines:

- Create a complaint file, for which the confidentiality and privacy of the parties involved is safeguarded, with a detailed record of the facts.
- Discuss and agree on next steps including pursuing a (in)formal complaint.
- Take any appropriate actions to prevent retaliation or prohibited conduct from recurring. This may include, but is not limited to, ensuring that the victim and alleged harasser do not work in proximity that may cause discomfort to the victim (e.g., by moving the alleged harasser to a different working location; asking either party to work from home, where possible and by mutual agreement; allowing paid leave for the victim, etc.)

- Individually interview the people involved.
- Issue a report to the *[Head of HR or other relevant senior manager]* with all the information collected during the investigation, the findings, and the concluded recommendations.

It is the responsibility of *[HR or person designated by company]* to ensure the procedure has been duly followed, and there is a secure record of all actions taken.

## 5. Disciplinary consequences

Punishment for any instance of discrimination, harassment, or sexual harassment will follow a thorough process of investigation. While reports of any inappropriate behaviour will be taken seriously and treated in good faith, any employee accused of inappropriate behaviour will nevertheless be treated with respect throughout the investigation. Depending on the severity and credibility of the accusation, the accused employee may be suspended with or without pay for the duration of the investigation.

The nature of the sanctions will depend on the severity and extent of the harassment. Suitable deterrent sanctions will be applied to ensure that incidents of sexual harassment are not treated as trivial. Certain serious cases, including physical violence, will result in the immediate dismissal of the alleged harasser.

Anyone who has been found to have sexually harassed another person under the terms of this policy is liable to any of the following sanctions:

- verbal or written warning
- adverse performance evaluation
- reduction in wages
- promotions and/or salary increases freeze for a period of time
- transfer
- demotion
- suspension
- dismissal
- mandatory relevant training

Depending on the severity of the situation, we may also transfer alleged harassers or take other appropriate action to protect the victims, in consultation with the victims and in adherence to their wishes, as well as the safety of other employees. We will apply these disciplinary actions uniformly (i.e., equal penalty for same offenses regardless of alleged harassers' or victims' identity and/or characteristics).

## 6. Non-retaliation stipulation

*[Company name]* prohibits retaliation<sup>20</sup> against any person who files a (sexual) harassment complaint. We encourage employees to come forward and participate in investigations, and we will make all reasonable efforts to keep investigations confidential, and to protect people who report grievances.

Whether accusations are true or false, our company wants to prevent victimisation and other retaliatory behaviour toward the employee, as we want to ensure an environment in which employees are comfortable speaking up about any issues.

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<sup>20</sup> Retaliation in general is defined as any kind of negative action against a current or former employee that takes the form of punishment, and creates a hostile, threatening, or uncomfortable environment as a result of their reported complaint.

Retaliation in the workplace may be expressed in a variety of ways. These include but are not limited to:

- Victimization
- Termination or illegal retraction of benefits
- Reduction of compensation
- Poor work performance evaluation
- Exclusion from company events or meetings
- Defamation of character (in cases of former employees)

If an employee retaliates against another employee for reporting harassment or discrimination, that employee will face serious consequences up to and including termination. Disciplinary action may also apply to employees who have repeatedly filed false or unreasonable ('bad faith') complaints against us or other employees, and are proven to have been intentionally lying, falsifying evidence, acting maliciously, or for personal benefit. This is to ensure that employees do not take advantage of our policies and always act in good faith.

## 7. Grievance mechanisms, investigations, and consequences for (sexual) harassment by a third-party (including customers and vendors)

This pertains to (sexual) harassment by a third-party (i.e. outside the company) including but not limited to customers, vendors, and agents.

### 7.1. Grievance mechanisms

If you (or someone else) are harassed or sexually harassed, whether by **a customer or vendor or other stakeholder(s)** via email/phone/in-person, cease interactions with them and/or leave, if possible. You can choose to speak with any of the following individuals:

- **Your manager:** Your manager will assess your situation and will contact HR, as soon as possible.
- **HR:** Feel free to reach out to HR in any case of harassment. For your safety, contact HR as soon as possible in cases of serious harassment, if feasible. Anything you disclose will remain strictly confidential.

You also have the option of filing an anonymous complaint via a letter, email, or other communication to HR or the company's anonymous grievance mechanism. Please be as specific as possible with regard to the allegation, to allow this complaint to be properly investigated.

In case of **agents being harassed by (prospective) customers** via phone/email, cease interactions with them and report the incident(s) to your manager. In case of in-person harassment, leave immediately, if possible, and/or stop the interaction and report it to your manager. Seek support from bystanders and/or fellow agents, if/as appropriate.

In particularly serious cases (i.e., if you are a victim of or witness sexual assault or in case of a life-threatening situation), which you want to report to the police, our company will provide any possible support until the matter is resolved. In any case, we will ensure that you are not victimised and that you have access to relevant evidence admissible in court, like office security video footage, if needed/available, or emails (without revealing confidential information about other employees).

### 7.2. Investigations and consequences

In case of complaints made by agents and employees against customers and/or (prospective) vendors, *[name of business]* will prioritise the safeguarding and support of its agents and employees. Depending on the resources and abilities of *[name of business]* to conduct its own investigation, and contingent upon the wishes of the agent/employee, the case may be referred to the appropriate law enforcement agency. Where available and desired by the victim, the *[HR or the agent's manager]* will also connect the victim to support and advice (e.g. local organisations working with victims of sexual harassment, local hotlines for sexual harassment victims, etc.).



Examples of third-party harassment (i.e., a case against a customer, vendor, agent, other stakeholders), could include any such behaviour as outlined on pages 2 and 3 of this document.

In the case that agents or employees wish to report an experience of harassment involving a customer, vendor, agent, or other external stakeholder, this should be reported to HR or line manager. *[HR or the agent's manager]* will then take one or more of the following actions:

- Listen to the victim
- Discuss the case with the victim as soon as possible, and help them to record the details of the case
- Raise the matter with the alleged harasser, explain why their behaviour was unacceptable, and warn them of the potential consequences
- In cases of more serious and/or repeated violations, [name of business] may cease dealings with the customer
- Where a case involves a vendor, the incident may be reported to the individual's supervisor and/or company. This may include a request that in addition to the alleged harasser immediately ceasing their behaviour, that the company assign another point of contact. If necessary, [name of business] will cease all dealings with the vendor, if we are not satisfied that the case has been dealt with appropriately.
- [name of business] will take necessary steps to ensure the alleged harasser is prohibited from having contact with the reporter. This could include:
  - Providing the employee/agent with a new sim card/ mobile phone number
  - Changing the employee/agents' work contact details (email address, etc.)
- If and where necessary, and with the express consent of the reporter, [name of company] may escalate the case and report it to the relevant law enforcement agencies

## 8. Resources Consulted

This sample anti-sexual harrasment policy was Inspired by and includes adaptations from:

- Vfw's Anti-discrimination and Anti-harassment Policies in Kenya and the Philippines and best practices document
- ILO. "Sample Sexual Harrasment Policy." Accessed February 19, 2021. [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---ilo-suva/documents/policy/wcms\\_407364.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---ilo-suva/documents/policy/wcms_407364.pdf)
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- Ontario Human Rights Commission. *Policy on Preventing Sexual and Gender-Based Harassment*. Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2013. Accessed February 19, 2021. <https://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-preventing-sexual-and-gender-based-harassment-0>
- Trades Union Congress. "Preventing Sexual Harassment—An Implementation Framework for Union Reps." Accessed November 21, 2021. <https://www.tuc.org.uk/resource/preventing-sexual-harassment>
- University of Toronto Governing Council. *Policy on Sexual Violence and Sexual Harrasment*. University of Toronto, 2019. Accessed February 19, 2021. <https://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/sites/default/files/2020-03/Sexual%20Violence%20and%20Sexual%20Harassment%20Policy%20on%20Jan%20201%202020.pdf>
- Workable. "Sexual Harrasment Policy. Workable." Accessed February 19, 2021. <https://resources.workable.com/sexual-harassment-policy;>

## Anti-Harassment Policy Action Planning

To implement and roll out the policy, select the most appropriate action options outlined below. Each action is listed under the level of resources (time, cash investment, and/or closeness to current business practices) and knowledge required to implement it. Furthermore, it is indicated if each action is a quick win and/or high priority.

### Key:



Quick win



High priority

See the table on [page 51](#) that further delineates the level of resources required for each.

### Actions requiring low resources/knowledge



**Carry out risk assessments in all locations** where [name of business] operates, taking into consideration any potential or existing concerns that staff may have, e.g., pertaining to remote locations; accessibility; mobile phone signal, etc. [Name of business] will never force agents or employees to work in locations where they do not feel safe and will take all steps possible to mitigate risks.



**Train and inform existing and new employees regarding this policy**, for instance by incorporating it in staff/agent onboarding training. Refresher training sessions (e.g., annually) are also advised for all staff, to refresh and reinforce the messaging. Each employee must certify annually that they have read and agree to uphold all company policies, including those regarding harassment. Take this opportunity to encourage employees to speak up about harassment, including from customers, to foster an open and honest company culture.



**Ensure all external suppliers, vendors and customers are aware that [name of business] has a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment.** Post a statement about the Anti-Harassment Policy in visible locations (ex. at the front door), both at the office and at retail shops/kiosks. Develop an electronic version of the statement to be used online, including on the company website, social media, emails, and WhatsApp.



**Provide agents with guidance on how they can help to reduce the risk of (sexual) harassment.** This may be in the form of online or offline training, informal peer-led sessions, or ad hoc knowledge dissemination.

- Encourage agents to carry a mobile phone or two-way radio at all times. Where possible, consider ways the company can enable this (e.g., through a phone purchase scheme).
- Share tips on safe and unsafe transportation (e.g., avoid traveling in deserted transport at night in a rural/deserted area).
- Provide Dos and Don'ts for visiting customers' premises safely.
- Compile and share a list of local service providers and helplines that employees/agents can contact in case of harassment.

**Encourage and enable agents to support each other.** This may look like:

- Agents "buddying up" or traveling together in small groups. Connect agents that want to explore a certain area, in case they would like to travel together; and facilitate the sharing of contact details between agents working in the same area (with their express consent).

- Identify experienced agents in different areas who can act as a ‘champion’ or leader, in supporting and training other agents on dealing with sexual harassment. If possible, assign a regional/area-specific supervisory agent to support others, as needed.

**Have managers/supervisors check in with agents in the field** (particularly in rural, insecure, or deserted areas), via text or phone calls. This could mean two daily calls initiated by the manager/supervisor at agreed-upon times, if feasible (e.g., around midday and close of business/end of route).

**Gather and share information** on challenging routes/areas/clients, and how respective agents dealt with the situation. Keep agents abreast of any security unrest or road blockages that could affect their route-planning.

**Identify ways to partner and collaborate with trusted individuals and organisations** including women’s organisations and/or community organisations and leaders working on sexual harassment. For example, there may already be materials and/or training on sexual harassment that your employees/agents can participate in your community. Below are some free training resources for reference:

- **Prevention of Sexual Harassment and Abuse of Authority** – This self-learning course is designed to raise awareness of the UN’s zero tolerance of workplace harassment, sexual harassment, and abuse of authority.<sup>21</sup>
- **Top 15 Sexual Harassment Training Courses** – List of 15 free and paid courses to choose from, depending on company needs.<sup>22</sup>

### Actions requiring medium resources/knowledge



**Provide all employees and agents training on sexual harassment (including what it is and how to prevent it) and self-defence.** This could be part of employees’/agents’ onboarding training. This may include training on how to deal with situations they are likely to encounter, as well as “bystander intervention”.

**Provide bystander intervention training** to help witnesses of harassment identify and support victims of harassment. For example, employees may be trained to disrupt harassment by making themselves known to the alleged harasser and asking the alleged harasser’s ‘target’ for help with something. In doing so, bystanders can stop the harassment, demonstrate their awareness of the issue, and, if feasible, talk to the alleged harasser later about their behaviour.<sup>23, 24</sup>

**Provide (select) managers with comprehensive training on sexual harassment** so that they are better equipped to implement anti-sexual harassment policies effectively. This may include recognising the different forms of sexual harassment, dealing with complaints, legal requirements, how to deal with harassing customers, and how to support agents/employees during the complaint procedure and beyond. Affordable online training may be explored, if feasible.

Provide all agents with a defined monthly airtime covered by the company. If this is not possible and agents are facing cost challenges to having cell phone connectivity, explore **negotiating a rate with service providers to be offered to all agents** (particularly women) at a reasonable cost.

21 Agora. “Prevention of Sexual Harassment and Abuse of Authority” UNICEF, 2021. <https://agora.unicef.org/course/info.php?id=28780>

22 Erika. “Top 15 Sexual Harassment Training Courses.” EdApp Microlearning Blog. November 11, 2021. <https://www.edapp.com/blog/10-sexual-harassment-training-courses/>

23 Johnson, Stefanie, and Madera, Juan. “Sexual Harassment Is Pervasive in the Restaurant Industry. Here’s What Needs to Change.” Harvard Business Review. January 18, 2018. <https://hbr.org/2018/01/sexual-harassment-is-pervasive-in-the-restaurant-industry-heres-what-needs-to-change>

24 People + Culture Strategies. “Tolerating Bad Behaviour: Why Employers Should Not Ignore Signs of Harassment by Customers or Clients.” Strateg-Eyes. May 26, 2016. <https://www.peopleculture.com.au/tolerating-bad-behaviour-why-employers-should-not-ignore-signs-of-harassment-by-customers-or-clients/>

**Anonymously collect statistics and data** as to how the anti-harassment policy is implemented and whether or not it is effective. This may include keeping track of: the number of incidents, where they occurred and by whom, how they were dealt with, and any recommendations made. This will help evaluate the effectiveness of this policy and make any changes needed.

**Use prominently displayed video cameras** to deter harassment within the office and/or at shops.

**Consider providing legal support to victims** of sexual harassment, if needed.

Consider negotiating and **offering health insurance coverage for agents and employees**, to access in the case of sexual harassment. Otherwise, consider covering medical costs (including psychiatric support) for victims of workplace sexual harassment.

## Resource estimations for sample actions

	Resources Required <sup>25</sup>		
	Time Low = 1-2 hrs/week Medium = 3-4 hrs/week High = 5+ hrs/week	Cash investment Low = minimal Medium = <10K USD High= >10K USD	Closeness to current business practices Effort required to move away from business as usual
1. Train and inform all existing/new employees and agents regarding this policy. Encourage employees to speak up about harassment, including from customers. Clearly communicate that sexual harassment from any source, including customers, will not be tolerated.	Low	Low	Low
2. Post a statement about the anti-harassment policy in visible locations (ex. at the front door) at the office and at the agent shops. Develop an electronic version of those messages to be used online, including on social media, emails, WhatsApp, and others.	Low	Low	Low
3. Provide agents with sessions (possibly recurring, as needed) on how they can collaborate and how they can prevent (sexual) harassment.	Low/Medium	Low	Low
4. Have managers/supervisors check in with agents during their time in the field	Low/Medium	Low	Low
5. Identify and explore ways to partner and collaborate with trusted individuals and organisations including women’s organisations and/or community organisations and leaders working on sexual harassment.	Low/Medium	Low	Low

<sup>25</sup> Please Note: These are estimates, and resources will likely vary based on the specific strategy chosen.

6. Provide employees and agents (particularly women) training on sexual harassment (including ways to prevent it) and self-defense (may be part of employees/agents onboarding training). This may include training on situations they are likely to encounter and possibly “bystander intervention”.	Medium	Medium	Low
7. Provide a bystander intervention training, which trains witnesses of harassment on identifying and supporting the target of harassment.	Medium	Medium	Low
8. Provide (select) managers with comprehensive training on sexual harassment so that they are better equipped to implement anti-sexual harassment policies effectively.	Medium	Low/Medium	Low
9. Provide all agents with a defined monthly airtime covered by the company. If this is not possible and agents are facing cost challenges to having cell phone connectivity, explore negotiating a rate with service providers to be offered to all agents (particularly women) at a reasonable cost.	Low/Medium	Medium/High	Low
10. Anonymously collect statistics and data as to how the anti-harassment policy is implemented and whether or not it is effective. This may include keeping track of: the number of incidents, where they occurred and by whom, how they were dealt with, and any recommendations made. This will help evaluate the effectiveness of this policy and make any changes needed.	Medium	Low	Low
11. Use prominently displayed video cameras in a way to deter harassment within the office and/or at shops.	Low	Medium/High	Low
12. Consider providing legal support to victims of sexual harassment, if needed.	Low	High	Low
13. Consider negotiating and offering a health insurance coverage for agents (also employees) for cases of sexual harassment (at an affordable price), if available in the market. If not, consider covering medical costs (including psychiatric support) for victims of sexual harassment.	Low	High	Low



## APPENDIX 5 (FOR STRATEGY 4):

# Key Metrics to Track for Digital Marketing

We recommend that you gather information on the following metrics, to develop and refine a digital marketing strategy for specific customer segments. Use these metrics to analyse the performance of your current posts, in order to identify products and messages that appeal more to women than to men. Use these insights to inform your strategy when piloting new, gender-specific posts. They are appropriate for Facebook, Instagram, and other social media platforms.

*Note: Appendices 5-7 are complementary and designed to be used in tandem.*

## Key Metrics to Track

### General insights (not specific to your page or posts)

Audience insights by region/city, gender, and age group (which will help you to understand the demography of your current social media audience, in relation to your target audience)

Times when target audience are usually online (which will help to identify the best times to post)

### Page insights (specific to your pages)

Number of page likes (gender-disaggregated)

Number of page followers (gender-disaggregated)

Top performing content (posts)

### Insights specific to your campaign(s) and posts

Number of people reached, per campaign or post (ideally disaggregated by gender, age, region/city, to extent known)

Number of post engagements (clicks), per campaign or post

Ad spend vs. reach, per paid campaign

Cost per post engagement/click, per paid campaign

## APPENDIX 6 (FOR STRATEGY 4):

# Applying a Gender Lens to Market Research and Capturing Consumer Insights

## What does it mean to apply a gender lens to market research?

*Note: Appendices 5-7 are complementary and designed to be used in tandem.*

Applying a gender lens means considering how your activities respond to and impact women as well as men— rather than assuming that women and men will respond to and be impacted by business activities in the same way. For the purposes of this tool, “applying a gender lens to market research” includes the following activities:

- 1. Identifying your overarching research objectives.** These are the specific aspects you want to learn about that are useful for your business (see examples in the table below).
- 2. Defining the specific questions you want to ask to accomplish these research objectives** (*see examples of questions for each research objective in the table below*). Once you identify these questions, use them to populate the questionnaire or guide that you will use for your survey, focus group, or other data collection methodology (defined activity 3, below).
- 3. Designing your data collection plan to increase the likelihood of reaching women in your target market.** Identify the best locations and times to reach women and the methods that women are likely to respond to (e.g., considering, for instance, technology and literacy requirements), as well as ensure that the data collectors are women, if this will help women customers to be forthcoming with responses.
- 4. Collecting data in your target market, both from customers who pay for the product and end users of the product** (*in the case that paying customers and end users are different*). Do not assume that women and men customers have similar preferences or usage patterns. You can collect data from women and men customers, indicating on each survey collection instrument if it was completed by a man or woman (this way you can later compare women’s responses and men’s responses).
- 5. Studying the responses of women and men separately** (*this is called “sex-disaggregated analysis” or “gender analysis”*), in addition to carrying out aggregated analysis across all respondents. This will allow you to identify women’s different usage patterns and preferences. Use this analysis to inform decision-making and improvements in your product, marketing, and sales going forward.

Example Research Objectives and Specific Questions	
Research Objective	Corresponding Questions
<b>Women’s and men’s perceptions of products</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How satisfied are you with this product/ service?</li> <li>• On a scale of 1-10, how likely are you to recommend this product/service to your friend or family member?</li> </ul>
<b>Women’s vs men’s motivators for purchasing the product</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What made you decide to purchase this product / service?</li> </ul>
<b>Women’s vs. men’s sources of information</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How did you learn about this product / service?</li> </ul>
<b>How product is used by women vs. men</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How frequently do you use this product / service? What are the main things that you use it for?</li> </ul>
<b>Sales pitches for women vs. men</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you see as the 3 key benefits of this product for you and/or your family?</li> <li>• What do you think would convince your friends to use this product / service?</li> </ul>
<b>Customer service for women vs. men</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How would you rate the business’s after-sales support?</li> <li>• Which channel of after-sales support is most helpful (i.e., in-person conversation with agent, phone call, online chat, other)?</li> </ul>
<b>Marketing channels for women vs. men</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How did you first learn about this product (i.e., demonstration, in-person visit, Whatsapp, Facebook, phone call)?</li> <li>• How do you prefer to learn about new products? (i.e., demonstration, in-person visit, Whatsapp, Facebook, phone call)?</li> </ul>
<b>Pain points for women vs. men</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What don’t you like about this product and why?</li> <li>• What would you want to change?</li> </ul>





## APPENDIX 7 (FOR STRATEGY 4):

# Guidance on Developing a Gender-Responsive Social Media Marketing Strategy and Content

What are the key components of a gender-responsive digital marketing strategy?

*Note: Appendices 5-7 are complementary and designed to be used in tandem.*

- 1. Conduct gender-inclusive research to better understand women customers' product preferences, needs, usage patterns, and support requirements.** This could take the form of a.) a gender-specific customer habits and preferences study, and b.) an assessment of gender-specific customer social media habits and preferences. This would provide a solid basis for accurately tailoring messaging, and reaching and targeting women customers online.
- 2. Analyse sex-disaggregated social media user engagement metrics using free in-built analytics features and tools like Facebook Insights and Instagram Insights<sup>26</sup>** (refer to Appendix 5 for a list of key metrics to analyse and track). Ideally, you should disaggregate and analyse by other identity factors in addition to sex, such as age, geographical area (e.g., rural, urban) and income, as feasible.
- 3. Competitor analysis.** Analyse the pages and profiles of your competitors to identify social media best practices in the sector. Also, you can improve your ability to build your brand online and appeal to the different segments of your women and men target audience(s) (e.g., young rural women, men adults in urban areas, etc.).
- 4. Design tailored and segmented social media content accordingly,** including product advertisements, general posts, case studies or success stories, images, videos, online events, etc. These should be tailored to target the diverse needs, capacities, and pain points of different segments of your women and men audiences.
- 5. Develop a regular posting schedule.** It is important to plan your posts ahead of time and to develop a formal plan, calendar or schedule for the next 2 to 3 months. You can use Hootsuite to bulk schedule posts in advance for all your channels and easily duplicate posts as needed.

<sup>26</sup> Refer to the in-built analytics tools on Facebook and Instagram.

- 6. Maintain a steady stream of content.** Post frequently. Ideally, you should post at least once a day, or once in two days, in order to maintain strong visibility amongst your followers on social media. Viewing a second post may remind users to go back and purchase an interesting product that they may have seen on your page earlier. Post at times when women are usually online, and around important events or days for different audiences (e.g., Mother’s Day or International Women’s Day).
- 7. Keep abreast of interesting developments in the sector and post about them.** In addition to your own content and advertisements, occasionally sharing news on developments in the sector will keep your women and men audience interested and engaged. However, these posts should not make up more than 20% of your posts.
- 8. Regularly track and analyse sex-disaggregated user engagement to assess the impact of the strategy.** Ideally, you should check the analytics tools and keep track of or analyse metrics once a week or once every two weeks. Ideally, you should disaggregate and analyse the data by other identity factors such as age, geographical area, income, etc., as feasible.
- 9. Iterate and tweak your strategy** (especially your content and posting schedule) as needed, based on your ongoing analysis of the different segments of women and men users’ engagement metrics, in order to meet your targets.

## Guidance on Gender-Sensitive Framing of Social Media Content

### Messaging for Advertisements and Product Posts

**In order to appeal to women customers, focus on the specific interests and pain points of women.** It is important to go through a process of documenting what women customers want and to base this focus on data and anecdotes, rather than on assumptions, preconceived notions, or stereotypes. Please refer to Appendix 6 for more on this.

**Start the post with a hook to draw attention.** This could be a question, such as— Are you struggling to ...? OR Did you know that...? OR Would you like to...? The hook should touch on the main requirement or pain point of the diverse segments of your women and men target customers (e.g., young women, men in urban areas, older women in rural areas, etc.).

**Explicitly address how the product responds to the requirements/pain points of target customers.** For example, if the product saves the user time or money, and this is a major consumer pain point/ requirement for women, frame the post in a way that highlights this.

**Use concrete figures and percentages to underline your pitch wherever possible**, such as prices, discounts, and sex-disaggregated user satisfaction figures (e.g., “80% of \_\_\_\_\_ women and men users have saved an hour or more”; “90% of women or men users have saved at least USD \_\_\_\_ per month”).

**Draw attention to the unique features or benefits of the product.** Demonstrate how your product is a better deal compared to those of your competitors.

**Feature testimonials or quotes from different segments of customers, highlighting their positive experience with the product.** This highlights aspects that are important to women and draws the attention of prospective women customers. The post should ideally include a picture of the customer providing the testimonial.

Examples of questions to ask women customers in order to obtain these insights:

- What has your experience with this product been like?
- How has it changed things for you or your family?
- What are the main benefits of this product?
- Would you recommend this product to your friends/neighbours?

**Keep the sentences short and snappy** while capturing the message you want to convey.

## Using Gender-Inclusive Language<sup>27</sup>

**Ensure that men and women are equitably represented.** Aim for gender balance across examples, images, and testimonies used. If women are the main users or target customer segment, aim to use more pictures and testimonials of women than of men. Seek to mention the diverse segments of women and men (by age, race, ethnicity, religious beliefs, ability, rural/urban, etc.).

**Use an inclusive approach with pronouns.** Avoid gender-specific pronoun(s) such as “he, him, his, she, her, hers”, except when referring to a specific person. When referring to a ‘generic’ customer, use the pronoun “they” or “them”. This also supports the use of nonbinary language in pronouns.

**Use generic terms to describe people, jobs, and things.** Generics are nouns and pronouns that include women and men. Use humanity rather than mankind, sales representative rather than salesman, spokesperson rather than spokesman, etc.

**Where possible, challenge gender stereotypes in order to promote gender equality.** Challenge gender roles through messaging where there is scope to do so, such as the stereotype that only women manage the housework, or that only men serve customers at the shop at night, or that sales agent roles are more suited to men than women. To do this, for example, use images that show women in decision-making roles, i.e., speaking and in the foreground of the picture, rather than sitting/standing behind men or listening to men.

<sup>27</sup> Please refer to Value for Women’s Communications and Gender Checklist for more tips and guidance.

## Use of Images

*Before using anyone's image, it's critical to obtain the person's consent, both for ethical and legal reasons. This includes asking permission to photograph them, explaining how the photos(s) will be used, and ensuring that photos are appropriate. Verify local legal requirements on consent and strive to get consent in writing.*

### **Use images depicting the product, the customer using it and/or sales agents, whenever possible.**

Depict women actually using the product; this is particularly important if the product is not typically thought of as a 'women's product' (or vice versa, depict men using the product if it is not considered a 'men's product'). Photos of women sales agents are particularly important in contexts where the role of field-based sales agents is considered a man's job or is a male-dominated job. In these ways, images serve to challenge gender stereotypes.

In order to appeal to your range of customers, **use images of the different segments of women and men customers and/or agents, wherever possible**, to help prospective customers identify with your company. Seek to portray the diverse segments of women and men (by age, race, ethnicity, religious beliefs, ability, rural/urban, etc.).

**Use high-quality images**, professionally captured, if possible. Action shots (e.g., customers using the product or sales agents explaining how a product works) work just as well as, or sometimes better than, 'posed' photos. For all photos, make sure that the image is clear, bright, sharply defined/not blurred, and not too dark or light. Wherever necessary, edit the image to adjust light, saturation, contrast, etc., to improve the quality of the image available; you can use free online photo editing software, or tools like Adobe Photoshop.

### **Recommended image types:**

- **High quality images of women and men customers using the products in their homes, shops, or fields, or posing with the products.** Ensure that both women customers and men customers are pictured with the products, separately or together. Customers should be interacting with the product in their homes, and should be smiling/looking happy. At least some of the images should be of subjects looking at/facing toward the camera.
- **High quality images of sales agents demonstrating products to buyers.** Please include images of women agents demonstrating to individual women customers, or to a group of women customers. As far as possible, at least one of the two (the agent or the customer) should be facing the camera. The product should be clearly visible and identifiable in the image.

