




**ASPEN NETWORK
OF DEVELOPMENT
ENTREPRENEURS**



aspen institute

**INTEGRATING A GENDER LENS INTO
SMALL AND GROWING BUSINESS
SUPPORT MEASUREMENT**



The Aspen Network of Development Entrepreneurs (ANDE) is a global network of organizations that propel entrepreneurship in developing economies. ANDE members provide critical financial, educational, and business support services to small and growing businesses (SGBs) based on the conviction that SGBs create jobs, stimulate long-term economic growth, and produce environmental and social benefits.

AUTHORS

Matthew Guttentag, Director of Research and Impact, ANDE

Mallory St. Claire, Senior Impact Analyst, ANDE

Nonceba Qabazi, Program Associate, ANDE South Africa

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Gender Lens Impact Measurement (GLIM) Fund was supported with the aid of a grant from the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Ottawa, Canada. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent those of the IDRC or its Board of Governors.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

EMERGING TOOLS AND LESSONS	4
INTRODUCTION	4
PROJECTS AND TOOLS	4
SUCCESS FACTORS IN DEPLOYING GENDER-LENS MEASUREMENT TOOLS	7
1. FACTOR IN TIME AND RESOURCE BURDENS FOR STAKEHOLDERS COLLECTING DATA AND PROVIDING DATA	7
2. CONTEXTUALIZE TO LOCAL CONTEXT AND BUSINESS PROFILE	8
3. INCORPORATE GENDER LENS MEASUREMENT INTO OVERALL IMPACT MEASUREMENT AND MANAGEMENT STRATEGY	9
RESEARCH AND PRACTITIONER PARTNERSHIPS: A KEY INGREDIENT	9
MOVING FORWARD	10
APPENDIX I - GENDER LENS TOOL COMPARISON DEFINITIONS	11
APPENDIX II - OTHER GENDER LENS AND IMPACT MEASUREMENT AND MANAGEMENT TOOLS	12

EMERGING TOOLS AND LESSONS

INTRODUCTION

In 2018, the [Aspen Network of Development Entrepreneurs \(ANDE\)](#), with the support of the [International Development Research Centre \(IDRC\)](#), launched the **Gender Lens Impact Measurement (GLIM) Fund** to enhance the awareness, rigor, and quality of impact measurement for organizations supporting entrepreneurs with a gender lens approach. Each grant from the fund went to a partnership between small and growing business (SGB) support organizations in Latin America and researchers to use measurement for driving improved gender-inclusive strategies. This synthesis report summarises the tools and lessons from these grants on using measurement to increase gender inclusion for SGB support organizations.

Together, these grants supported and tested tools for integrating gender lens into SGB support measurement for:


- Supporting SGBs with both a gender lens for agribusinesses and rural enterprises
- Integrating a gender lens into acceleration measurement
- Integrating a gender lens into measurement strategies for impact investment funds

In addition to the tools themselves, the use of researcher-practitioner partnerships also proved highly effective for the SGB support organizations.

PROJECTS AND TOOLS

The projects supported by the GLIM fund are summarized below.

- [Mennonite Economic Development Associates \(MEDA\)](#) partnered with [Agora Partnerships](#) to adapt MEDA's [Gender Equality Mainstreaming \(GEM\)](#) Framework for Nicaragua and Central America. The GEM framework was geographically contextualized and adapted to the agricultural sector, resulting in a new impact measurement methodology targeted at agribusiness SGBs in Latin America.
- [Root Capital](#) and [Value for Women](#) partnered to pilot and test a set of interventions to address gender inequalities and climate vulnerabilities within agricultural cooperatives. These [Gender Equity Grants \(GEGs\)](#) assisted agribusinesses to identify and address the need for improved policies and programs for women farmers facing climate-related threats to their livelihoods, while assessing the potential impact of such policies and programs.
- [Gente Del Futuro \(GDF\)](#) focused on developing the coffee production industry in Latin America and Africa by measuring a coffee training program with an emphasis on youth and women. GDF used an app called "Trace.coffee" to collect nuanced disaggregated gender data in partnership with the [William Davidson Institute at the University of Michigan \(WDI\)](#).

- 
- [Impact Hub](#) and the [Instituto Centroamericano de Administración de Empresas \(INCAE\)](#) looked at [accelerators as drivers of gender equality](#) in the SGB sector, specifically studying ways to apply a gender lens to SGB support programs and their measurement activities.
 - [Practical Action](#) and the [Instituto de Investigaciones Socio-Económicas of the Universidad Católica Boliviana \(IISEC-UCB, Institute for Socio-Economic Research of the Universidad Católica Boliviana\)](#) targeted gender inclusion in productive development projects, such as cocoa or banana production. The collaboration produced a [toolkit](#) for the monitoring and evaluation of productive projects with a gender-based approach.
 - [Nonprofit Enterprise and Self-sustainability Team \(NESsT\)](#) collaborated with [Dr. Ruta Aidis](#), academic researcher and gender expert, and the [UC Berkeley Haas School of Business Investing Practicum Team](#) to assess their current impact investing framework and propose [a new gender lens framework](#) and set of metrics, while testing those metrics with their investee SGBs. Based on the findings of this grant, NESsT was able to create and implement a new framework by adjusting their impact measurement tools.

COMPARATIVE MAPPING CHART

This table is adapted from a MEDA report, which compared their GEM tool to similar business-focused gender mainstreaming tools. The other tools developed by GLIM grantees have been added to this table for comparative purposes. See Appendix I and II for an explanation and links to other useful tools.

Tool	Focus on Gender	Targets companies	Facilitated process	Online Self-Assessment	Open Access (Free)	Systems Thinking	Intersectionality	Ongoing monitoring	Score, Certify, Report, Plan
GEM Framework (Compatible with ESG)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	S, R, P
Women's World Banking Gender Assessment	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x	R, P
V4W: Gender Inclusion Self-Assessment Tool	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	x	x	R, P
SEAF: Gender Equality Scorecard (Compatible with IRIS)	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	x	✓	S
EDGE Plus	✓	✓	✓	x	x	x	✓	✓	C
UN Women WEEI	✓	✓	✓	x	x	✓	x	x	S
Unirse (Spanish-language)	✓	✓	✓	x	x	✓	x	✓	C
UNDP Gender Equality Seal (for public and private enterprises)	✓	✓	✓	x	x	x	x	x	P, C
Gender Equity Now (GEN)	✓	✓	✓	x	x	x	✓	x	C
IDB Invest: WEP Tool	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	S, R
Practical Action: Toolkit for the monitoring and evaluation of productive products with gender-based approach	✓	x	x	x	✓	x	x	x	R, P
Root Capital: Gender and Climate Diagnostic Tool	✓	✓	x	x	✓	x	x	x	R, P
NESsT: How To Guide, Supporting Gender Inclusive Practices for Small and Growing Businesses – Phase 1	✓	✓	x	x	✓	x	✓	✓	R, P



SUCCESS FACTORS IN DEPLOYING GENDER-LENS MEASUREMENT TOOLS

While each tool tackled a different issue related to gender-lens measurement, the experience of the practitioners points to a set of common factors that should be considered when using any of the tools:

1. FACTOR IN TIME AND RESOURCE BURDENS FOR STAKEHOLDERS COLLECTING DATA AND PROVIDING DATA

When applying these tools, the grantees grappled with time and resource burdens that data collection placed on women-led SGBs. These data requirements competed with existing responsibilities, placing additional burdens on stakeholders. For women in the agribusinesses sector in particular, support organizations collecting data should determine the travel time, time spent away from work, and childcare burdens when doing any data collection that requires in-person attendance. This is particularly true for focus groups and other qualitative methods that are time-intensive. Any data collection method or process should be built around women's existing routines, as "failing to take this into account could lead to women being too distracted or hasty to fully participate."¹

Time and resource burdens should also be considered with respect to the needs of the organization doing the data collection. Different data collection modalities (i.e., in-person interviews, SMS surveys, online surveys) can vary in terms of time and monetary resources and should be selected depending on the types of data needed. For example, if an organization needs in-depth feedback about customer or stakeholder experiences, focus group discussions or interviews may be a better choice—but organizations should consider if these can be integrated into other touchpoints to reduce the additional time cost.

Nevertheless, when done efficiently, in-person data collection can be worth the effort. In the case of GDF, in-person data collection proved expensive in the short run but provided significant longer-term benefits. Survey respondents were distributed across a large geographic area, and so sending data collectors to the field dramatically increased transport costs and required the use of relatively complex mobile device data collection software. Nevertheless, GDF found that the in-person surveys resulted in positive interactions with their coffee suppliers, supplemented education and branding efforts for the cooperative by providing more exposure to the suppliers, and yielded insights about operational inefficiencies that could be used for project improvement that would have otherwise been missed. While the data collection was expensive, GDF stated that it helped to improve their overall organizational structure in the long term.

¹ "Toolkit for the monitoring and evaluation of productive products with gender-based approach," Practical Action, <https://answers.practicalaction.org/our-resources/item/toolkit-for-the-monitoring-and-evaluation-of-productive-products-with-gender-based-approach-brief/>, pg 18



2. CONTEXTUALIZE TO LOCAL CONTEXT AND BUSINESS PROFILE

Local contextualization of any gender-lens measurement tool is essential—and project plans should be altered to include time to enhance any tools for the context in which they are being deployed. Tools should be adapted both using the relevant local language or dialect as well as for clarity of terms used. Jargon and technical terms should be avoided in favor of clear, direct language. Depending on the target participant group, assessing literacy is also key. For areas with low levels of literacy or formal schooling, organizations should consider in-person participatory qualitative tools rather than written surveys.

For any tool used, indicators and question rankings should be customized according to SGB size. For example, local smaller SGBs may not have certain gender-sensitive policies or procedures in place as compared to larger businesses. During analysis, these indicators should be ranked or filtered according to revenue and staff size, along with other organizational factors. Different business models also will determine at which level gender inclusion will be measured. NESsT had to customize gender lens investment (GLI) indicators to address these different levels of gender inclusion shaped by certain business types. For example, for an SGB specializing in training and job placement, the metrics looked at the gender policies of the organizations in which the beneficiaries were placed. Other SGBs may have direct connections to their employees and formal relationships with suppliers; for example, NESsT's GLI metrics include examining their portfolio companies' suppliers.

In Practical Action's case, they found that qualitative tools "...allow grasping the different meanings and interpretations of words according to the cultural context."² Their project focused on indigenous populations in the highlands and lowlands of Bolivia and utilized qualitative participatory tools to collect information on gender differences. Qualitative tools can also be relatively easily modified to the target environment, since they often incorporate more open-ended approaches.

Local contextualization may also require input from local experts. For MEDA's grant, the evaluation team presented their tool to the public and solicited feedback from professors, activists, and industry experts. They also conducted focus group discussions with local gender monitoring and evaluation experts and women-led agribusinesses. "The contextualization process was extremely useful to understand what has been tried in a country and what has not...the tool was open source and the process [was] a learning experience, [which] contributed to receiving support and feedback from gender experts, impact measurement and monitoring experts, and the companies themselves,"³ MEDA reported.

Operational context is also a key consideration when identifying a mobile data collection method. While in-person surveys are more likely to result in positive interactions with stakeholders, branding awareness, education, and better understanding of operational inefficiencies, other data collection channels such as SMS or interactive voice response (IVR) have potential to bring as rich insights at a lower cost with more efficiency.

3. INCORPORATE GENDER LENS MEASUREMENT INTO OVERALL IMPACT MEASUREMENT AND MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

Gender lens measurement needs to integrate in the overall impact measurement and management strategy, rather than as a completely separate process or afterthought.

Impact Hub, for example, already had data collection systems in place to track basic information on entrepreneurs participating in their programs. By simply disaggregating this data by gender of the venture founding teams, they were able to gain a new perspective on gender issues in their programs. This included examining the ratio of women-led versus male-led ventures applying for acceleration and completing the program, percentage of ventures applying with a certain number of women on the founding team, and other key business metrics for the ventures. In addition, Impact Hub looked at gender-specific operational data such as the number of women entrepreneurs profiled on social media or communications materials, number of women business mentors. These analyses did not require a completely separate data collection process, but rather integrated gender considerations into existing processes.

NESsT used their GLIM grant to develop and integrate their GLI measurement strategy through a six-stage process that included two phases of piloting new metrics for their portfolio. To implement this new process, they altered their existing performance management tool to include gendered metrics, such as gender disaggregation of portfolio companies, income levels for technical/program staff versus management staff, demographics of employees, placements, suppliers, and distributors of portfolio companies, and existence of sexual harassment policies, among others. These new metrics were tested with portfolio company employees, suppliers, and distributors through focus group discussions. Moving forward, these metrics will be integrated into NESsT's overall systems and used to set gender inclusion goals for both the enterprises and the portfolio as a whole.


RESEARCH AND PRACTITIONER PARTNERSHIPS: A KEY INGREDIENT

The GLIM fund was designed to promote collaborative partnerships between researchers and practitioners within the SGB space. While the marriage of academia and practice results in valuable projects, the GLIM grantees reflected on how best to make these relationships work in an article on NextBillion. Key insights from both ANDE and the grantees include:

- Ensure entrepreneurial support organizations understand the research's main objective and audience.
- If SGBs are leading the collaboration, recommendations from researchers should be made in line with the program reality. To do this, researchers should prioritize traveling to the project area (or through virtual means) to understand the context. Desktop-based work through

² Toolkit for the monitoring and evaluation of productive products with gender-based approach," Practical Action, <https://answers.practicalaction.org/our-resources/item/toolkit-for-the-monitoring-and-evaluation-of-productive-products-with-gender-based-approach-brief/>, pg 21

³ "Gender Equality Mainstreaming in Impact Measurement (GEMIM), Final Report: Pilot Execution," MEDA, Agora, pg 16



literature reviews or standard application of methodologies does not guard against pre-conceived notions nor allow for realistic recommendations to be made.

- Time, effort, and financial resources into data collection are significant—however, GLIM grantees found that the end results of investing in data collection and on-the-ground research capacity were substantial. SGBs and SGB support organizations should not underestimate the tangible and non-tangible resources needed to strengthen impact measurement capacity.

MOVING FORWARD

These pilot projects show that, when done with the right approaches, gender-lens measurement can be a powerful way to drive inclusiveness in SGB support programs. Moving forward, there are a number of opportunities for funders, researchers, and SGB support organizations themselves to continue to advance gender-lens measurement, including:

- Continuing to adapt the many existing tools (both those tested as part of GLIM as well as the tools outlined in the comparative mapping chart above) into local languages and contexts.
- Testing the comparative value of different tools in measuring and driving different gender-related outcomes in various contexts, similar to the comparison table that MEDA developed.
- Connecting the content of different gender-lens measurement tools with different low-cost data collection platforms (SMS-based, IVR-based, etc.).
- Connecting gender-lens measurement tools to tools that cover intersecting issues such as climate.
- Target funding toward developing gender-lens measurement tools and building capacity to implement these tools for both SGBs and SGB support organizations.

APPENDIX I – GENDER LENS TOOL COMPARISON

DEFINITIONS

- A. Focus on Gender: Does the tool explicitly focus on Gender Mainstreaming?
- B. Targets companies: Is the tool meant for use with SMEs?
- C. Facilitated process: Does the tool offer an option to have a facilitator conduct or support the assessment?
- D. Online Self-Assessment: Does the tool offer an online self-assessment option?
- E. Public domain (Free): Is the assessment offered for free? Note that while the materials maybe available online at no cost to businesses, there may still be costs associated with facilitation (hiring a consultant/team). There may also be costs associated with getting/remaining certified. A checkmark in this column signifies that the materials are in the public domain and available free to access online.
- F. Systems Thinking: Does the tool take into consideration other market actors including customers and suppliers? Most tools focus solely on the businesses internal working and governance. Not all assessments consider factors impacting performance or gender equality that are external to the business itself. A check mark in this category does not represent the quality or depth of a tool's incorporation of systems thinking, but rather that they include some indication that their assessment goes beyond simply the workplace.
- G. Intersectionality: Does the tool consider social intersections that can exacerbate inequality for women? Most tools focus on gender exclusively, but some also consider other social categories including, for example, the rural/urban divide, poverty levels and race.
- H. Ongoing monitoring: Is this tool designed to monitor progress and promote learning over time or collect longitudinal data? Some tools, including the SEAF scorecard are designed to be integrated into a company's HR data collection during the initial assessment. The goal is then to have the company self-monitor and become aware of changes over time.
- I. Score, Certification, Report, Plan: What is the ultimate product of the assessment for the business? Scores are often helpful for understanding a company's relative performance. The term "score" here may also indicate a ranking, a benchmark, or placement on a spectrum. Certification (or a seal) results in a business being able to co-brand with the certifying organization. A certification may be used to market the company for a specific amount of time (e.g. GEN is 3 years), and often requires an annual fee and recertification upon expiry. Assessments may also result in a performance report and/or an action plan to close gaps.



APPENDIX II – OTHER GENDER LENS AND IMPACT MEASUREMENT AND MANAGEMENT TOOLS

[ADB Gender Toolkit](#), 2014

[B-Corp](#), also see [B-Corp Certification](#), 2006 (B Lab founded)

[Bloomberg Gender Equality Index](#), 2020

[Calvert: open source Gender Equity Underwriting Framework](#) (Data provider)

[Enclude Gender Benchmarking Tool](#), pre-2015

[Equileap Scorecard](#), (Data provider), 2016

[Equilo](#) (App)

[ILO Participatory Gender Audit](#), 2012

[Interaction Gender Audit Handbook](#), 2010

[IRIS/IRIS+](#), 2019-2020 (though IRIS was developed in 2008)

This appendix is sourced from a MEDA report.