



# GENDER-INFORMED APPROACHES TO STRENGTHENING HUMAN RESOURCES AND OPERATIONS:

## A Training for Clean Cooking Enterprises

### Gender-Informed Business Models are More Effective

Clean cooking sector enterprises are actively working to scale the market and increase adoption of clean and efficient cookstoves and fuels. Many of them are applying a gender approach to strengthen their business models and increase socio-economic impacts, particularly for women and girls.

Evidence shows that women can catalyze the sector as employees and entrepreneurs working throughout the value chain. A recent study demonstrated that women are excellent candidates for selling clean cookstoves. In fact, they outsold their male counterparts by nearly 3 to 1. Women were more likely to understand the needs of women customers, more likely to pursue leads, and women consumers reported greater customer satisfaction when they purchased a cookstove from a female sales agent.<sup>1</sup> Tapping into female consumer segments is key given that women control over \$20 trillion of total consumer spending globally, and make or influence 80% of purchasing decisions.<sup>2</sup>



Photo credit: Practical Action

### Benefits of a Gender-Informed Approach

A gender approach helps enterprises understand the gender dynamics of every part of their business – from production and distribution to operations. Understanding these dynamics can lead to increased effectiveness and allow enterprises to better leverage opportunities to empower women.

**There are several advantages to adopting gender-informed approaches and practices. These include:**

- **Increased profitability, productivity, and customer satisfaction**
- **Contribution to reducing poverty and vulnerability among women and girls**
- **Strengthened long-term workforce commitment, leading to mitigation of turnover costs**
- **Increased workforce efficiency and competitive advantage**
- **Long-term company reputation or international accreditation**

### KEY STATS

- 3 to 1** Women outsold men cookstoves sellers by nearly 3 to 1 when they received agency-based empowerment and leadership training<sup>1</sup>
- \$20 trillion** Women control over \$20 trillion of total consumer spending globally, and make or influence 80% of purchasing decisions<sup>2</sup>

1. Johns Hopkins University, Bloomberg School of Public Health, USA ESVAK Community Development Initiatives, Kenya and Envirofit, Ltd Kenya (2015), "Understanding Impacts of Women's Engagement in the Improved Cookstove Value Chain in Kenya."

2. Dalberg (October 2014), The Business Case for Women's Economic Empowerment: An Integrated Approach." [http://dalberg.com/documents/Business\\_Case\\_for\\_Womens\\_Economic\\_Empowerment.pdf](http://dalberg.com/documents/Business_Case_for_Womens_Economic_Empowerment.pdf)

## THE CHALLENGE

As women seek to engage in and take advantage of new opportunities in the clean cooking sector, there are several common constraints that can slow their progress. Enterprises should have a strategy to help women overcome these barriers.

Women's potential as entrepreneurs and employees is limited by challenges such as lack of access to finance<sup>3</sup> and formal education or training, as well as by negative gender norms which tend to limit women's participation outside the home.<sup>4</sup> This gender gap is also evident in employment practices, including a significant wage gap for women who earn on average 10-30% less than men.<sup>5</sup>

### Common Constraints for Women Entrepreneurs and Employees<sup>6</sup>:

- Lack of access to affordable financing
- Lack of access to formal education and business training
- Lack of access to a variety of market actors and intermediaries, as well as valuable market data
- Mobility constraints
- Discriminatory cultural and gender norms that can limit opportunities to grow their businesses

6. The Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves (2013). "Scaling Adoption of Clean Cooking Solutions through Women's Empowerment: A Resource Guide." <http://cleancookstoves.org/binary-data/RESOURCE/file/000/000/223-1.pdf>

## WOMEN IN YOUR WORKFORCE

Despite these challenges, women increasingly have access to education and training, offering the sector an opportunity to take advantage of the growing resource of skilled and talented women. Diversity and talent retention can be achieved in part through gender balance, leading to an enhanced competitive advantage.

- **Women are an underutilized human and intellectual resource**
- **Women on your team can help the business gain better insight into customer preferences**
- **Employing women gives you a competitive advantage and drives innovation through diversity**

Enterprises in the clean cooking sector can offer fair, safe, and equitable working environments for employees. Companies that focus on people – developing and retaining talent – are more adaptable and have a stronger competitive edge. Enterprises should better understand gender dynamics and gender issues faced by employees as a core part of their business strategy, which will improve business performance and contribute to gender equality.

**“Gender stereotypes are generalizations on what is expected of men and women in a specific social context. They are over-simplified ideas of the differences between women and men, their skills, psychological attitudes, ambitions and behavior. Judgments based on these generalizations may initially appear to help save time and energy. In reality, they fail to capture the richness of individuals’ traits and abilities. The EU has identified the persistence of gender stereotypes as a root cause of gender imbalances and of labor market inefficiencies”**

**Source:** “Break gender stereotypes, give talent a chance - Toolkit for SME Advisors and Human Resource Managers”, European Commission, 2008 (page 17) – <http://www.businessandgender.eu>

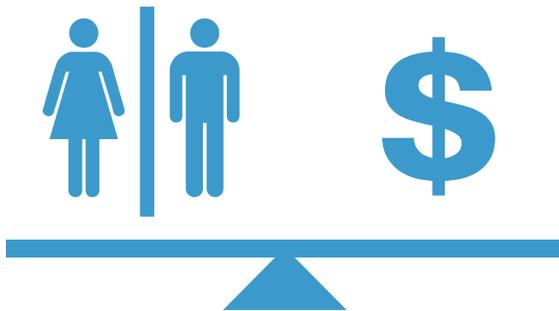
3. In Mexico for example, only 11% of commercial banks have specific SGB-focused strategies, and within this missing middle women are even less visible Fries, et al (September 2014), “Creating Opportunities: Strengthening the Ecosystem for Women Entrepreneurs in Mexico,” Value for Women, <http://www.v4w.org/images/generales/Resources/CreatingOpportunitiesReport-VfW-Dec2014.pdf>

4. Fries, et al, 2014.

5. ILO (2008). “Global Wage Report 2008-09: Minimum Wages and Collective Bargaining, Towards Policy Coherence.”

## INTEGRATING GENDER INTO THE OPERATIONS OF A CLEAN COOKING ENTERPRISE MAY INCLUDE:

- **Creating equal employment opportunities for women**
- **Ensuring equal pay for equal work in wages and promotions**
- **Providing a safe workplace free of harassment**
- **Offer training and capacity building for skills building and mobility in the company**



## GENDERING YOUR INTERNAL OPERATIONS - AN AVAILABLE RESOURCE

The Alliance and Value for Women have designed a training for clean cooking sector enterprises on how to design and implement a gendered operations model.

- **WHO IT IS FOR?** Managers of enterprises in the clean energy sector, of various sizes and stages of growth.
- **WHAT IS IT?** An introduction to approaches for gender-informed practices, which can be tailored to the needs of your firm, as well as additional reference material for further reading.
- **WHY DO IT?** The training provides guidance for building gender into the operations and human resources policies of your business. It explains how inclusion will enhance the performance of your firm, and provides examples of best practices for achieving this.



Photo credit: Chloe Shields - Cambodia



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## THIS TRAINING IS DESIGNED TO HELP GUIDE YOU AND YOUR STAFF IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF APPROPRIATE POLICIES, PROCEDURES, AND MANUALS THAT ARE SUITED FOR YOUR BUSINESS

The training includes information on:

- **The business case for gender-informed approaches**
- **Common challenges and solutions**
- **Methods and tools for implementation**
- **Best practices and additional resources**

This is part of a broader package of gender tools available to Alliance partners, including gender due diligence assessments, gendered value chain analysis, [best practices](#) for integrating gender throughout the sector, and agency-based [empowerment training](#). Additional or tailored support can be arranged based on the needs of your business.

### What else you can do:

- Analyze opportunities across your value chain for increased inclusion of women (producers, suppliers, distributors, service providers, etc.)
- Conduct gender-informed marketing and distribution so your products and services reach more women, by including gender experts and women staff in product design and marketing
- Develop a product or service that has a specific or intentional positive impact on women (example safe cooking alternatives, as women tend to cook more) or on closing the gender gap



Photo credit: AEST Ltd., Uganda, women drying briquettes

**For more information on the Alliance's gender tools and/or to access additional support, contact:**

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**THE OPPORTUNITY IS REAL. THE MARKET IS POISED TO SCALE. THE IMPERATIVE FOR ACTION IS OURS.**