



How to embed gender equality in your business model: Building inclusive value chains

This publication has been produced in the framework of the SEGIE (*For a Social Economy that reduces Gender Inequalities in Europe*) project, co-funded by the European Social Fund. The views expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the European Union.

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1- Introduction

1.1 About SEGIE

In recent years, numerous reports have highlighted the need for better integration of women and gender minorities into the social economy, particularly as social entrepreneurs. However, there is little data on the interconnections between the social economy and gender equality as a whole, and on the sector's impact on the economic empowerment of women and gender minorities.

This is why the SEGIE project (*For a Social Economy that reduces Gender Inequalities in Europe*) was born. While the social economy is booming in Europe, bringing new solutions to major social and environmental challenges, it also has a responsibility to foster positive change for all, not at the expense of women and other minorities. There is therefore a clear need to investigate this topic, raise awareness and develop hands-on tools in order to harness the power of the European social economy ecosystem to reduce gender inequality. SEGIE to pursue this goal, the project seeks the following objectives:

- » **Develop new data on and investigate the impact of the social economy on gender equality** in order to identify areas of improvement and to make stakeholders in the social economy more aware and knowledgeable about gender equality.
- » **Develop hands-on pedagogical contents to help European social enterprises push for more gender-equal practices** and develop fairer and more women-inclusive business models.
- » **Contribute to the emergence of 30 women-inclusive businesses in France, Italy and Portugal** to generate a wider ripple effect on women's economic empowerment and shed light on business champions leading the way towards a more inclusive European social economy.

SEGIE is a project funded by the European Social Fund and is implemented by four partner organisations:

Empow'Her Global (coordinator - France) is an international feminist organization founded in 2013 that deploys several types of activities aimed at the same objective: supporting women in the realization of their projects, allowing them to reach their full potential and giving them all the keys to empower themselves through entrepreneurship.

Action Aid Italia (Italy) is a non-profit organization who works to promote and animate spaces for democratic participation everywhere, involving people and communities in the protection of their rights. Action Aid collaborates at local, national and international levels to bring about change and increase equity, improving the quality of democracy and thus supporting those living in situations of poverty and marginality.

Acube (Italy) is an incubator and accelerator of ideas and businesses with high social, cultural and environmental value. Acube encourages and supports the creation and development of impactful businesses in order to generate innovation and social transformation.

NOVA School of Business and Economics (Portugal) is an accredited and top-ranked business school that offers a variety of academic programs such as Bachelor's, Master's, PhD, MBAs.

1.2 The imperative of integrating diversity, equity, and inclusion in today's consumer industry

Across the globe, the consumer industry profoundly impacts people's daily lives. It is evident that consumers are growing more socially aware, demanding brands they endorse to demonstrate social responsibility through tangible actions and greater accountability. Furthermore, consumer purchasing influence is now more diverse than ever, and organizations failing to align with the needs of their diverse customer base risk losing significant market share. Therefore, integrating Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) has emerged as both a business necessity and a moral obligation for organizations in the present day.

In addition to managing risk, addressing DEI can also help organizations accelerate their business objectives. Research shows that diverse organizations make better business decisions resulting in improved productivity and financial performance.

A few figures...

Diverse companies have **up to 19% higher innovation revenues** in terms of new products than non-diverse peers.

S&P 500 companies that invest in diversity initiatives have generated a **higher operating profit margin of 12%** than non-diverse peers.

Organizations with inclusive policies that result in a greater sense of belongingness see a **50% reduction in employee turnover** and a **56% increase in job performance**¹.

1.3 Handbook's overview

In today's world, the significance of gender equality in fostering thriving social enterprises cannot be overstated. This handbook aims to provide practical insights and strategies for integrating gender equality throughout the value chain of social businesses.

Gender equality stands at the core of sustainable and socially responsible business practices. As we navigate the dynamic landscape of social entrepreneurship, it becomes increasingly evident that fostering diversity and inclusivity is not only ethically imperative but also a strategic advantage.

This handbook seeks to contextualize the crucial role of gender equality within this framework, emphasizing its transformative potential in driving positive social impact and business growth.

It serves as a comprehensive resource for social businesses committed to advancing gender equality and more inclusiveness in their global value chain. It offers a roadmap for organizations to understand, embrace, and implement inclusive practices across all facets of their operations. From redefining procurement strategies to promoting gender-inclusive leadership, this handbook provides actionable guidance to create more equitable and resilient businesses.

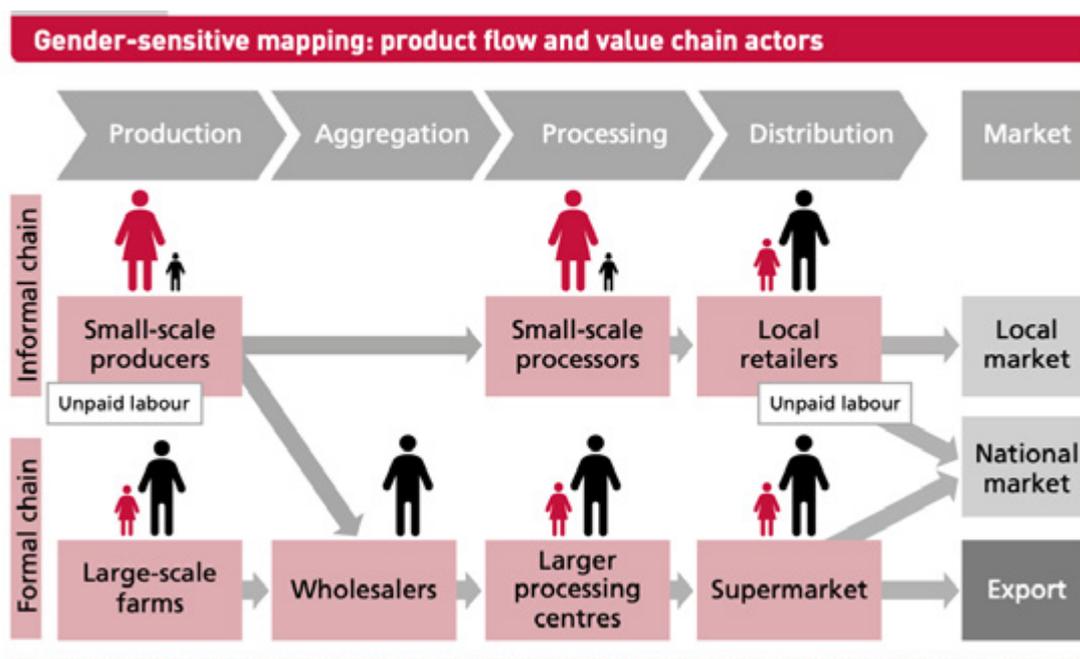
¹ Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) across the consumer value chain. A North American perspective, Deloitte, 2022.

2 - Definition & current landscape

2.1 Definition of an inclusive value chain

The value chain as a concept describes the full range of activities that firms, farms and workers do to bring a product from its conception to its end use and beyond. This includes activities such as design, production, marketing, distribution and support to the final consumer. The activities that comprise a value chain can be contained within a single firm or divided among different firms. Value chain activities can produce goods or services, and can be contained within a single geographical location or spread over wider areas. Value chain analysis has emerged since the early 1990s as a novel methodological tool for understanding the dynamics of economic globalization and international trade². The approach focuses on 'vertical' relationships between buyers and suppliers and the movement of a good or service from producer to consumer.

More precisely, using the image of a chain allows us to appreciate the importance of coordinating the different activities and stakeholders involved, just as the links make up a chain. Therefore, analyzing the production



Source: Food and Agriculture Organization, 2018

of a good or service via the value chain enables us to determine the role and positioning of each player.

However, a value chain should take into account several criteria in order to guarantee the respect and integration of all the stakeholders in this ecosystem. This includes the importance of social and economic inclusion of all stakeholders in the production of a good or service. In a value chain, some of them are more disadvantaged and vulnerable than others; this is particularly true for producers. It is therefore essential to guarantee better working conditions for the men and women involved in the value chain, thereby promoting

² Gender and Value Chain Development, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2010.

a more sustainable and inclusive economy. Production must enable the creation of decent work, i.e. respect decent pay, decent working conditions, guarantee safety at work, etc.

Similarly, gender equality is a major factor in achieving an inclusive value chain. Women can be found at different stages of a value chain, yet they may encounter difficulties linked, for example, to social norms. The production of a good or service cannot be blind to these obstacles, and must ensure that it offers solutions to overcome them. Moreover, failing to take the gender dimension into account in a production chain can reinforce these norms. The Do No Harm principle, which implies to take into account risks and negative outputs when implementing actions, underlines the importance of including value chains into broader societal objectives.

More generally, global value chains need to become more inclusive to enable a positive impact on low and middle-income countries. Indeed, equitable inclusion of low and middle-income countries enables them to participate more actively in global markets, and thus accelerate the growth that benefits local populations. The value chain must include small, local businesses to achieve economic development for local communities.

The Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) organizations represent a model capable of rethinking business models in order to acquire a new way of producing and consuming. SSEs emphasize solidarity, social utility and inclusion. They represent and/or must represent the way forward to guarantee a response to social and environmental needs and inclusion.

2.2 A more equal and inclusive global value chain brings economic value

According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF)³, gender diversity in the workplace helps companies achieve better financial results, particularly when management is inclusive. Beyond management positions, the IMF affirms that women and men are complementary in the production process given that they would not have the same view due to their competence and their different vision. So, in this case, gender equality enables greater economic benefits to be achieved, not only at the organizational level, but also at community and national levels. According to their study, gender equality in some countries can boost Gross domestic product (GDP) by more than 35%, particularly as it leads to new people entering the workforce.

Increasing the integration of women into the value chain of a good or service helps to gradually change the gender norms present in a country. Gender norms are sometimes very strong and can considerably restrict employment opportunities for women. While they are often relegated to care-related tasks, women are also discriminated against in their choice of employment. For example, author Rhiannon Pyburn⁴ explains that, in the collective imagination, a woman can't be a farmer, can't do work that requires physical strength or travel too far on her own. By promoting an inclusive value chain, we can gradually change these norms, in particular through the promotion of role models, success stories both of working women and of organizations that succeed thanks to a positive, inclusive model.

Moreover, women's participation in the value chain can help them transition out of informal employment, allowing them to move away from potentially hazardous working conditions and reducing their vulnerability to labor exploitation. The remuneration obtained through this formal employment gives them greater opportunity to access a bank account and banking services leading to a great financial empowerment.

³ Economic Gains from Gender Inclusion: Even Greater than You Thought, international Monetary Fund, 2018

⁴ "Gender dynamics in agrifood value chains: Advances in research and practice over the last decade", Rhiannon Pyburn, 2023

2.3 Current challenges of gender equality on the value chain

» The burden of domestic work

The monetary value of women's domestic work represents 10.8 trillion dollars each year. This domestic work prevents 42% of women worldwide from obtaining paid work.⁵

In South Asia, 90.7% of women are in informal employment, and this figure is even higher in Sub-Saharan Africa at 92.1%⁶

In addition to banking difficulties, women may have difficulty finding formal employment as informal work takes up all their time and energy of the day. The weight of the mental load can be very heavy, which can mentally exhaust women and discourage them from adding a new activity to their day.

It is therefore sometimes difficult to involve women in a value chain because this unpaid work prevents them from devoting time to having income-generating activities.

» Access to land

By eliminating gender inequalities in the agricultural sector, women could increase their productivity between 20% and 30% and would therefore imply an increase in the volume of production in low and middle-income countries by 2.5% to 4% thus contributing to the reduction of food insecurity in the world between 12% and 17%⁷

37% of workers in the agricultural sector are women, earning ¼ less than men. Moreover, less than 15% of land-owning farmers are women⁸

As we explained above, women are a small minority with access to land. In an inclusive value chain, it is important to favor women who own land in order to economically support them in their activity. By favoring female owners, the organization contributes to the fight for equality in access to property. As family responsibilities are disproportionate between women and men, this further limits their access to formal employment. Furthermore, in certain cultures women do not have the right to move alone, which restricts women's mobility and therefore their opportunity to access resources and establish themselves in a value chain. In short, it's important to understand the different opportunities for access to resources that women have but also to understand the norms that exist in each country participating in the value chain.

» Leadership difficulty: norms and education

2.4 billion women of working age do not have the same economic rights as men⁹

In some countries, social and cultural norms can limit women's self-confidence and thus limit their leadership. As a result, they may censor themselves and not dare to launch into entrepreneurship, for example. Another point that limits women's leadership is their low presence in participation in the decision-making process. Thus, we find an over-representation of women in certain phases of the value chain such as production, but very little at the level of decision-making. The challenge is therefore to transform this and entrust women with new roles in order to ensure their representation at all stages of the value chain.

Moreover, access to education for women is essential to strengthen their empowerment. In Europe, education shows a reverse trend when it comes to gender equality. A majority of children in EU countries have access to education despite their gender and even a higher percentage of women aged 25-34 have tertiary education

⁵ Celles qui comptent. Reconnaître la contribution considérable des femmes à l'économie pour combattre les inégalités, OXFAM France, 2020

⁶ Les femmes dans l'économie informelle: la double peine?, 2022, Institut du genre en géopolitique

⁷ Women and SDG 12 - Responsible consumption and production: establishing sustainable consumption and production patterns, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development iLibrary

⁸ Integrating a gender perspective into supply chain due diligence, 2021, OECD & FAO

⁹ Nearly 2.4 Billion Women Globally Don't Have Same Economic Rights as Men, The World Bank, 2022

compared with men (48% of women and 37% of men, respectively)¹⁰. However, despite advances in this area in Europe, education continues to be an area where gender inequalities persist considerably, especially in low and middle-income countries. This inequality thus generates inequality which is the over-representation of women at the lowest links of the value chain, thus leading to an increase in the salary gaps between women and men.

» The partners/distributors/suppliers section

Wanting an inclusive value chain also means paying attention to the entire logistics phase upstream and downstream of the value chain. If we want an inclusive value chain, we must pay particular attention to the production of the product, but we must also analyze the distribution and sale of these goods or services. It is therefore appropriate to correctly target the distributors of our product who must also respect the principle of inclusiveness. For example, an organization that sells jewelry can choose to sell its creations on environmentally friendly sites with good working conditions for its employees.

» Difficult working conditions

25% of sexist and sexual assaults in the world happen in the workplace¹¹

Women, more than men, are sometimes faced with more difficult working conditions.

The impact of difficult conditions may depend on the sectors of activity in a value chain. For example, the ready-to-wear value chains where women carry out precarious work and in disastrous conditions. How can we not note the case of Rana Plaza on April 24, 2013 where of the 1,138 dead and 2,000 injured, the majority were women. This event revealed to the world the conditions in which women can work, namely in a dilapidated building among others... This event also revealed that women are both poorly paid but also less safe than men in the workplace. In the textile sector, where women are over-represented, labor regulations are less strict than in certain sectors both on working conditions and on wages. Furthermore, as evidenced by the figure given above, women are also confronted (regardless of the sector of activity) with sexist and sexual violence in the workplace.

All this creates an anxiety and dangerous climate for women at work.

¹⁰ More women than men held tertiary degrees in 2022, EuroStat

¹¹ Stop à la violence sexiste et sexuelle au travail!, ActionAid France

3 - What social businesses can do?

Here are actionable steps social businesses can take to embed gender equality in their business model:

3.1 Opportunities for women-owned businesses in the supply chain

In the pursuit of diversifying suppliers, organizations are encouraged to actively seek and engage with women-owned businesses to foster diversity and inclusivity within their supply chains. For example, collaborations could include partnering with a women-led textile manufacturer for raw materials or utilizing the services of a female-owned transportation company for logistics needs. These intentional partnerships not only promote gender equality but also enrich supply chains with diverse perspectives and expertise.

Furthermore, recognizing the importance of supporting capacity building among women entrepreneurs within the supplier network, organizations should offer tailored training programs and resources. This may involve workshops on sustainable production practices or financial management seminars designed specifically for women-owned businesses. For instance, organizations can facilitate training sessions aimed at enhancing efficiency and competitiveness. Additionally, providing access to financial resources such as microloans or grants, and fostering mentorship opportunities where experienced professionals offer guidance, can empower women entrepreneurs to thrive and contribute meaningfully to supply chains.

3.2 Build a traceable value chain, ensure transparency to your customers

To ensure an inclusive value chain, the importance of traceability cannot be overstated. Traceability refers to the ability to track and document the history, application, or location of an entity or process, often through recorded identification. In the context of value chains, this means being able to trace the journey of a product from its origin, through all stages of production, to the final consumer. This process allows you to promote sustainability and ethical practices within value chains.

KOTN

A good example of transparency is the Canadian clothing brand Kotn created in 2015

“At Kotn, we believe that traceability – knowing where a product comes from, who made it, how and when – should not be a luxury, but a standard. Yet, according to Fashion Revolution’s Transparency Index, only 11% of fashion brands know the source of their raw materials. That’s why we built Kotn from the ground up, starting with the farmers who grow our natural fibers. By bypassing traditional middlemen and ensuring a clear chain of custody, we are able to maintain best business practices for our community, ensuring decent wages, safe working conditions, fair treatment and environmental transparency at every step. »¹²

To respect this commitment, the brand has a [web page dedicated](https://kotn.com/fr/about/supply-chain) to its value chain which is explained step by step.

¹² Notre chaîne d’approvisionnement, Kotn, <https://kotn.com/fr/about/supply-chain>



Source: Kotn <https://kotn.com/fr/about/supply-chain>

3.3 Marketing and Branding Strategies

- » Challenge Stereotypes: Develop advertising and marketing campaigns that challenge gender stereotypes and promote positive representations of all genders. Avoid perpetuating harmful stereotypes in promotional materials.
- » Inclusive Messaging: Ensure that promotional materials are inclusive and respectful of diverse identities, using language and imagery that resonates with a diverse audience.



Lou Escobar/MOODZ

3.4 Establishing gender equality at a leadership level

Embedding gender equality principles right from the foundations of an organization is paramount. These values should be ingrained in the mission and values upheld by the founders from the outset. As young companies operating in the realm of social enterprises and startups, it's crucial to recognize that gender equality isn't just a matter of legal compliance, but also a fundamental pillar of sustainability and social impact. By integrating these values early on, founders and teams can foster a culture of inclusion and equity that permeates every aspect of the organization.

Effective leadership involves having a clear vision and a strong strategy for implementing change. In the case of gender equality, this means developing a gender mainstreaming strategy with clear objectives that identify gender considerations as cross-cutting and non-negotiable. In practical terms, such a strategy should include gender mainstreaming as part of policies, programs, the conduct of personnel, as well as training. In addition to having the support and commitment of the leadership, any strategy must be backed by financial and human resources. By adopting transparent policies and recruitment and promotion practices based on merit rather than gender, you create an environment where all team members have equal opportunities for success. By integrating these operational principles from the start, you establish a solid foundation for an inclusive and egalitarian corporate culture that fosters long-term growth and success.

It's also vital to encourage open dialogue and collaboration among team members. Create an environment where all voices are heard and valued, where employees feel safe to share their gender-related experiences and concerns. This can be achieved through awareness sessions and regular discussions on gender issues, as well as through task forces or committees dedicated to gender equality.

3.5 Ensuring equal employment opportunities

As enterprises spearhead innovation and advancement, it becomes imperative for these companies to mirror the demographics of the communities they serve and emphasize the establishment of inclusive environments. The advantages of diversity and inclusion are manifold, ranging from enhanced decision-making and heightened creativity to bolstered connections with both customers and employees. However, despite these benefits, numerous startups encounter challenges in fostering genuinely inclusive cultures.

To foster diversity among candidates and eliminate bias in hiring decisions, it's essential to [*adopt gender-neutral recruitment processes*](#). This involves reviewing job descriptions and selection criteria to ensure they're not biased towards any particular gender. Additionally, measures such as using gender-neutral language and training recruiters on unconscious biases can help create a more inclusive recruitment environment. Concurrently, it's crucial to implement policies ensuring equal opportunities for career development and advancement.

This may include mentorship programs, training initiatives, and efforts to promote diversity and inclusion within the organization. Regarding compensation practices, regular reviews of salary structures and benefits are necessary to ensure equal pay for equal work. Transparency in compensation practices is also essential for building trust within the company and demonstrating commitment to pay equity.

Finally, celebrate differences! Celebrate the unique perspectives and experiences that each person brings to the workplace. This can help to build a culture of respect and inclusiveness, where everyone feels valued and appreciated.

By taking these steps, you can start to build a culture of respect and inclusiveness in your startup. Remember, building a diverse and inclusive workplace is a continuous journey, not a one-time effort. Keep these steps in mind as you work to create a more inclusive future for everyone.

3.6 Supporting Work-Life Balance

Supporting work-life balance is crucial for maintaining employee well-being and productivity, and particularly important for women due to various societal and cultural factors that often place a disproportionate burden on them in terms of caregiving responsibilities and work-life balance. Women are more likely to take on primary caregiving roles for children or elderly family members, which can significantly impact their ability to maintain a successful career without adequate support.



Some figures at European level...

Share of parents spending at least 5 hours a day on childcare, by gender (% , EU-27, 2022)*

*EIGE's Survey of Gender Gaps in Unpaid Care, Individual and Social Activities, 2022. The survey was carried out in the summer of 2022, with over 60 000 respondents aged 16–74 across the 27 EU Member States

Historically, women have faced challenges in balancing their professional aspirations with family responsibilities, often leading to career interruptions or decreased career advancement opportunities. Without flexible working arrangements and supportive parental leave policies, women may face difficulties in managing their work and family obligations simultaneously, leading to stress, burnout, and ultimately, a decision to leave the workforce altogether.

One way to achieve this is by implementing flexible working arrangements, such as remote work options and flexible scheduling. Remote work allows employees to manage their workloads while accommodating diverse family responsibilities, such as childcare or eldercare. Flexible scheduling enables employees to adjust their work hours to better suit their personal needs, whether it's attending appointments or managing household tasks.

Additionally, offering robust **parental leave policies** and support programs is essential. Parental leave allows new parents to take time off to care for their newborns or newly adopted children without worrying about job security or financial strain. Support programs can include resources such as lactation rooms for nursing mothers, childcare subsidies, or access to parenting workshops and support groups. These initiatives demonstrate a commitment to employees' well-being and help them balance their professional and personal responsibilities effectively.

3.7 Collaborating with feminist organizations

From day one of their enterprise, founders should not hesitate in creating partnerships by collaborating with non-governmental organizations that support women, to amplify their efforts and create more meaningful change. These partnerships involve jointly developing and implementing projects that benefit women at various points along the value chain.

By leveraging the collective expertise and resources of both businesses and Non-governmental organizations (NGO), these initiatives can address a wide range of challenges faced by women, including access to education, healthcare, economic opportunities, and leadership roles. For example, businesses can partner with NGOs to provide vocational training programs for women that have limited or no access to resources, support initiatives that promote women's entrepreneurship, or implement mentorship programs to help women advance in their careers.

These partnerships not only benefit women but also contribute to the overall success and sustainability of businesses. By investing in the empowerment of women, companies can tap into a diverse talent pool, enhance their reputation as socially responsible entities, and foster innovation and growth. Additionally, these collaborations can help businesses better understand the needs and preferences of their female customers, leading to improved products and services tailored to their target market.

Discover here a selection of [25 international organizations](#) that are fighting for gender equality.

Social businesses could also directly collaborate with organizations supporting women directly on the value chain, like *Empow'Her* (entrepreneurship) or BSR and Her Project (health, financial inclusion, and gender equality.) These collaborations enable businesses to access expertise, resources, and best practices to implement effective strategies that empower women, foster inclusive workplaces, and drive positive social impact throughout the value chain.

3.8 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for Assessing Impact

Define key performance indicators (KPIs) to track and evaluate the impact of gender equality initiatives across the value chain. Expand the KPIs to cover inclusiveness both inside and outside the organization.

Here are some examples of KPIs to be followed:

Internal KPIs:

- » Percentage of women in leadership positions at all levels of the organization, including the board of directors and executive team.
- » Gender pay gap reduction within the organization.
- » Employee satisfaction scores related to inclusiveness and diversity.
- » Participation rate of women in training and development programs aimed at career advancement.
- » Promotion rates of women compared to men, ensuring equitable opportunities for career progression.

External KPIs (Value Chain Inclusiveness):

- » Percentage of women-owned businesses in the supplier base.
- » Diversity and inclusion criteria incorporated into supplier selection and contracting processes.
- » Supplier diversity spend, representing the amount spent with women-owned businesses.
- » Impact of supplier diversity initiatives on the economic empowerment of women in the supply chain, such as job creation, income generation, and skills development.
- » Evaluation of supplier relationships for fair treatment and opportunities for women-owned businesses, including feedback mechanisms and support programs.
- » Inclusiveness of marketing and advertising materials, assessing representation and portrayal of women in promotional materials and campaigns.
- » Customer feedback and satisfaction scores related to inclusiveness and diversity in products, services, and brand messaging.

It's important to note that these KPIs must be customized to fit the unique characteristics and dynamics of each organization's value chain. The requirements for gender equality and inclusiveness can vary significantly depending on the industry, geographical location, and the specific nature of the business operations. Therefore, it's essential to conduct a thorough assessment of the value chain to identify the most relevant metrics for monitoring and evaluating gender equality initiatives. This sector-specific approach ensures that the KPIs accurately reflect the challenges and opportunities within the value chain, enabling organizations to effectively measure progress and drive meaningful change. By aligning the KPIs with the sector's specific requirements and priorities, organizations can maximize the impact of their gender equality efforts and contribute to positive outcomes for both their business and the broader community.

Case : Ethiopian flower farms: KPIs to track and evaluate gender-equality interventions, by IDH*

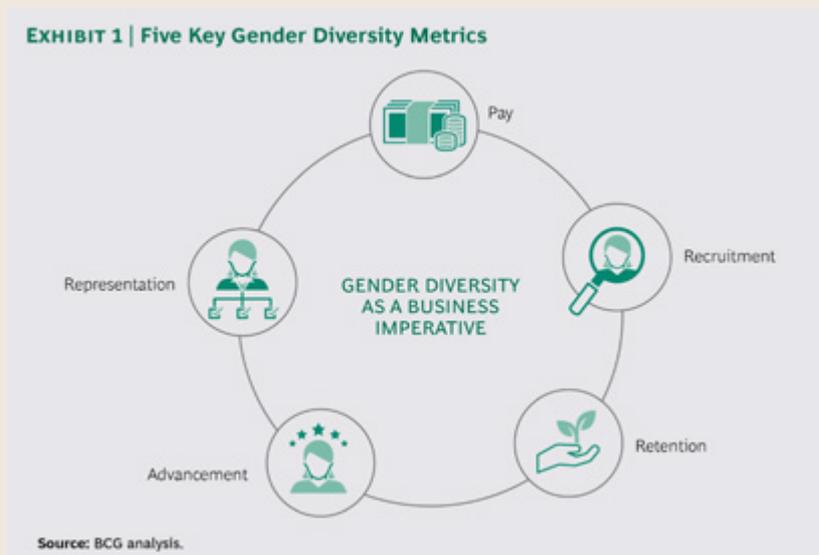


The KPIs, conceived by IDH, the Sustainable Trade Initiative, and developed together with the Floriculture Sustainability Initiative (FSI) and the FSI Working Group on Gender (WGG), follow from extensive research on gender-equality interventions in the floriculture sector carried out since 2014. A business case study commissioned by IDH and conducted by Fair & Sustainable Consulting tested and evaluated the impact of these interventions on families, communities, and businesses connected with five Ethiopian flower Farms.

» To read more about the study and discover [the set of KPIs](#).

Business Case : Measuring what matters in gender diversity, BCG

The Boston Consulting Group (BCG), on the basis on their research and experience with clients across all industries and geographic markets, have identified five areas on which companies need to focus and track metrics and data to measure their progress towards gender diversity. BCG recommends that for each of the five areas, companies should evaluate their current status and necessary changes, in order to identify their biggest challenges and their highest-priority goals for gender diversity.



» To read more about BCG's work and discover [the five areas](#).

4- Case studies and toolbox

4.1 Case studies illustrating successful integration of gender equality in social businesses, testimonials

Case Study n°1



Meet my Mama is a French startup founded in 2017 by Donia Souad Amamra, Loubna Ksibi and Youssef Oudahman, whose mission is to reveal the culinary talents of women around the world, whatever their age, social or economic background. The creation of this startup stems from a simple observation: despite the unique talent of certain women in the culinary field, some of them encounter economic and social obstacles, a lack of self-confidence and a lack of network. As a result, they are all too often overlooked and ignored. Meet my Mama now supports, trains and encourages Mamas to become accomplished leaders and entrepreneurs, in order to raise the profile of these women. The overall vision of this startup is to “Make the food industry and society more inclusive, sustainable and responsible ». Today, Meet My Mama is present in 2 cities in France (Paris and Marseille) and has a new project to open in another country, with over 3,000 events (in France, London, Ireland and Dubai) and more than 100 Mamas supported. Loubna Ksibi reveals that after two years in business, her startup’s sales have exceeded one million euros.

To help these Mamas realize their dreams, Meet My Mama has three major programs: Empower my Mama, which aims to boost women’s self-confidence; Mama Academy, which trains women to become cooks, but also and above all entrepreneurs; and Meet my Mama, which connects these Mamas with customers to “transform their talent into an economic opportunity ».

Meet my Mama is the perfect example to illustrate what an inclusive value chain is. On the one hand, Meet my Mama raises awareness among Mamas of the importance of **short-circuit, seasonal and organic products**, thus allowing mamas to select local producers. Even more, Meet my Mama works in collaboration with organizations that share the same values as it, namely Du pain et des roses which offers ethical and responsible floral compositions as well as Brûlerie Saint-Jacques which offers artisanal and responsible coffees. These three organizations therefore offer customers, during events, value sharing promoting an inclusive and responsible value chain.

On the other hand, the central element of Meet my Mama’s reason for living is to put women cooks at the heart of its operations. Mamas come from all over the world, including Latin America, the Middle East, Europe, Asia and Africa. The three programs explained above are a course dedicated to the empowerment of women and thus allowing them to become independent chefs and entrepreneurs. Meet my Mama aims to promote, through cuisine, all the cultures of the world and to make this industry a more inclusive environment. This promotion of women’s empowerment is also found during events where Meet my Mama participates, because speaking time is reserved for Mamas so that they can reflect on their empowerment journey.

Finally, at Meet my Mama everything is designed to have the most inclusive value chain, including the training of Mamas, the choice of partners, the choice of products and also the choice of transport and packaging which are eco-friendly (bicycle delivery and plastic-free packaging). Finally, the choice of the final beneficiaries, namely the customers who will consume the products, Meet my Mamas also tries to be inclusive, because beyond serving large groups, Meet my Mamas creates solidarity events to redistribute meals to people in need (especially during the COVID-19 crisis).



Case Study n°2:

Quote : “Do your best to mirror the demographics of the communities you serve”

Choose to use a user-centered approach to product design and collecting gender-disaggregated data to ensure that the offerings are both accessible and affordable to individuals of all genders, taking into consideration factors such as pricing, packaging, and distribution channels.

Business Case (fictive) : Build a sustainable clothing brand committed to creating gender-inclusive apparel that aligns with its values of sustainability, inclusivity, and social responsibility.



Example of a user-centered design process:

Step 1: market research

Conducts thorough market research to understand the preferences, lifestyle choices, and sizing requirements of its target audience. Utilizing surveys, focus groups, and customer feedback mechanisms, your brand collects gender-disaggregated data to inform its product development decisions.

Step 2: user persona development

Based on the collected data, your company develops detailed user personas representing diverse gender identities within its customer base. These personas encapsulate specific clothing preferences, fit requirements, and style preferences across different gender identities.

Step 3 : inclusive sizing and fit

Utilizing gender-disaggregated data on body measurements and fit preferences, your brand develops an inclusive sizing chart that caters to a wide range of body types and shapes. Garments are designed with adjustable features and inclusive sizing options to ensure comfort and confidence for all customers.

Step 4: Accessible Design Features

Your brand integrates accessible design features into its clothing collections, such as adaptive closures, sensory-friendly fabrics, and inclusive styling options. These features are informed by user feedback and insights gathered through gender-disaggregated data analysis.

Through its user-centered design approach and the use of gender-disaggregated data, Your brand successfully launches a range of gender-inclusive apparel that resonates with diverse customers. The brand's commitment to inclusivity and accessibility sets it apart in the fashion industry, driving customer satisfaction and loyalty while promoting positive social change.

4.2 Best practices in inclusive governance

Governance is the exercise of legitimate power, which supports and maintains the functioning of a society. Governance questions the relationship between employees and administrators or the mobilization of internal and external parties: it therefore questions decision-making and power sharing more broadly. Dynamic in essence, it is called to evolve. Inclusive governance effectively serves and engages all people and takes into account gender and other facets of personal identity, and institutions, policies, processes and services are accessible, accountable and responsive to all members of the Company. An inclusive culture must ensure diversity but must not be satisfied with ensuring minimal or symbolic representation of an ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation and people with disabilities. It must guide the core values of the board and influence all its policies and practices.

Making your organization an inclusive organization has several major challenges, namely the possibility of having the points of view of different social groups, including those often marginalized such as women. Inclusive governance makes it possible to include under-represented minorities in an organization's decision-making process and therefore obtains the opinions and aspirations of everyone.

To create an inclusive work culture, it is necessary to identify the obstacles that hinder the participation of underrepresented sections of the population and even more so women and to develop strategies leading to equitable participation between everyone at the level of all stakeholders of the organization.

In a document entitled [*“WBG Action plan for Preventing and Addressing Sexual Harassment”*](#) (see link), the World Bank provides good practices for combating sexist behaviour in the workplace and thus improving the governance of an organisation. To do this, the World Bank outlines two steps:

1. Identify and assess the risks of bad behavior within the organization
2. Act on this bad behavior or risk of bad behavior

For example, it is possible to develop a roadmap to integrate a gender inclusion strategy within an organization. This then helps guide efforts to better promote gender equality and create a more inclusive work environment. Creating a roadmap makes it possible to structure and implement significant changes in favor of gender equality and diversity while remaining aligned with concrete and measurable objectives. The roadmap allows, among other things, to create a common understanding of the organization on the importance of gender inclusion; define SMART (Specific; Measurable; Achievable; Relevant; Time-Bound) objectives; establish responsibilities by determining the roles and responsibilities of everyone; develop specific actions; establish a timetable for the implementation of actions and measure the results obtained.

There are several fundamental questions to ask yourself before starting the roadmap. The project or organization manager must ask himself:

- » Why is inclusion important to our organization?
- » What is the state of inclusion in our organization?
- » Which groups are underrepresented or marginalized in our organization?
- » What are the short and long term goals of the initiative?
- » How to get commitment from management and stakeholders?
- » How to raise awareness and educate employees on inclusion?
- » What policies and practices need review?

Other actions or measure can help to strengthen inclusive governance:

- » Ensuring that calls for applications are written in an inclusive way
- » Creating training courses for employees at all levels on the right behaviors to adopt
- » Create flexible working conditions to ensure the well-being and fulfillment of its employees, taking into account family constraints as well as different religious events.
- » Identify the obstacles to hiring women in your organization
- » Be clear about the fact that inclusiveness within your organization is essential
- » Ensure that there is no discrimination in the workplace and that women have equal opportunities to access decision-making positions
- » Adopt inclusive language on a daily basis
- » Ensure that everyone's dietary constraints are respected when creating an event

4.3 Tracking and evaluation tools

The challenge of this part is to provide indicators that may be interesting to put in place in order to know if your value chain is inclusive. It therefore allows an organization to realize its inclusiveness and therefore as an organization what can be changed. Although government initiatives and other development organizations exist, the main driver of change must be businesses themselves in order to make the value chain an inclusive place for the entire population.

The report¹³ from the BSR organization, based on research from the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), focuses on the apparel sector and suggests areas in which companies in this sector should focus to ensure that their supply chain value is more inclusive: informal work, the end of gender-based violence and the well-being of children. Although this report focuses only on the apparel sector, the following indicators we propose can be applied across sectors.

- » informal work indicator
 - » Have visibility across my entire value chain, which involves creating a complete map of the value chain to target all stakeholders. Thus, having a good representation of one's value chain makes it possible to identify at which level of practices are more obscure and thus focus more specifically on it to clarify and concentrate efforts.
 - » As the previous report cited explains, it is also necessary to follow the guidelines of ILO Recommendation 204 in order to transition as best as possible to a formal economy.

¹³ Empowering Female Workers in the Apparel Industry. Three Areas for Business Action, BSR & International Center for Research on Women, 2017

- » It is also possible to carry out regular monitoring of the parties involved to ensure total transparency in terms of respect for workers and their working conditions. This also allows us to monitor the progress of our value chain and always assess where the company is heading.
- » Indicator on violence and harassment at work
 - » A single definition of GBV is adopted so that all members of the value chain can standardize efforts and create a common guideline.
 - » Training has been created across the entire value chain, particularly among managers, to ensure a good understanding of the importance of this fight against violence.
 - » Gender-based and sexual violence is prohibited throughout the value chain
 - » Measures and policies are created among all stakeholders to effectively combat any type of violence within the organization
 - » Ensure that codes of conduct regarding workplace violence are respected by all stakeholder
- » Indicator for children
 - » Women are faced with informal work which takes up a lot of time. The creation of measures to relieve women of this domestic employment, all stakeholders in the chain must take measures to strengthen the presence of women in the workplace. Therefore, it is important to ensure that measures regarding childcare are taken and respected. Stakeholders can invest in the creation of community children centers, for example, as the report explains.
 - » To this, we would like to add indicators on respect for children's rights. Therefore, it should be ensured that stakeholders do not participate in child labor. In this way, all stakeholders must be transparent about their policy.

4.4 Business models tools (Canva..)

This section is based on a study by Youth Co:lab, UNDP and Citi foundation¹⁴ dedicated to young entrepreneurs in order to promote gender equality and inclusiveness within their organization.

Below, you will find a table allowing you to create a gender-sensitive value chain for all parties involved, i.e. ensuring that gender is taken into account throughout the entire value chain: from the creation of the product or service until its sale. It is therefore recommended to create a code of conduct:

« Establish a code of conduct that outlines suppliers' expectations regarding gender equality, human rights, and labour practices. Communicate the code of conduct to all suppliers and enforce it through regular monitoring and evaluation »¹⁵

This worksheet will help you in developing a gender-sensitive code of conduct. The questions include important elements to guide you but you are free to modify them: it is your Worksheet and it must correspond to your values and your objectives

¹⁴ Breaking Barriers, Building successful Businesses: A gender inclusive toolkit for young entrepreneurs, Youth Co:Lab, UNDP & Citi Foundation

¹⁵ ibid



Worksheet 7

Developing a Gender-Responsive Supplier Code of Conduct

This worksheet will guide you in developing a gender-responsive supplier code of conduct that aligns with your business values and goals. The guiding questions will help you consider key elements when developing a code of conduct sensitive to gender issues. Use this worksheet to write your responses and reflections in the comments section. You can find this worksheet with sample responses to the guiding questions in the [Annex](#).

GENDER-RESPONSIVE SUPPLIER CODE OF CONDUCT -KEY SECTION	GUIDING QUESTIONS	COMMENTS
Purpose and Scope	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the purpose and scope of the code of conduct? How does it align with your business values and goals related to gender equality? 	
Key Principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What fundamental principles should be framed in the code of conduct? How do these principles promote gender equality and inclusivity in the supply chain? 	
Diversity and Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What measures should suppliers take to foster an inclusive workplace? 	
Consequences of Non-Compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the consequences of non-compliance with the code of conduct? 	
Monitoring and Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How will your business monitor and evaluate suppliers' compliance with the code of conduct? 	
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How will the code of conduct be communicated? 	
Capacity Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How will your business support suppliers in building their capacity to promote gender equality? 	
Collaboration and Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How will your business collaborate with other stakeholders to promote gender equality in the supply chain? 	

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