



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

 **IFAD**
Investing in rural people

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World Food
Programme

Gender transformative approaches for food security and nutrition



GOOD PRACTICE

Models to Empower Women in Outgrower Schemes

PREPARED BY

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SECTION 1

OVERVIEW OF THE METHODOLOGY

Name of the methodology**Empowering women in smallholder outgrower schemes through ten principles of success****Countries with implementation experience**

- **West Africa:** Ghana, Senegal, Sierra Leone
- **East Africa:** Rwanda, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania
- **Southern Africa:** Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia

Start/end date

Ongoing

Lead organization sponsoring the development and implementation of the methodology

AgDevCo is a specialist investor in African agribusinesses. It provides growth capital and support to deliver positive impact at scale. AgDevCo's Smallholder Development Unit (SDU) is a five-year programme that started in 2016. The SDU is able to provide support to share the costs of enhancing systems and processes that are intended to better link agribusinesses with smallholder farmers. At the same time, the SDU generates sustainable long-term market opportunities for smallholder farmers. Based on case studies from AgDevCo investees and SDU partners, the SDU developed the ten principles of success (listed below) for empowering women in smallholder outgrower schemes.

Purpose of the methodology and the domains of gender inequality that are addressed

- To improve gender equality and women's economic empowerment (access and agency) in outgrower schemes

Contribution of the methodology to wider development/organizational/project goals

As a private sector investor, AgDevCo's purpose is to build sustainable agribusinesses. Although gender issues are not the primary focus of its investments, AgDevCo believes that gender equality and women's empowerment are significant factors in the success of its investments. Consequently, AgDevCo's intention is to undertake investments that do no harm and safeguard both women and men, as well as create beneficial outcomes for both women and men.

Target group

AgDevCo targets women as farmers and suppliers, employees, intermediaries and entrepreneurs linked to agribusinesses and as buyers of fertilizer or agricultural inputs from agribusinesses. The SDU has a target of reaching 50% female beneficiaries and 30% youth (people under 35 years old).

SECTION 2

IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

Key entry points for applying the methodology

- Agribusinesses that are currently working with small-scale farmers as outgrowers or planning to work with them

Implementing partners

Agribusinesses implement their own strategies, sometimes in collaboration with third parties, such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The agribusinesses act as the interface between AgDevCo and the ultimate target group.

AgDevCo developed a gender flyer for agribusinesses (see resource materials) that it shares with potential investees. Project leads notify the business of AgDevCo's gender policy and each investee must sign up to AgDevCo's responsible business principles, which include safeguarding provisions. The minimum requirement is that agribusinesses do no harm to women and that there are no red flag environmental, social and governance risks.

Process of and criteria for selecting facilitators/champions/mentors

The gender workstream sits within the wider environmental, social and governance framework of AgDevCo and is coordinated by the impact/monitoring and evaluation team. Investment and project leads interact with agribusinesses, including on the topic of gender.

Training of facilitators/champions/mentors

AgDevCo staff receive an annual training/refresher on how to conduct gender-sensitive due diligence. They have also been provided with specific teach-in sessions that share lessons learnt about addressing gender inequalities in each of the portfolio countries. The SDU also actively engages in knowledge sharing through publications, workshops, conferences, blogs and webinars.

SECTION 3

IMPLEMENTATION CYCLE

Key steps in the implementation cycle

AgDevCo's ten principles of success to empower women in smallholder outgrower schemes are listed below.

— To improve productivity and market engagement

- Principle 1: Scale up and commercialize women's crops. Targeting typical 'female' crops and value chains automatically reaches many women. However, there is a risk of male appropriation once crops become profitable.
- Principle 2: Engage women as equal actors in male-dominated value chains and promote farming as a family business.
- Principle 3: Ensure women benefit from training. Pay attention to time, place and duration of training, invite the whole household to attend training, encourage women to attend through female role models (e.g. extension officers, lead farmers, training videos featuring women).
- Principle 4: Ensure women have access to productive resources and promote access to inputs and labour-saving technologies, including mechanization.
- Principle 5: Improve market access for women. Source from women's groups or female buying agents, aggregate produce locally and provide market information (e.g. via SMS).
- Principle 6: Ensure that contract farming schemes offer equal opportunities for women and men. Register all household members, rather than just the household head, and adapt criteria to enable farmers with smaller plots to participate.

— To improve agency and structures

- Principle 7: Ensure women benefit from income earned. Ensure women are aware of the income the household is receiving (e.g. spouses collect payment together).
- Principle 8: Promote equitable sharing and joint budgeting in the household. This can result in joint planning, sharing of workloads, and information sharing about production, practices and marketing. Joint decision making about income and other benefits will motivate women farmers to increase their productivity.
- Principle 9: Promote women's leadership in farmer organizations. Set targets for women's representation on committees. This may require training women to enable their effective participation and earn their respect from men; encouraging women's applications in job adverts; and mentoring women by internal staff (e.g. supervisors, human resource department or external experts if the company can afford it).

— To disseminate information

- Principle 10: Share success stories of gender-sensitive business practices of AgDevCo and/or agribusinesses and make the business case.

For more information and case studies on each of these principles, please refer to the publication, *Gender lens investing: the case for empowering women* (see resource materials).

There is no graduation among the principles. For example, principle 10 is not necessarily more effective than principle 1. Principles 1 and 2 are value chain-based (i.e. very crop-specific). Agribusinesses typically apply one to three principles and do so often without having a formalized gender strategy or policy. However, some agribusinesses are more gender-aware than others. The extent to which an agribusiness can actively pursue the principles of success will depend on their internal resources and know-how. To help agribusinesses develop a gender strategy, the SDU has prepared a practical guidance document to develop inclusive outgrower schemes. This document includes information on 'quick wins' that agribusinesses could implement to ensure their outgrower schemes benefit both women and men more equally.

Given the diversity in contexts and complexities of developing feasible and commercially attractive interventions, each company and business model may require different gender actions. For this reason, the ten principles of success in empowering women in outgrower schemes are to be used as general guidelines. Agribusinesses are encouraged to identify the gender-based constraints that affect their business, pilot interventions, and collect more information and consult with experts. As a minimum, they must ensure their activities do no harm to women and men, and include a zero tolerance policy for sexual harassment.

Average length of the implementation cycle

The implementation cycle depends on which principle is being applied and when the partnership with the SDU starts.

Graduation from the methodology

Agribusinesses operate in different contexts and have various degrees of gender inclusion and hence different outcomes. In some of the outgrower schemes, gender inclusion has led to successes in terms of women's economic empowerment and/or for the business itself. Other companies have yet to start implementing specific gender actions. It is not possible to come up with a 'set menu' of gender interventions.

SECTION 4

MONITORING

Monitoring system

— Internal by participants

Agribusinesses typically measure the number of female smallholder farmers they engage with, including number of women attending trainings and the number of female employees they have.

— External

When resources are available, external monitoring and evaluations are commissioned to assess deeper impacts. AgDevCo also works with an adapted version of the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) as part of selected externally commissioned impact studies (i.e. where gender is part of the impact thesis of a project).

Indicators

— Quantitative

The SDU captures sex-disaggregated data for the following metrics:

- Number of smallholder farmers reached by type of agricultural extension support and training, including information and communication technology for development (ICT4D) (e.g. using smallholder farmer management software) and occasionally innovative technologies (e.g. labour-saving tools or mechanization)
- Number of small and medium enterprise extension and management staff trained

- Number and percentage of smallholders who have established viable commercial relationships with buyers and agribusinesses
- Number and percentage of smallholder farmers obtaining agricultural inputs on credit from buyers and agribusinesses

— Qualitative

As part of the annual monitoring impact reports, which are sent to investees, and quarterly impact reporting for SDU partners, qualitative lessons are learnt about how women engage with the company as employees, suppliers or customers, and insights are gained on how the company could enhance its impact on women's empowerment.

SECTION 5

BUDGET

Main items of expenditure

AgDevCo has a specific gender budget to implement its internal gender policy and action plan. Agribusinesses typically do not have the internal resources required to actively implement gender interventions, although some may still decide to proceed with their own funds if there is a clear business case for doing so. Otherwise, agribusinesses typically require grants and/or NGO support.

Total budget

Not available

SECTION 6

RESULTS

Number of beneficiaries reached

The key metric for the SDU is the number and percentage of smallholder farmers who have established viable commercial relationships with buyers. To date, this figure is 183 861 total beneficiaries of which 49% are women and 30% are youth.

Main changes attributed to the methodology

— Gender-related changes in commercial agricultural operations

- Improved access to resources (e.g. inputs, training and mechanization) help women to close the yield gap between men and women.
- Improved agency as women get access to their own income, have more say in developing household budgets and have reduced time poverty due to mechanization.
- Community-level changes as a result of women being perceived as equal actors in the value chain (e.g. by the promotion of women in training videos, female extension officers and lead farmers, or women in leadership positions).

— Other changes

- Improved food security through sustainable links to commercial agribusinesses and the resultant income security.
- Increased income due to access to higher-value crops, fairer prices and premiums associated with certifications.
- Greater appreciation on the part of agribusinesses of the value of female employees who are often perceived as more detail-oriented in processing/post-harvest positions (e.g. grading and cleaning seeds).

Key success factors and strengths of the methodology

The following are the key success factors and strengths of the ten principles of success:

- The ten principles are modular (i.e. an agribusiness can select one or several interventions and does not need to apply all ten principles simultaneously). This provides the flexibility needed to tailor the methodology to the mandate of each agribusiness.

- The principles enable agribusinesses to target women’s economic empowerment through two key routes: improving access (to resources) and increasing agency (decision-making power). Ideally principles should be combined to ensure both aspects of women’s economic empowerment are being targeted.
- Some principles are based on a value chain approach (e.g. principles 1 and 2), whereas others are based on a farming as a family business (i.e. household level). This allows agribusinesses to have different entry points and ensures the principles are complementary.

Preconditions to successful implementation of the ten principles:

- The agribusiness needs to clearly understand the gender business case and AgDevCo’s remit. They also must demonstrate a willingness to allocate their own resources to implement gender-based actions or seek external funding. The SDU can contribute to household budgeting training expenses and promotes family farming.
- Women should be consulted for a needs analysis rather than having solutions imposed on them.
- If needed, gender-based interventions should be developed by businesses together with gender experts or internal staff who have benefited from capacity building exercises. The interventions should be piloted before scaling up.
- What gets measured gets done. Clear objectives, key performance indicators and metrics need to be in place to track progress on gender action plans.

Challenges and measures to overcome them

- Avoiding the development of household conflict (e.g. men’s perception of discrimination)
 - This can be overcome by promoting farming as a family business and by having male gender champions that support women. The champions are identified by the agribusinesses during consultations and interactions during training.
- Funding and human resources required to implement certain gender-based actions
 - Ensure companies are linked to grant providers and/or NGOs that can help to implement gender-based actions cost-effectively.
- Lack of understanding of the gender business case
 - Share practical case studies to ensure businesses understand that empowering women is both beneficial from a social/equity perspective, as well as from a commercial perspective.

Potential for upscaling

- **Requirements to support upscaling**
 - Strong buy-in by agribusinesses, which includes a reporting mechanism showing progress on gender-based actions.
 - Allocated funds and dedicated team or gender focal person to drive the process.
- **Potential improvements**
 - Networking and connecting agribusinesses to local players and NGOs that can support the business to implement gender-based actions.
 - AgDevCo and the SDU linking Women’s Economic Empowerment experts to agribusinesses where relevant and possible.
- **Adaptation**
 - Ensuring that agribusinesses understand AgDevCo’s remit as a private sector investor and how it can help to empower women in outgrower schemes.

Potential for replication

— Key enablers

– **Sharing knowledge and lessons learnt widely**

This includes making a strong business case for gender-based actions. In principle it is the task of the agribusiness to report lessons learned to AgDevCo through the annual monitoring process or through quarterly reporting to the SDU. AgDevCo may then consolidate lessons learnt to produce a knowledge-sharing document for wider distribution.

– **Partnerships**

Agribusinesses need to partner with relevant stakeholders (e.g. funders and NGOs) to help implement gender-based actions.

– **Buy-in by senior management of agribusinesses**

It is crucial that senior management buys into gender-based actions and understands the business case.

Sustainability of the methodology once project/external input is complete

Sustainability is a key consideration for the SDU. Projects need to be able to continue after grant support has ended. To ensure that this happens the agribusiness must have a clear business case and have the funds to continue the project using its own funding. AgDevCo has different teams (e.g. enterprise development team; environment, social and governance team; agriculture team), each of which provide services to the agribusiness if needed. The teams can send in a video consultant, gender expert or information technology consultant to help the business directly.

The SDU can fund the following types of activities:

- production and dissemination of farmer training materials (e.g. training manuals, posters, videos, graphics) on a range of themes including good agricultural practices, post-harvest loss mitigation, financial inclusion and household budgeting;
- provision and delivery of extension services and other forms of training (e.g. support for salaries, training and bicycles and motorbikes for extension workers, field officers and lead farmers);
- set up and support for the maintenance of information and communication technology systems, including digital farmer management and transparency systems;
- set up of farmer field schools, cooperatives, dynamic agro-forestry farming systems and community nurseries;
- set up of simple mechanization pilot initiatives;
- certifications (e.g. organic, FairTrade, Rainforest Alliance, UTZ) and related audits and traceability activities; and
- capacity building among micro-entrepreneurs working closely with agribusinesses to provide important services to smallholder farmers.

SECTION 7

RESOURCES

Publications

- AgDevCo (2017) *Successful models for empowering women in smallholder outgrower schemes*
https://www.agdevco.com/uploads/reports/SDU_Gender_Case%20Study_AW_digital_Jan%202018.pdf
- AgDevCo (2018) *Gender lens investing: the case for empowering women*
https://www.agdevco.com/uploads/Case%20Studies%20-%202018/AgDevCo_Gender%20report_A5_AW_digital.pdf
- AgDevCo (2018) Gender flyer for agribusiness to realise their full business potential
https://www.agdevco.com/uploads/Case%20Studies%20-%202018/AgDevCo_Gender_flyer_AW_digital.pdf

Blog

- AgDevCo (2018) Three practical steps agribusinesses can take to help close the gender gap in smallholder outgrower schemes
<https://www.rafllearning.org/post/three-practical-steps-agribusinesses-can-take-help-close-the-gender-gap-smallholder-outgrower>

Webinar

- Women's empowerment in smallholder finance, combining social and business goals for good
<https://www.rafllearning.org/post/webinar-materials-womens-empowerment-smallholder-finance-combining-social-and-business-goals>

Cover photo: AgDevCo Farmer keeping records at cattle dipping stations, Zambia

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