

Tool 1.2: Institutionalise gender sensitisation sessions and allocate a budget for gender-inclusive activities

For building a gender-inclusive business, sensitisation sessions for all the employees stressing on the importance of the inclusion of women in business activities assume critical importance. This will eventually lead to an informed and sensitised team that positions women's inclusion as a core strategy. It would also be essential to allocate targeted budgets to prioritise and expedite the activities driving women's participation within your organisation.

Tool objectives

- To emphasise the importance of women's participation in your business team.
- To enhance the accountability, transparency, performance, and effectiveness of the implemented inclusive strategies within your organisation.

Action plan

Step 1: Session for the senior leadership team

In this session, the following aspects could be built in:

- ☐ Ensure equitable participation by men and women employees.
- ☐ Buy-in for consistent support from the senior management to ensure that the action plan created is for the long term and is integrated into the business vision.

The session can be made interactive and effective by including the following:

- ☐ Provide insights through case studies highlighting the importance of women's inclusion. For example,
 - ☐ [Advancing Women in Non-Traditional Roles](#), a case study by Interloop Limited, Hosiery Manufacturing, Pakistan.
 - ☐ [The Business Case for Change](#) by Bureau for Employers' Activities (ACT/EMP), International Labour Office, International Labour Organisation (ILO), May 2019.
- ☐ Explain the rationale for integrating women at three different levels (*suggested as per training conducted by [Value for Women \(VfW\)](#) under [Powering Livelihoods](#) programme*):

Leadership and workforce level	Market level	Value chain level
Set targets for women's representation in the board and management roles, enhance recruitment, retention, and promotion policies, and mentorship for women employees	Integrate women as potential customer segments via sex-disaggregated market data to understand women's preferences, develop products/ technologies tailored to their needs, and design inclusive marketing strategies	Partner with diverse suppliers/vendors and support the growth of women-led businesses within distribution networks, among others



Step 2: Session for entry-level and on-ground staff

Conduct two-hour virtual/in-person training sessions spanning two to three days to build the staff's capacities to support women customers' requirements, queries, and preferences.

- ☐ Develop content illustrating the challenges women customers face, including limited awareness of modern technologies, lack of technical knowledge, and mobility constraints.
- ☐ Role-plays on pitching to women customers, addressing their needs by highlighting benefits, resolving technical queries, and sharing impactful stories of existing women customers.
- ☐ Invite experts, such as financial institutions, last-mile delivery partners, and customer sales representatives from other organisations.

Step 3: Gender-inclusive targeted funding

- ☐ Conduct a gender gap assessment to identify potential areas for the inclusion of women (refer to '[Tool 1.1: Gender gap assessment for informed strategy formation](#)').
- ☐ Based on the needs assessment exercise, identify potential areas where dedicated strategies and funds are required. Following are the potential areas:
 - ☐ **Onboarding women employees:** Board members, senior-level management, field executives, or in customer-facing roles.
 - ☐ **Mentorship programmes** for women employees; capacity building and training for women customers.
 - ☐ **Outreach:** Gender-inclusive marketing collaterals, videos of women users, and gender-inclusive technology manuals (refer to '[Tool 4.2: Create gender-inclusive marketing collaterals](#)').
 - ☐ **Sex-disaggregated market research** to tap into potential women customers (refer to [Tool 3.1: Conduct sex-disaggregated market research](#)).
 - ☐ Establish a **monitoring and evaluation (M&E)** system.
- ☐ Set dedicated target numbers and milestones for institutionalising women's participation in respective areas for each financial year.
- ☐ Outline the expected outcomes of the set milestones and estimate the costs of implementing these initiatives. The cost heads would include the per-unit cost of human resources (HR) required, that is, salaries, partnerships for mentorship, training, and marketing agencies.

Note: It is essential to understand that it takes time to realise the outcomes of strategies deployed to integrate women within your business. Patience and a long-term vision to budgeting are crucial for sustained impact.

Pro-tips

1. Partner with a diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) consultant for training sessions and facilitate multiple training sessions in local languages and divide the on-ground staff into clusters.
2. Familiarise on-ground staff with concepts such as self-help groups, farmer-producer organisations, dairy cooperatives, and potential financing schemes for rural women.

Indicative: Required resources and cost and time implications

Resources: Settings for virtual training sessions such as internet, laptops, projectors, trainer, HR from the startup/organisation, hard copies of modules for on-ground staff

Indicative cost heads*	Cost implications Low: USD 0–2,500 USD Medium: USD 2,500–5,000 High: USD >5,000	Time implications Low: 1–3 hours/week Medium: 4–5 hours/week High: >5 hours/week	Frequency of expenses
Virtual training set-up	Low	-	One-time
Trainer	Low	High	One-time
Salaries to HR	Medium	Medium	Monthly
Print-outs/stationery	Low	-	Recurring

**Note: This calculation provides an overview of the primary cost categories associated with the implementation of this tool. Minor expenses may also be incurred.*

Source: Authors' analysis

Potential indicators to measure success

- Number of strategies integrated, such as inclusive policies (prevention of sexual harassment (PoSH), maternity leave, flexible timing), mentorship programmes for women employees, explicit gender goals in strategic documents, and others.
- Number of women customers reached via training of entry-level and on-ground staff on pitching, handling queries, and providing solutions to potential women users.
- Amount of funds allocated and spent for gender-inclusive strategies in each financial year.

Success story

As part of the [Powering Livelihoods](#) Programme, we conducted gender sensitisation sessions for cleantech startups with the support of a technical expert, [Value for Women \(VfW\)](#). After the session, five of six enterprises undertook measures to accommodate more women within their teams. These startups integrated inclusive Job Descriptions (JDs), identified women champions, designed inclusive collaterals, and undertook other related measures to make their business gender-inclusive. We also integrated dedicated milestones into the programme funding for each startup. Through the initial nudge by sensitisation sessions and targeted funding, startups have collaborated with women's networks and community organisations to expand their outreach to women users.