

AgDevCo<sup>o</sup>

# REALISING YOUR FULL BUSINESS POTENTIAL

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# CREATING NEW OPPORTUNITIES

Women already make a major contribution to your agribusiness – they are employees, suppliers, agents and consumers alike. But their full potential is often overlooked.

By breaking down barriers for women you can develop and capitalise on a valuable pool of talent, which can bring the following benefits to your business:

- > Increased productivity (yields) and reduced post-harvest losses, by tapping into local, committed and skilled talent
- > Improved product quality and supply chain reliability
- > Better understanding of your business from the consumer's point of view
- > Greater insight into how best to market and sell your products
- > Improved quality of business decision-making by being open to new ideas and perspectives
- > Positive branding as an inclusive business, which can lead to customer loyalty and premium pricing

## TYPICAL BARRIERS THAT PREVENT WOMEN FROM CREATING MORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUR BUSINESS INCLUDE:

- > Limited access to resources and inputs, including hired labour, equipment, financial services and technology
- > Time constraints owing to domestic responsibilities and lack of on-site childcare
- > Limited mobility owing to lack of transport to travel to work and marketplaces
- > Lack of financial independence
- > Lower literacy and financial training
- > Restrictions on land ownership and tenure
- > Sexual harassment and violence

## DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES AND BETTER BUSINESS DECISIONS

At Phata Sugar Cooperative in Malawi, women make up 27% of its executive committee, whilst female representation at Board level is lower at 17%. However, Phata's Board is chaired by a woman (see photo). Having identified real and perceived barriers to women holding leadership positions, Phata's management introduced support groups, mentorship programmes and gender-sensitive policies to empower its female employees. In June 2017, AgDevCo organised a workshop with Phata's Board and management to develop a gender policy and action plan. Following their adoption and internal awareness-raising, a second female joined the Board in December 2017 after being elected Vice-Secretary of the Executive Committee, the first woman in this position.



# PUTTING OUR FINDINGS INTO PRACTICE

At AgDevCo, we have many examples of how our agribusinesses are becoming more successful by making it easier for women to reach their full potential, wherever they are in the supply chain.

## FOUR KEY ROLES OF WOMEN IN AGRICULTURAL AFRICA



**Women as employees**



**Women as outgrowers, suppliers and producers**



**Women as intermediaries**  
(e.g. vendors, traders, agents and distributors)



**Women as clients and end-consumers**

## TO BE MORE SUCCESSFUL BUSINESSES SHOULD:

- > Help women move from low-paid, low-skilled roles to more senior positions
- > Provide a work environment with high standards of welfare and safeguarding, and with clear working terms and conditions that are balanced with domestic responsibilities
- > Employ women to reduce post-harvest losses and increase profit margins
- > Open farmer registration to all household members as individuals
- > Hold time-efficient training sessions at convenient times and locations
- > Rethink gender approaches to outgrower schemes
- > Use female lead farmers and extension staff to promote overall female participation
- > Monitor and address unintended changes in gender ratios
- > Remove mobility and safety constraints that discourage women from making transactions
- > Understand the positive outcomes of female empowerment at the household level
- > Use female intermediaries to capitalise on untapped market segments
- > Benefit women and communities by meeting commercial demand for healthier products
- > Empower women to gain access to finance through Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs)

## A CLEAR BUSINESS CASE FOR INCLUDING WOMEN

At Gulu Agricultural Development Company (GADC) in Uganda, ongoing investment is enabling women to work, learn and progress their careers. Extension staff provide financial literacy and agronomic training via video in local communities, which reduces travel time and makes it easier for women to combine work commitments and domestic responsibilities. Female buying agents have been recruited specifically to open up routes to untapped markets and product handling training has reduced post-harvest losses and contributed to higher profits. By recruiting female lead farmers, more women have been inspired to become involved in outgrower schemes, which has strengthened GADC's supply chain quality and reliability.



## **AgDevCo is an impact investor in agriculture in Africa.**

Our gender work is a fundamental component of our programme to develop our own and our investees' environmental, social and governance (ESG) practices. We believe that promoting gender equality is not only fair but also presents a significant opportunity to enhance the commercial and social impact potential of our investments.

### **MORE INFORMATION AND RESOURCES**

For general information about AgDevCo and our work

> [www.agdevco.com](http://www.agdevco.com)

For specific reports and publications

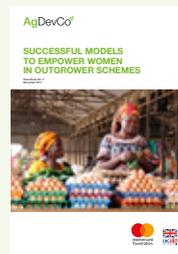
> [www.agdevco.com/about-us/reports-and-presentations.html](http://www.agdevco.com/about-us/reports-and-presentations.html)

To learn more about empowering women in your outgrower schemes

> [Successful models to empower women in outgrower schemes](#)

To read more about AgDevCo's approach to gender-balanced investing

> [Gender lens investing: the case for empowering women](#)



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