



IIGS Gender Learning Brief:

Unlocking Business Resilience and Shared Prosperity through Gender-Diverse Agri-SMEs

Introduction

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are essential growth drivers in East African agri-food systems. However, many SMEs face persistent challenges such as unreliable supply chains, limited access to markets and constant struggle to access capital. Simultaneously, while women contribute significantly in agricultural production, this has not translated into proportional benefits or full economic empowerment—the ability to equitably access productive resources, influence economic decisions and earn a decent income.

As a result, women's potential as suppliers, employees, entrepreneurs, consumers and decision makers in agriculture remains largely untapped. The Implementing Inclusive Growth Strategies (IIGS) program, supported by the Visa Foundation and implemented by TechnoServe, was designed to address this dual challenge. It was built on a simple premise: gender inclusion is a catalyst for business performance.

IIGS partnered with 32 nutritious-food processing SMEs

Women's potential as suppliers, employees, entrepreneurs, consumers and decision makers in agriculture remains largely untapped.

in Kenya and Tanzania from 2023 till 2025 to unlock growth by making inclusion an integral part of how the businesses run. For IIGS this meant creating equitable opportunities for women and men across value chains, ensuring that everyone can participate meaningfully and benefit fairly from business growth. By providing a tailored mix of technical assistance, inclusive business planning and catalytic grants, IIGS encouraged SMEs to strengthen relationships with supply chain actors, create fair jobs, access finance, and expand access to nutritious food for Base of the Pyramid (BOP) markets.

This brief showcases core approaches, demonstrable results and actionable lessons for donors, implementers and Agri-MSMEs seeking to invest in gender-inclusive initiatives to drive sustainable growth and resilient food systems

The IIGS Approach- Embedding Gender Equality to Drive Business Growth

IIGS partnered with 32 food processing SMES (15 women owned/led, 11 male owned & 6 jointly owned) in Kenya and Tanzania.

The IIGS program implemented by Technoserve aimed to demonstrate how greater inclusion of women can be a catalyst for commercial growth and resilience in the agri-food sector. The program's overarching goal was to show how integrating inclusive practices into core business strategies drives both commercial success and social impact. To achieve this, IIGS partnered with 32 food processing SMES (15 women owned/led, 11 male owned & 6 jointly owned) in Kenya and Tanzania operating across diverse value chains such as dairy, grains, poultry, fisheries, edible oils, fruits and vegetables, nuts and baked products. IIGS recognized that for SMEs the primary driver is improving business performance, therefore

each intervention was framed through a business lens connecting inclusive practices directly to productivity, market reach and profitability. IIGS engaged businesses in a three step-process to enable them to identify and adopt strategies that expand opportunities for women and contribute to business growth. This process included: a diagnostic, making the business case for gender equality as well as targeted technical and financial support moving the SMEs from awareness to sustained action.



IIGS supported businesses showcasing their products at the 2024 Changamka Festival and engaging with the public.
(Photo credit: TechnoServe)

Pillar 1: A Diagnostic-Driven, Action-Oriented Foundation



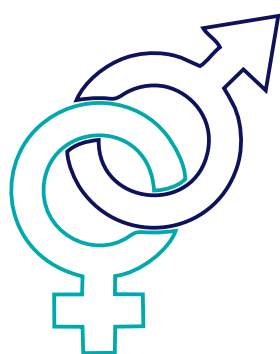
To select and support SMEs, IIGS first applied an inclusive business checklist to determine alignment with the program, assess business needs and ensure additionality. For the participating food processing SMEs, the program then used TechnoServe's Gender-Responsive Business Practice Diagnostic (GRD) tool, to establish a data-driven entry point for adopting business practices intentionally designed to create equitable opportunities for women and men that also drive commercial benefits.

IIGS applied the GRD with business leaders, to gain an understanding of women's and men's engagement within business operations. The results of the assessment were used to reflect on opportunities for SMEs to invest in greater inclusion of women to achieve

their commercial goals. The tool focused on internal and external business practices across five core themes: organizational equity, benefits to women across the value chain, business performance, supply chain performance and Base of the Pyramid (BOP) marketing. This process gave each SME a clear picture of its current performance and revealed concrete opportunities to advance gender-responsive business practices (GRBP).

By engaging decision-makers directly, the GRD process fostered ownership and accountability helping businesses link greater inclusion of women to their day-to-day operations and strategic goals. Each SME co-created an action plan with clear priorities, timelines and roles grounded in its own data and insights.

Pillar 2: Making the Business Case for Gender Inclusion



To secure genuine buy-in from SMEs, it was critical to frame greater inclusion of women as a performance lever influencing profitability and resilience of businesses. IIGS focused on making the business case for adoption of gender responsive business practices by demonstrating the commercial benefits.

To build this understanding, IIGS leveraged gender disaggregated data to showcase tangible returns on investing in inclusive practices efforts, including increasing women's participation. These positive impacts include increasing supply chain resilience, improving employee retention, increasing productivity and expanding market reach.

These discussions often became turning points, where SMEs leaders started recognizing inclusion of women as a lever in competitiveness and resilience enabling them to start adapting inclusive strategies over time.

Gender inclusive Business practices benefit business

Gender inclusive Business practices		Commercial Benefits	
	Inclusive supply chain participation		More suppliers and increased product volume
	Equitable resource and service delivery		Higher quality products
	Inclusive financial benefits		Motivated supplier, more sustainable supplier
	Safe and inclusive workplace		Loyal and motivated workforce
	BoP Marketing		Expanded market reach and increased product intake.

Pillar 3: Targeted Technical and Financial Support



This approach – which aims to advance women's economic empowerment – was embedded into the program's tools and approaches,

combining strategic planning, practical training and supportive finance to foster lasting inclusivity:

Strategic Planning Tools:

With support from IIGS, SMEs developed Inclusive Business Plans (IBPs) and Inclusive Marketing Plans (IMPs) strategic tools to include gender consideration across value chains. IBPs focused on upstream areas like sourcing and supplier relationships to increase opportunities for women farmers.

IMPs shaped downstream marketing decisions such as product design, affordability and distribution channels to ensure women's roles as suppliers,

Targeted Training & Coaching:

The program rolled out a Gender-Responsive Business Practices (GRBP) training for SME leaders. This was the cornerstone of the program's capacity-building efforts that included a 3 day in person workshop enhanced by virtual individualized coaching designed to build both the will and skill for gender inclusion.

This helped the SMEs refine and implement their action plans, troubleshoot challenges and track their progress ensuring that insights were translated into action.

Grants for Action:

To bring strategies to life, IIGS offered co-investment grants that were directly linked to the implementation of the inclusive plans developed.

The grants de-risked initial investment needed to operationalize these plans such as setting up new sourcing hubs or launching women-led distribution networks/models.

Evidence of Change: Transforming Perspectives and Practices

Key Impact Metrics at a Glance

IIGS results, mapped to the core areas of the Gender-Responsive Diagnostic (GRD):

The program's impact is evidenced by both quantitative metrics and powerful qualitative stories of change, demonstrating how gender-inclusive practices strengthen organizational performance and market reach.

Organizational Equity & Inclusion

220

Jobs created by women owned or led businesses (63%) of total jobs created.

21

Women-owned and jointly owned/led food processors received support from IIGS (66% of total food processors).

Supply Chain Performance

39,931

Smallholder farmers (SHFs) linkages from IIGS-supported food processors are women (58 % of total SHFs).

Business Performance

\$196,821.26

in finance (grants and loans) accessed by IIGS-supported food processors who are women-owned or jointly owned (50 % of total finance)

Women-owned or jointly owned (50 % of total finance accessed).

\$15,188,511

in sales by IIGS-supported food processors that are women-owned or jointly owned (57 % of total sales).

BoP Marketing

1394 (31%)

New BOP linkages by women-owned or jointly owned businesses
\$2.05M value sold to

Strengthening Supply Chains Through Gender-Responsive Sourcing

Investing in women's skills and participation directly contributes to supply chain resilience.

The success of food processors hinges on a dependable supply of quality raw materials, yet many SMEs often rely on informal sourcing practices that limit visibility, consistency and fairness especially for women small holder farmers (SHF). IIGS recognized this and prioritised shifting SMEs from

informal arrangements to more structured gender responsive sourcing models that enhance both reliability and equity.

IIGS supported SMEs to adopt more inclusive sourcing practices and tools such as the Inclusive Business Plans (IBPs). IBPs guided processors to formalize supplier registers, engage

women more directly, provide targeted quality training, set predictable collection schedules and clarify payment terms. These practical changes replaced informal arrangements with transparent, auditable systems that made sourcing fairer and more reliable for both processors and suppliers. In total, 8 IBPs were developed and implemented during the program period.

Participating SMEs strongly validated the approach, rating the usefulness of IBPs 4.75/5, citing improved coordination with women producer groups and stronger alignment between procurement plans and market demand.

A key insight from the program was that investing in women's skills and participation directly contributes to supply chain resilience. Women farmers demonstrated higher consistency in meeting delivery schedules, greater adoption of quality practices when trained and lower dropout rates reducing disruptions for processors during peak and lean seasons.

IIGS strategy generated substantial reach, across the program food processing SMEs sourced from 69,343 SHFs, of whom 39,931 (58%) are women. This progress reflects how intentional, transparent practices can reduce risk while building supply chains that are genuinely more resilient and more inclusive.

Caselet: Asili Dairy (Tanzania) - Sourcing with women in focus

Before IIGS: Asili Dairy raw milk sourcing collection relied on informal practices that included the use of wrong milk collection and transportation equipment which resulted in inconsistent supply and varied quality. Women suppliers were present but under-recognized and payment arrangements were not consistently transparent creating disadvantages for them.

Intervention: The business was looking to increase its overall milk collection from small holder farmers and strengthen supply chain reliability, seeing women as a valuable and reliable additional pool of suppliers. Guided by IBP and GRBP training, Asili introduced a women-focused sourcing approach which clarified quality-based payments, recruited women into sourcing and extension roles with training as well as established a new milk collection center supported by a co-investment grant from IIGS. Transparent quality testing and a digital payment platform were integrated to ensure fair and timely payments.

Result: The new sourcing model has helped in building trust with 40 new women suppliers who now benefit from transparent engagements and timely payments. Women now make up 70% of Asili's supplier base, with



An Asili Dairy milk collection center located near smallholder farmers, improving access, reliability, and fair participation for women SHFs. (Photo: [unintelligible])

the established new milk collection center run by a woman quality control personnel. For Asili this has translated into a more reliable, higher-quality supply the CEO noted

'IIGS support was pivotal for Asili Dairy enabling implementation of inclusive business strategies which strengthened quality control and expanded raw milk

intake. Strategic initiatives such as trade shows, partnerships with schools and churches as well as climate-smart practices further supported growth and resilience, all guided by the Inclusive Business Plan. This has helped us withstand drought with no reduced intake'

Building the last mile; Expanded Market Reach and Access to Nutritious Food

Inclusive marketing plans enabled SMEs to simplify the 4As (awareness, acceptability, accessibility, affordability) and rethink how they reach low-income consumers. The IMP process led SMEs to understand that their previous sales methods were based on assumptions about consumer behavior and were failing to connect with women, who are the primary decision-makers regarding household nutrition. With support from IIGS, 23 food processing SMEs adopted IMPs which provided a roadmap to bridge the gap between products and low-income consumers.

Businesses shifted from broad assumptions to leveraging consumer insights and data which informed, gender responsive strategies. This included designing approaches that truly fit how and where women shop

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When businesses intentionally design with women in mind, inclusion and commercial growth move forward together

such as placing products in local kiosks, having point of sale advertisements that were gender responsive, outlets near clinics, schools and feeding programs while introducing smaller, more affordable product sizes. To strengthen reach and trust, participating SMEs employed women and youth as last-mile sales agents while using social media marketing and in-store promotions to help low income consumers notice, try and adopt

their products. These shifts unlocked significant market reach creating 4,476 new BoP linkages including 1,394 (31%) driven by women owned or jointly owned businesses contributing to \$2.05 million in new BoP sales.

Across the broader portfolio, women-owned or jointly owned food processors generated \$15.18 million in sales 57% of all IIGS-supported food processing revenue. Beyond the numbers, the experience showed a simple truth: when businesses intentionally design with women in mind,

inclusion and commercial growth move forward together, expanding access to affordable, nutritious food where it is most needed.

Caselet: Global Organic Chicken (Kenya) - women & youth at the last mile

Before IIGS: Global Organic Chicken (GOC), a Kenyan food processing company specializing in organic poultry struggled to reach low-income markets. Distribution into BOP areas was limited and repeat purchases remained low due to limited brand visibility, insufficient consumer awareness and lack of direct engagement with women who are the primary decision makers for household purchases.

Intervention: Through the IMP process, IIGS helped GOC rethink how it reaches and engages low-income consumers. The IMP identified the strategic use of women and youth as last-mile sales agents to improve product awareness and trust. They were equipped with training on customer demos and tools (like trolleys) paired with route designs and basic safety protocols to strengthen outreach. In addition IIGS, supported GOC to enhance its brand presence through branding of its new Mombasa outlet, improved packaging materials, targeted social media promotion as well as facilitating participation in trade and local market campaigns

Result: As of the endline, GOC reported a 305% increase in sales of nutritious



Eunice Mukai, CEO of Global Organic Chicken, at the company's newly opened outlet in Mombasa. Phot credit; GOC

products and has expanded its distribution to reach more low-income areas, including opening an outlet in Mombasa. In addition, the business has strengthened its supply network by connecting with more suppliers in Nairobi and securing 40 new linkages including with major retail outlets such as Carrefour, which has further broadened the availability of nutritious food for a wider consumer base.

A Blended, Business-Led Model on Gender-Responsive Business Practices

To drive internal change, IIGS designed a Gender-Responsive Business Practices (GRBP) training around the five themes of the GRD tool. The training used a three-phase blended model consisting of pre-training virtual coaching, an in-person workshop and post-training virtual follow-up. Twenty-seven food processing businesses from Kenya and Tanzania participated, with every business starting with a gender responsive diagnostic to explore where inclusion was thin then moving through pre-training coaching à an in-person workshop à post-training follow up.

The GRD tool established a baseline, for instance the initial assessment revealed average low adoption rates for critical practices like monitoring benefits for suppliers (38%) and committing to worker safety (53%). Pre-Training coaching focused on

understanding current practices and identifying specific intervention areas.

The program applied the GRD with key decision makers in the businesses such as CEOs, which enabled SMEs to identify specific gaps and opportunities for strengthening gender inclusion in their value chain. In-Person Workshop entailed practical sessions focused on organizational equity, building relationships with suppliers, inclusive leadership, policies, marketing and sourcing.

Post-Training coaching allowed follow-up to support the implementation of the gender action plans. Participating SMEs nominated gender champions to attend the grouped coaching sessions which created safe spaces for them to develop

action plans, engage in peer learning and build a supportive community.

The training equipped SMEs with practical knowledge and tools such as policy templates, leading to concrete inclusive changes. Kenyan participants reported a 95% increase in confidence when speaking about gender inclusivity in their business while Tanzanian participants reported 87% increase in knowledge on setting and monitoring gender-responsive targets and practices from pre-training to post training feedback.

The model succeeded because it linked diagnostics to concrete action plans, and commitments from SMEs to adopt practices after the training.



Participants in discussion during a GRBP workshop. (Photo credit: TechnoServe.)

Company Spotlight

Kenya's food processor Gender-responsive Business Practices (GRBP) Diagnostic and Action Plan
In August 2023, a Gender-Responsive Business Practices (GRBP) Diagnostic was conducted with a food processor in Kenya. The assessment revealed

low scores in monitoring benefits to women and men suppliers (0%) and in commitment to worker safety (67%). To address these gaps, IIGS supported the processor in developing a targeted action plan:

Objective	Action/Process	Achievement
Develop a Gender-Based Violence & Harassment (GBVH) policy.	Gender Champion to form a committee to review and adapt GRBP training templates, get legal approval, and train all employees.	A balanced committee (3 men, 3 women) from the factory and management was formed to review the policy before legal approval. A GBVH policy was created using the template provided.
Implement gender-disaggregated data collection to understand the supply chain's gender dynamics.	Gender Champion to collect updated data from farmers, disaggregating by gender (men, women, youth) and land ownership status.	Collaboration began with a data partner to track gender distribution and youth participation among suppliers.
Enhance gender equality in job roles and address perceptions of "lighter jobs" for women.	Gender Champion to lead discussions on fair work distribution and ensure tasks are not assigned based on gender.	Discussions were held on work distribution, resulting in a consensus that gender equality should be balanced and tasks like housekeeping shared as part of the overall distribution of work.

A Ripple Effect of Empowerment

Access to More and Better Jobs for Women:

The program contributed to the creation of 351 new jobs, with women taking up 56% and youth 81% of these opportunities. Women-led businesses were especially strong drivers of job creation, generating 220 of the new roles, especially for women –62% of new jobs were held by women. By supporting women-led businesses and encouraging formal sector job creation, the program ensured that increased profitability translated into quality career opportunities, especially for underserved groups (women and youth).

Beyond the numbers, the quality of jobs also improved. Participating SMEs reported greater consistency in hiring practices, clearer job descriptions and the introduction of structured HR processes changes that particularly benefited women, who often face informal or unstable employment arrangements in the food processing sector. These shifts created pathways not only for entry-level participation but also for more secure and meaningful work for women across the value chain.

Increased Income and Agency for Smallholders:

The impact extended to the first mile of the supply chain. As of the endline, majority of SMEs reported confidence that the shift toward more structured and inclusive sourcing practices was translating into real economic benefits for their smallholder suppliers particularly women.

Businesses shared observations of women investing in improved farming equipment, participating more actively in supplier meetings and improving their families' living standards. These insights point to an important pattern; when women farmers gain more predictable market access, fairer terms and timely payments, their ability to grow and exercise agency within their household increases.

This suggests a direct link between gender-responsive sourcing and household-level economic empowerment through increased income.

Youth Inclusion; Fostering the Next Generation of Inclusive Leaders

Recognizing that sustainable change requires intergenerational transfer, IIGS convened a succession planning masterclass that brought together 14 founders and successors from 7 SMEs.

The session created a space for founders and “Gen Z” successors to move leadership transitions through concrete planning. Through exercises like the “Tree of Life” reflection, participants mapped personal values to leadership vision while structured dialogues helped bridge generational divides. Young women particularly used this platform to voice bold aspirations and challenge norms, paving the way for women and youth to become future SME leaders. This investment in succession planning secured the continuity of both businesses and the gender-responsive practices they had adopted.



Founders and next-generation leaders at the IIGS succession planning workshop. Photo credit, TechnoServe

Voices of Change: From Learning to Public Advocacy

Authentic feedback from participants underscores the transformative potential of IIGS interventions. The post highlighted was shared on LinkedIn by a participant in the GRBP training, offering an unfiltered perspective on its value.

Business leaders became public advocates for investing in gender-responsive business practices, demonstrating how they had come to embrace and understand the value of investing in this approach.

This shows the training's concepts traveling beyond the classroom and into sector-wide conversations about re-designing value-chain mechanics.

Leah Wanjiku • 1st
Business Development Manager | Commercial Country Manager | Channel Per...
3mo • 🌐

👏 The Contractual Farming Paradox: Women Left Behind
My [#GenderResponsiveBusinessPractices](#) training (thanks to [TechnoServe](#) funded by [Visa Foundation](#)) didn't just teach theory, it gave me the lens to see a deep flaw in systems like contractual farming. We champion Inclusive Trade, but exclusion is still visible, right on the farm:

The Challenges:

- 🚫 **Land & Finance**
Contracts, training, and credit are tied to land ownership, which is predominantly held by men. This cuts women off from being primary signatories and beneficiaries.
- 🚫 **Information Blackout**
Women often perform the labor but are excluded from meetings and decisions due to cultural norms and the burden of unpaid care work. They're denied power, not just voice.
- 🚫 **Skewed Development**
Profits earmarked for “community development” rarely address women's priorities (like childcare or maternal health), because they lack a seat at the investment table.

💡 **Making Trade Gender-Responsive**
The solution is simple: intentionally restructure [#valuechains](#) to include women as economic agents, not just laborers.

This means:

- ✅ **Joint Contracts**
Require contracts to be signed by both spouses to ensure shared risks and benefits.
- ✅ **Targeted Training**
Schedule and deliver training at times and locations accessible to women.
- ✅ **Empowering the Purse**
Route payments to women's own accounts, giving them independent control over income for family and farm investments.

We can't build a resilient global economy on the backs of excluded women. Inclusive Trade means making sure every contract, big or small - truly works for everyone. 🌱

[#InclusiveTrade](#) [#GenderResponsiveBusiness](#) [#ContractualFarming](#)
[#EmpoweringWomen](#) [#TechnoServe](#) [#VisaFoundation](#) [#WomenInAgri](#)
[#EquityInTrade](#)

A participant shares her experience after the GRBP training, highlighting its practical value and impact on her professional perspective

Access to Finance; Fostering the Next Generation of Inclusive Leaders

Access to finance was a key barrier for many of the SMEs working with IIGS particularly for women-owned or led businesses. Even when businesses saw the value of inclusion, most lacked the capital to test new ideas or scale inclusive models. IIGS addressed this through a dual approach combining co-investment grants and a targeted Access to Finance initiative.

The co-investment grants were designed as catalysts for action and proof of concept for larger investments, tied directly to the implementation of the Inclusive Business and Marketing Plans that IIGS had supported SMEs to develop. The grants required SME co-investment typically at ratios like 50:50 or 60:40, ensuring ownership and shared commitment. These funds enabled businesses to

pilot gender-responsive strategies such as women-led sales teams, testing women-friendly packaging, women-operated collection centers or adapting production processes to integrate women suppliers. By testing these strategies in real operations, SMEs generated tangible evidence that strengthened their business case for inclusion.

Complementing this, the Access to Finance initiative provided technical assistance to build investment readiness. SMEs received coaching and hands-on support to develop bankable business plans, pitch decks and investor memos that clearly articulated the business case for gender inclusion.

Critically, the combination of piloted strategies (funded by grants) and strengthened investment readiness enabled SMEs to present credible, evidence-based opportunities to financiers.

This integrated approach yielded measurable results. Across the program, SMEs mobilized \$468,046.02 in financing, of which \$289,972.91 (62%) was accessed by women-owned or jointly-owned businesses.

Beyond capital, the process helped SMEs translate gender inclusion from a concept into a practical, fundable business strategy, strengthening both commercial growth and social impact.



IIGS clients engaging potential investors during a facilitated roundtable following targeted support on investment readiness. Photo credit: TechnoServe

Best Practices for Impact

The IIGS program's journey with 32 agri-SMEs shows that building truly gender-inclusive food processing businesses requires moving beyond standalone initiatives to embedding gender within core, business-driven strategies. Six key practices stood out as essential for scaling impact:

Best Practice 1:

Integrate Gender as a Core Business Strategy, Not an "Add-On."

The most successful outcomes occurred when gender responsive business practices were integrated into core business strategies. Treating this as a parallel activity limits impacts and relevance.

Best Practice 2:

Secure Leadership Buy-In as the Primary Enabler.

Commitment from senior management emerged as the single most important factor determining success. When leaders understood inclusion as a pathway to profitability, change accelerated significantly.

Future programs must have a clear strategy for engaging and convincing business leaders from the onset, using sector-specific data and peer examples.

Best Practice 3:

Deploy Holistic Support Packages to Drive Adoption.

A one-off training is not enough to create lasting change. The IIGS model worked because it combined awareness-building (GRBP training) with strategic planning (IBPs/IMPs), financial de-risking (grants) and sustained support (coaching). This

holistic package gave SMEs the confidence, knowledge and resources needed to move from intention to meaningful action.

Best Practice 4:

Make the Business Case Visible and Tangible.

When greater inclusion of women is framed as a tool for achieving primary business goals, leadership is far more likely to champion and resource it. The program was most effective when it helped SMEs track gender-disaggregated data and connect it to performance KPIs. Seeing quantified returns such as increased sales from women sales agents or higher raw material volumes from women farmers is what transforms skeptics into champions.

Best Practice 5:

Empower SMEs to Tackle Systemic Barriers.

The most impactful SMEs learned to address exclusionary systems beyond their walls such as redesigning relationships with suppliers and consumers, using tools like joint contracts and direct digital payments to women.

Best Practice 6: Foster Peer Learning and Community. The IIGS model proved that change is accelerated when SMEs learn from each other. Creating structured platforms for peer-to-peer learning, like grouped coaching sessions, fosters supportive communities that help to address challenges, share successes and encourage momentum.

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Foster Peer Learning and Community.

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Recommendations

Based on these lessons, we offer the following recommendations to stakeholders committed to building a more inclusive and prosperous agri-food system.



For Donors & Program Implementers:

Design for Integration from start:

Conduct gender analyses to understand unique needs of men and women this will help in structuring gender inclusion from inception into programs and not brought in as an afterthought. Structure activities so that gender targets are embedded within planned interventions and M&E frameworks from the start.

Build the Business Case with Sector-Specific Data:

Invest in collecting and disseminating gender disaggregated data that shows the direct link between gender-responsive practices and key commercial benefits like increased sales, supply chain resilience and market reach.

Foster Peer-to-Peer Learning:

Create platforms (physical or virtual) to foster connectivity and peer learning for Agribusinesses. The opportunity and platform to share their successes and challenges in implementing gender inclusive practices is often the most convincing argument.

Resource for Long-Term, Tailored Support.

A one-off training is insufficient. Fund and implement programs that combine different aspects such as diagnostic tools, strategic planning, catalytic grants and sustained coaching to help SMEs navigate the journey from intention to implementation.

Equip SMEs to Reform Exclusionary Practices:

Provide tools and incentives for SMEs to redesign core operations, such as implementing joint-spouse supplier contracts or ensuring direct digital payments to women farmers.



For Agri-SMEs:

Start with Gender Disaggregated Data:

You cannot change what you do not measure. Start by collecting gender disaggregated data to help identify gaps and opportunities for advancing gender inclusion within operations. Assess your own business across different departments to identify one or two areas where you can make a meaningful change.

Identify a "Quick Win" to Build Momentum:

Choose an initial action that is relatively easy to implement and likely to show a clear return. This could be as simple as revising targets and performance indicators to include gender quotas or recruitment language to attract diverse candidates.

Champion Inclusion from the Top Down: Designate a gender champion within the senior management team. When employees see that leadership is genuinely committed, it empowers them to contribute ideas and adopt new practices.

Tell your story.

Share what worked with buyers, financiers and peers, visibility attracts markets and talent.

Connect with your peers:

Actively seek out other SME leaders who are on a similar journey. Sharing challenges and successes with a peer network is a powerful tool for building confidence and finding practical solutions.



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This document was prepared by:

Gail Bowa with support from Monica Githige, Cait Nordehn and Benson Karuku