

EMPOWER & UNITE

Accelerating Women Entrepreneurs

A Handbook for Practitioners



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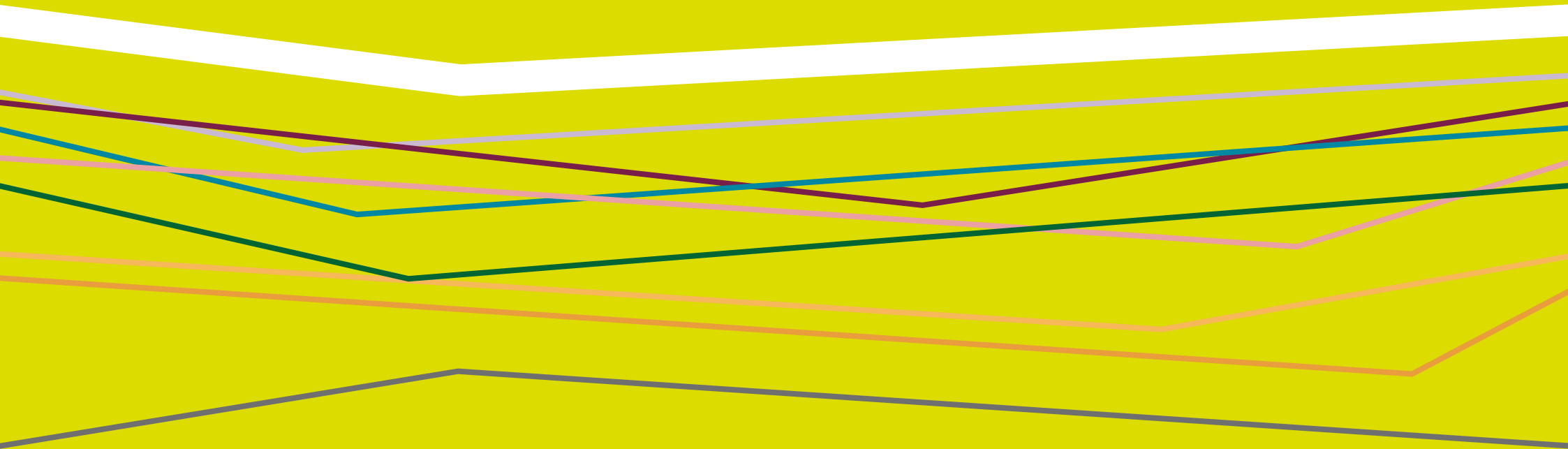
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INTRODUCTION



Introduction

About this Handbook

This is an interactive resource designed to equip you with the knowledge and strategies required to meet the needs of women entrepreneurs.

This handbook can be applied in the context of a women-only programme or to better support women founders within a mixed gender programme.

We recognise that gender is not binary and so depending on the context, you may choose to use this handbook as a guide to reflect on how to make your programme more accessible, inclusive and equitable for other genders as well.

WHO IS THIS HANDBOOK FOR?

This handbook is for you if:

- › You are running or planning a project that incorporates support for mixed gender entrepreneurs and **want to attract more women entrepreneurs and/or better support them.**
- › You are running or planning a project that incorporates support for women entrepreneurs and **want to improve the programme or learn from the challenges and successes of others.**
- › You are looking to **select the right partners to run a programme** that aims to support women entrepreneurs, and would like to use this handbook to inform your selection.

- › You are **new to entrepreneurship support programmes & women's empowerment** and want to learn more about both.

HOW WILL IT HELP YOU?

This handbook will equip you with:

- › The **business case** for accelerating women entrepreneurs to help your project team convince partners, funders or other key stakeholders of the need for this kind of a programme.
- › An understanding of the **key barriers women entrepreneurs** face.
- › The **basics of acceleration** with links to more detailed resources that can help you navigate launching an Accelerator programme if you are completely new to acceleration.
- › **Guiding questions** to help you decide whether to run a mixed gender programme that applies a gender lens or a women-only programme.
- › A **self-diagnosis** to identify what you have already considered or taken action on when it comes to applying a gender lens to Acceleration and what modules of the handbook will be most useful to you.
- › **Key strategies** to apply a gender lens to each component of an Accelerator programme.

- › **Insights from** Accelerator programmes that have applied a gender lens.
- › **Additional resources** to build your expertise around gender and Acceleration or help you develop content for a programme that aims to support women founders.

HOW TO USE THIS HANDBOOK

The handbook has been designed in a modular format to allow you to jump straight to the topics that are most relevant to you. At the start of the handbook you will find information around making the business case, a glossary of key terms, and a section on getting started. From there, each module will focus on a particular component of an Accelerator programme and will walk you through:

- › Acceleration basics (for those new to Acceleration)
- › Why it matters
- › Key strategies for applying a gender lens
- › Additional resources for deeper learning

THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN USING THIS HANDBOOK:

1. Gender is not binary: We acknowledge that gender identity is a spectrum and the entrepreneurs that your programme supports may not identify as men or women. Many of the strategies included in this handbook can help your team consider the needs of all gendered groups throughout the design and delivery of the programme and we strongly encourage you to do so. For the purposes of this handbook we will primarily

focus on women, given the extensive data we have around the barriers they face, how programmes have been successfully adapted, and the demand for initiatives that support them.

- 2. Context is key:** A deep understanding of the local context is a prerequisite for developing a successful Accelerator programme that meets the needs of women and all genders. This handbook will provide a range of possible strategies for you to consider, however it is up to you to determine which will be most suitable for your programme's unique context. Selecting the right partners to implement the programme, who ideally have this understanding, is an important early step which the handbook will also address.
- 3. Start small:** We encourage you to take a lean approach to applying a gender lens to your programmes. First choose a few strategies that you would like to test and get feedback on. Implement those strategies, learn from the process, look out for unintended consequences and adapt your approach.
- 4. The importance of 'intersectionality':** Gender is just one factor that may influence how an entrepreneur experiences and benefits from your Accelerator programme. Race, culture, religion, background, age, ability, and other factors can also impact their experience and combine to magnify any areas of advantage or disadvantage. For this reason, it is important to not only consider gender differences but also the rich diversity of perspectives and backgrounds you have represented among programme participants and how you can maximise the impact of your programme for everyone.

Glossary

Accelerators	Time-limited entrepreneur support programmes that work with cohorts or “classes” of ventures to provide mentorship and training with the purpose of helping those ventures validate and scale their business model, with a special emphasis on connecting early-stage ventures with investment. Often used synonymously with Incubator. For the purposes of this handbook we will refer to Accelerators but if you are running an incubator, the guidance provided in this handbook will still be applicable to your programme.
Incubators	Typically refers to entrepreneur support programmes that take earlier stage businesses, are run over a longer term or not time bound and often focus support on mentorship, coaching and the provision of co-working space, with the aim of helping startups succeed and grow.
Venture	A new business or business activity, especially one that involves risk. There are other terms used in the sector to refer to an early stage or small business i.e. startup, enterprise, etc. For the purposes of this handbook we will primarily use “venture” however the guidance will be applicable to most entrepreneurship support programmes working with small or emerging women-led businesses.
Women-led	There are differing definitions for women-led or women-owned ventures across the sector. UN Women and many others define it as a venture that is more than 51-per-cent owned, managed and controlled by women. This is the definition we will use for this handbook, but your definition may differ depending on your context.
Gender	Gender refers to the range of characteristics that society has constructed and associated with women, men, and those who do not identify with either of those two categories. These include the roles and relationships of and between those groups, which varies from society to society and can change over time.
Gender Lens	A gender lens is the deliberate consideration of how your activities may be experienced by different gender groups. Applying a gender lens may reveal that your activities advantage certain gender groups, whilst disadvantaging others.
Gender Equity	Gender equity means fairness of treatment for all genders, according to their respective needs. This can include initiatives that are different for different genders, but that allow for opportunities and benefits to be distributed fairly.

Gender Bias

Gender bias is a preference toward, or negative opinion of, one gender, which is based on their perceived role within society. It influences judgment and can lead you to treat certain gender groups unfairly. These biases are often unconscious, making them even more important to identify and combat.

Power Dynamics

Power is the capacity to control or influence the behaviour of others. And gendered power dynamics are the ways in which people from different gender groups interact with each other, where one has more power than the other.

Safe Space

A safe space is a formal or informal place where people feel physically and emotionally safe. The term 'safe,' refers to the absence of trauma, excessive stress, violence (or fear of violence), or abuse. It is a space where marginalised groups feel comfortable and enjoy the freedom to express themselves without the fear of judgment or harm.

Intersectionality

The complex, cumulative manner in which the effects of different forms of advantage or oppression (in relation to gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, religion, etc.) combine, overlap, or intersect.

Case studies

Throughout this handbook, you will hear from a number of projects, introduced below, that have applied a gender lens to an Accelerator programme. They share their insights and real-world examples of how they have applied some of the suggested strategies to better support women-led ventures.



KAPITA BUSINESS HUB'S SCALEUP ACADEMY (IRAQ) →

GIZ supported the establishment of KAPITA Business Hub's ScaleUp Academy. Located in Bagdad, Iraq, the programme works with mixed gender cohorts of technology startups by offering an intensive 9 week programme that includes general business and tailor-made sessions, helping businesses grow and become investment ready. Given the young nature of the entrepreneurship ecosystem in Iraq, they chose to run a mixed gender programme as the pipeline wasn't big enough to run a women only programme – meaning the number of scalable technology startups led by women was too small to make a women-only programme worthwhile. They also found, after running three cohorts of the programme, that a more inclusive approach was needed at this stage of the ecosystem.

This is the first accelerator GIZ has supported in the country. One of the key reasons they chose to partner with the Business Hub is that its founder is a well-known entrepreneur who has himself founded several ventures, is a shareholder in many more and is very well connected in the region. He has lived experience and knows what training entrepreneurs requires, and brings credibility to the programme. The Business Hub also expressed from the start that they wanted to start an angel investment network for ventures to access funds post-graduation. [Read more on the ScaleUp Academy here](#)

HER & NOW (INDIA) →

GIZ partnered with the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Government of India, to deliver programmes that support aspiring and existing women entrepreneurs across the country. Their seven-month accelerator programme helps women-led enterprises from tier II and III cities in the North Eastern Region, Rajasthan and Telangana, Maharashtra, and Uttar Pradesh to scale up, with critical learning on building teams, fundraising, leadership, and other customized sessions.

They work with women entrepreneurs who are not typically reached by traditional entrepreneur support organisations, and go beyond the big cities, working primarily with Micro and Small enterprises. They do this by partnering with local organisations who deeply understand the needs of women entrepreneurs in each region. To date, they have supported 700 women-led enterprises.

WOMEN FOUNDERS ACCELERATOR (ALBANIA)

GIZ partnered with the Women Founders Network in Albania to run a four month accelerator programme to support women-led ventures, the first of its kind in the country and in the greater Western Balkans. The programme was co-delivered with Spring Activator, an international entrepreneurship support organisation, and comprised a hybrid virtual and in-person accelerator programme made up of high-intensity bootcamps complemented by expert-led online sessions and mentorship. Through the programme, the entrepreneurs were able to explore regional and global business expansion opportunities, gaining knowledge to help them scale their businesses and become investment ready.



(© GIZ/India)

Why Accelerate Women Entrepreneurs?

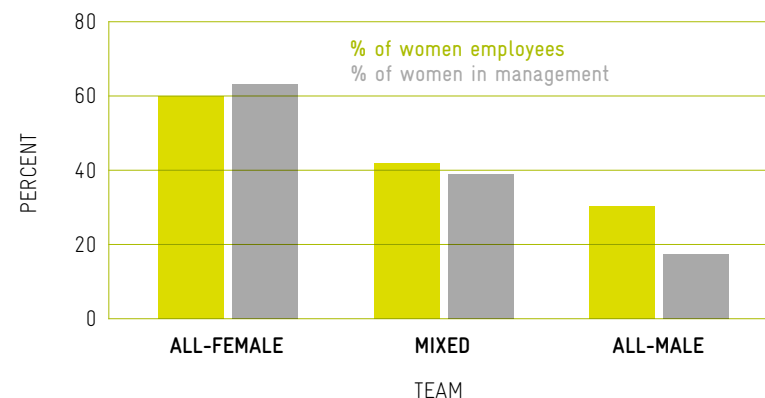
THE BUSINESS CASE

In this section, you'll find the latest research and a few key arguments to help you make a compelling case for accelerating women entrepreneurs in team meetings, funding proposals and partnership discussions.

Investing in women entrepreneurs is good for development.

- › Research shows that when women run their own businesses, they **employ more women**.¹
- › Startups with at least one female founder hire 2.5 times more women.²
- › And when more women work, the economy grows. With more women in the workforce, economies are more **productive and diverse and incomes are more equitable**. For example, according to the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) there would be an estimated increase of 15 % of worldwide GDP if women participated equally in the economy.³
- › Economies that have high numbers of women entrepreneurs are also **more resilient to financial crises** and experience economic slowdowns less frequently.⁴
- › Studies also show women generally have a **smaller impact on the environment**, making more sustainable and resource efficient decisions for both their households and businesses.⁵

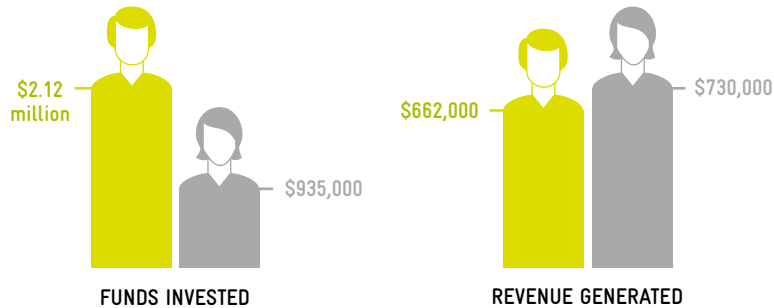
FIGURE 1: Share of women employees and women in management in startups with all-female, mixed and all-male founding teams



(Worldbank, 2021, *In Search Of Equity. Exploring Africa's Gender Gap in Startup Finance*)

- › Finally, we need women creating products and services that **meet the needs of women and girls**. 85 % of product designers and engineers are men⁶ and too often we have had men designing products and services that fail to take the perspective, desires and needs of women into account.

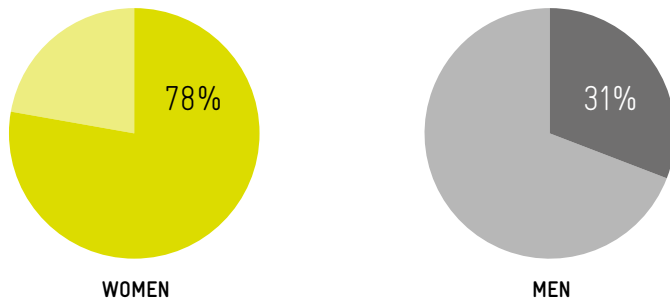
FIGURE 2: Funds invested in and revenue generated by startups founded or co-founded by women vs. men



Startups Founded or Cofounded by Women Garner Less in Investments but Generate More Revenue

Sources: MassChallenge; BCG analysis. Note: Of the 350 companies included in the analysis, 258 were founded by men, and 92 were founded or cofounded by women.

FIGURE 3: Return on investment by startups founded or co-founded by women vs. men



Original source for graphics: masschallenge.org

Women-led ventures are a good financial bet.

- › Investing in women entrepreneurs is not just good for development, it's good for business. Research shows that startups founded or co-founded by women **generate more revenue** and have a **better return on investment**.⁷
- › It is also very clear that achieving **gender diversity** in executive teams leads to **better business performance**.⁸

Acceleration is an effective tool for entrepreneurial growth & success.

- › Accelerators play a **critical role in supporting ventures** by 'increasing awareness of entrepreneurial opportunities and pathways, providing vital early-stage support, and facilitating engagement between key stakeholders (i. e. entrepreneurs, investors, corporations, and government).'⁹
- › On average, ventures that **participate in accelerators increase their revenues, number of employees, and outside investment by greater margins** than those that applied but were rejected.¹⁰
- › And research shows that this is equally true across both high income and emerging market contexts.¹¹

Unfortunately, women face many barriers to launch and grow their businesses.

- › Gender differences in entrepreneurship have been well documented. Here are some of the key barriers women-led ventures commonly face:

TABLE 1: Barriers women entrepreneurs face when launching and growing their business

<p>Financial barriers Barriers that prevent easy access to the financial acumen and capital that women entrepreneurs need to grow their business.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Low financial literacy › Difficulty accessing capital due to investor bias, regulatory requirements, difficulty providing collateral for loans, and gender based discrimination from lenders. On average women-led ventures in emerging markets obtain about one quarter of the equity financing of men-led ventures.¹² › Often not in control of family finances › Male dominated investment firms/networks
<p>Legal and Regulatory barriers Laws and regulations that restrict women’s mobility, business activity and freedoms.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › In 108 economies, women cannot run a business in the same way as men due to laws that prevent women from opening a bank account, registering a business, signing a contract or accessing credit.¹³ › 30% of economies still restrict women’s freedom of movement, determining whether they can travel outside their home, their country or choose where to live.¹⁴
<p>Cultural and Social barriers Cultural norms, biases and structural inequalities that make it more difficult for women to pursue and succeed in entrepreneurship.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Traditional gender roles and stereotypes that discourage women from participating in the workforce or running a business › Gender based discrimination and violence, gender bias, sexual harassment › A double burden of paid work and unpaid care work › Obligations to support extended family › Male dominated networks of peers › Gender differences in business sectors like technology or energy, which make it more difficult for women to start businesses and succeed.¹⁵





Individual barriers

Internal or personal barriers (often caused by gender norms and stereotypes) which limit women's confidence and ability to pursue and succeed in entrepreneurship.

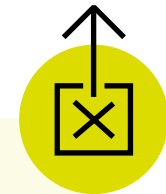
- › Lack of confidence
- › Imposter syndrome
- › Higher aversion to risk and fear of failure
- › Lack of access to education/training - particularly in STEM fields
- › Lack of access to technology
- › Less contact with business networks, the supply industry and markets¹⁶
- › Fewer role models and mentors - 'You can't be what you can't see'

- › As a result of these and other barriers, only one in three businesses are owned by women globally.¹⁷



Launching a programme in a new country and don't have a good **understanding of the context specific barriers facing women entrepreneurs?**

Check out **this resource** to learn more about that country's laws and regulations for women in business or entrepreneurship.



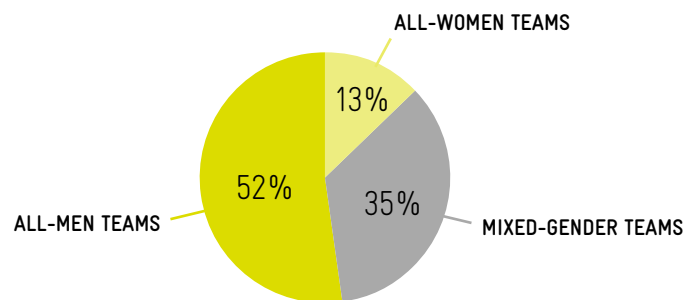
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ON BARRIERS FOR WOMEN-LED VENTURES:

- › [Gender Differences in Entrepreneurship](#)
- › [Accelerators as Drivers of Gender Equality – A Guide to Gender Lens Acceleration](#)
- › [The Confidence Gap](#)
- › [In Search of Equity: Exploring Africa's Gender Gap in Startup Finance](#)

Accelerators are not helping women get the support they need.

- › Not enough women-led ventures are applying to Accelerator programmes.¹⁸
- › When women-led ventures do participate, they don't benefit as much as men do and acceleration actually exacerbates the gender gap in equity finance.¹⁹ Male-led ventures raise on average 2.6 times more equity than women-led ventures.
- › This may be due to the fact that women are often not the ones designing the programmes or making the investment decisions. Of 131 corporate-run accelerators around the world identified in 2016, 87 % were run by men²⁰ and women make up just 12 % of the decision-makers in venture capital firms.²¹

FIGURE 4: Gender makeup of founding teams that apply to accelerators



(Source: GALI, 2020, [Accelerating Women-led Startups](#))

But Gender-lens Acceleration can help.

When programmes are tailored to attract more women and better meet their needs, outcomes for women-led ventures improve.

- › GALI research has found that the inclusion of women in selection committees and mentorship pools is associated with greater participation of women entrepreneurs in acceleration programmes.²²
- › Village Capital found that using a more democratic Peer Selection investment model (rather than investor selection) reduced implicit bias and got more funding to women.²³
- › A World Bank Gender Innovation Lab mindset training programme in Togo that focused on personal initiative and soft skills for women was correlated with significant business performance improvements.²⁴
- › When women are making decisions on investments, they are twice as likely to invest in female founders.²⁵

If Accelerator programmes successfully apply a gender lens to their programmes, they can play a powerful role in levelling the playing field for women entrepreneurs.

There is a global appetite for women's entrepreneurship initiatives

- › Initiatives that support women entrepreneurs are aligned with multiple Sustainable Development Goals:



- › Women entrepreneurs have been disproportionately affected by the economic repercussions of COVID-19²⁶ and there is a risk that COVID-19 will undo decades of progress in advancing women's entrepreneurship²⁷

So the evidence is clear. Investing in women entrepreneurs through innovative gender lens Acceleration programmes has the power to combat the concerning repercussions of COVID-19 on women entrepreneurs, level the playing field for their growth and success, welcome more women into the workforce, contribute to more sustainable and resilient communities and ultimately grow economies.

MODULE 1

GETTING STARTED



Module 1 **Getting Started**

WHAT IS AN ACCELERATOR?

The purpose of an Accelerator is to help an entrepreneur validate and grow an early business idea. An entrepreneur will usually join an Accelerator with an idea that has some early traction - they have a clear product/service and they have made some sales, but the business model and the assumptions that underpin it still need to be tested. An accelerator programme can help a founder answer questions like:

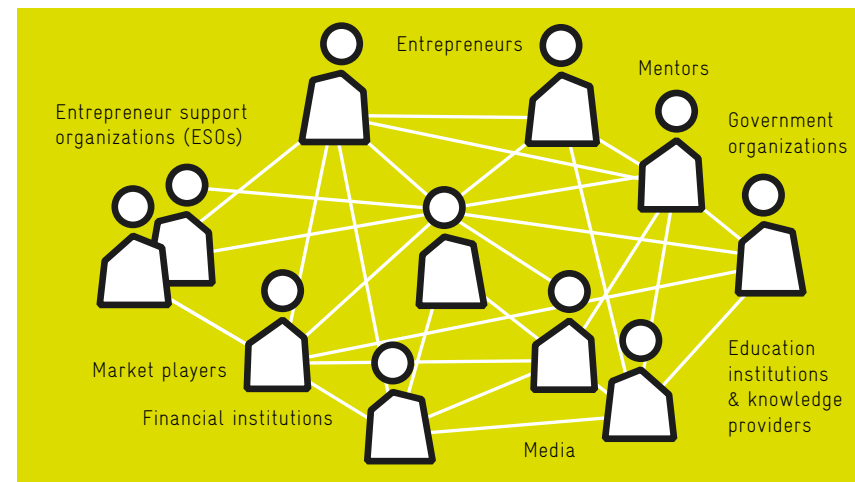
- › Is the product/service really needed? Is it solving a problem?
- › Who needs it? Who is the target customer?
- › Does the customer actually want that solution?
- › How will it make money?
- › Can we scale it?

Through mentoring, capacity building and connections, Accelerators can help early stage ventures answer these questions faster than if they were working alone, providing valuable guidance as they navigate the many challenges they will face as they validate their business models.

Accelerators differ in effectiveness but in the most successful programmes, entrepreneurs refine their business model, plan for scale and access funding faster than ventures who do not participate in these kinds of programmes.

Effective programmes also work beyond the programme itself to engage with and influence the entrepreneurial ecosystem that their ventures are operating in. There are a number of factors that can either support or undermine the growth and success of early stage ventures and as you'll read more about in [Module 7](#), an Accelerator programme can play a powerful role in linking their programme participants with the rest of the ecosystem as well as influencing ecosystem players to foster a more conducive environment for entrepreneurial success.

FIGURE 5: Entrepreneurial ecosystem players



(Source: GIZ/Ecosystem Guide)

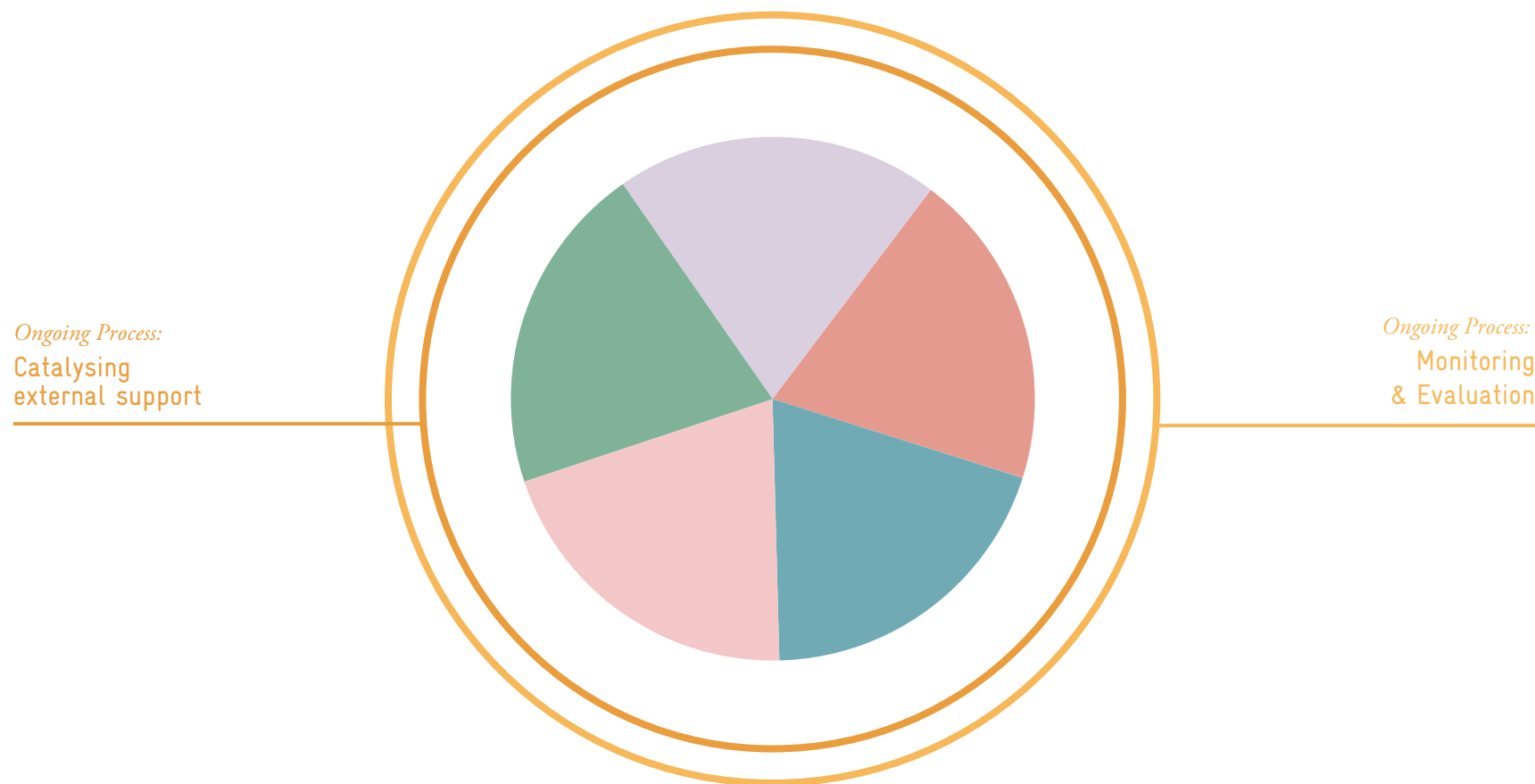
Most Accelerator programmes share a common process which is reflected in the Accelerator Lifecycle below. In the modules

ahead, we will present strategies to apply a gender lens to each of the key activities of the programme lifecycle.

FIGURE 6: Accelerator Life-Cycle

ACCELERATOR LIFE-CYCLE

Click on the icons to learn more



(Source: Authors)

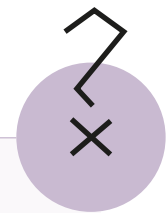
PREPARE

DETERMINE YOUR OBJECTIVES

Firstly, what is the purpose of your Accelerator programme? Is there a larger goal beyond helping participating ventures grow? What is the problem the programme aims to address, who else is working to address that problem and how can the programme fill a gap or add value? For example, an Accelerator

programme may be established with the aim to:

- › Generate innovative solutions to climate change
- › Stimulate job growth
- › Develop new clean energy technologies
- › Improve deal flow for impact investors in the region



Additional questions to consider:

- › **Will the programme focus on a particular *stage of venture development* (idea/startup/growth)?**

This will depend on the programme objectives, what the need is in your particular context, and where there may be a gap in the ecosystem.

- › **Will the programme focus on a particular *sector* i.e. health, tech, education, agriculture, etc. or be sector-agnostic?**

Is there a need for innovation in a particular sector? Does the project already involve partners with particular expertise? Or is the project interested in attracting a wide range of ventures?

- › **What will the *geographic focus* of the programme be?**

Will it recruit ventures from a particular community,

country, region, or globally? Will they be from rural or urban areas? What does the pipeline look like for each of these options? While pipeline can be smaller, there is benefit in focusing on a smaller area in order to leverage local partners and develop the local ecosystem.

- › **Will the programme target for *profit companies or social enterprises*?**

Is the goal to generate economic growth, to solve social problems through business, or both?

- › **What is the programme's *value proposition*?**

Why would a venture apply to this programme over the others available to them? Is there a value proposition for investors as well? Why would they source deal flow from this programme?

Secondly, why is there a desire to apply a gender lens to this Accelerator programme? Has an existing programme experienced difficulty attracting women and wants to improve the gender diversity of their programme participants? Are women entrepreneurs largely underserved in the local context and there is a desire to design a programme to fill that gap? Or is the goal to adapt an existing programme to be more inclusive of other marginalised gendered groups?

Getting clear on the programme's objectives is key for:

- › Getting the right partners on board
- › Attracting the right funders
- › Targeting the programme's recruitment channels to find the right entrepreneurs
- › Tailoring the programme design to provide the most relevant and impactful support

SELECTING PARTNERS

There are a range of partners you may engage in your Accelerator programme.

- › Innovation Hubs
- › Government ministries
- › Community organisations
- › Business associations
- › Women's groups
- › Education/training providers

- › Universities
- › Financial institutions
- › Micro-finance providers
- › Investment firms

When considering who to engage as a partner in the delivery of an Accelerator programme, look for those that meet the following ideal criteria:

- › **Aligned vision and strategic goals:** Do the partner's vision and strategic goals align with the programme's vision and objectives?
- › **Understanding of the local context:** Is the partner able to tailor the programme to meet the needs of the target audience?
- › **Entrepreneurship experience:** Does the team have the credibility to train and/or mentor entrepreneurs?
- › **Strong connections within the local entrepreneurial ecosystem:** Can the partner connect entrepreneurs with other key players (mentors, investors, industry experts), networks or markets in the ecosystem?
- › **A commitment to gender equality within the organisation itself:** Does the partner prioritise gender diversity, equality and inclusion in their own team?
- › **A track record of delivering effective programmes:** Can the partner provide evidence of successful programmes with positive feedback and recommendations from alumni? Do they have strong monitoring and evaluation systems in place to collect data and report on their impact?

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

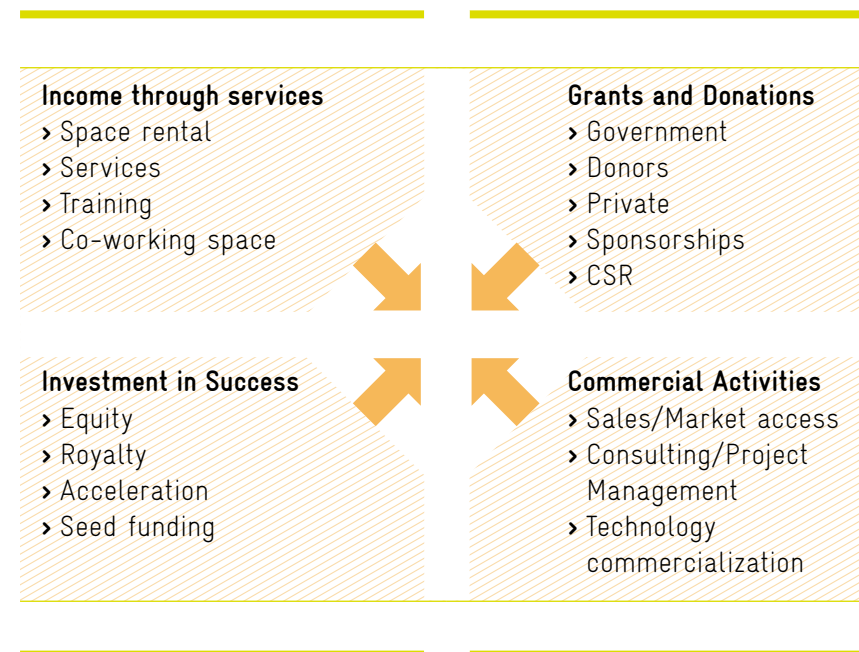
Accelerator programmes are rarely able to be financially independent. They are generally not established to make a profit, but rather have a longer term goal in mind like generating economic growth for the community or a return on investment for the Accelerator. Most Accelerators rely on some form of financial sponsorship, at least in the short term while they build up their own avenues of revenue generation.

Some of the common funding partners for Accelerators include:

- › **Public body or government agency** with the aim of promoting local economic growth.
- › **Non-profit organisations** are interested in supporting the development of innovative solutions to address social problems.
- › **Corporations** are interested in promoting ecosystem development or technical innovation. Corporations often run their own in-house Accelerator programmes as a tool for research and development of new products and services.
- › **Venture Capitalists** with a goal of generating deal flow and an interest in connecting with a range of startups, possibly testing small amounts of funding before considering larger investments.
- › **Universities** typically with the goal of commercialising research outcomes.

To increase financial sustainability, Accelerators are often exploring other revenue sources as shown in the graph below from the [Guide on Strengthening Entrepreneurial Ecosystems](#).

FIGURE 7: Revenue sources of Entrepreneurship support organisation

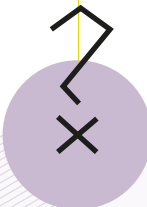


(© GIZ/Ecosystem Guide)

GENDER TRAINING FOR STAFF

In preparation for the Accelerator programme, consider conducting gender sensitivity training for anyone who will be involved in supporting the programme. Gender sensitivity training can equip the project team with a basic understanding of gender, including current gender norms, stereotypes, and in-

equalities, and how men and women's needs, interests, priorities and expectations can differ. It can raise awareness of the power dynamics and unconscious biases that may impact the delivery of the programme and how the project team can ensure everyone is able to participate fully and benefit equally regardless of their gender.



Considering opening your women-only programme up to those who identify as women? It is important to note that depending on your project's context, there may be some challenges with having for example trans women participate. Women (or their families) may not be comfortable participating or in cultures where a strong stigma still exists around non-binary genders, it may impact the local perception of the programme and/or the number of applicants you can attract. Consider running a session to better understand the needs of transgender/non-binary entrepreneurs, and speak with other organisations that support diverse gender groups to understand how to navigate such challenges.

RESOURCES ON GENDER SENSITIVITY TRAININGS

- > [UNESCO](#)
- > [GLIA](#)
- > [USAID](#)
- > [SHIFT Culture](#)



MIXED GENDER OR WOMEN-ONLY ACCELERATION?

When thinking about applying a gender lens to an Accelerator programme, there are a few approaches you can take:

Mixed Gender Accelerator with a Gender Lens: A programme that applies a gender lens to all elements of the programme (design, recruitment, selection, delivery, etc.) to understand differences between how men and women experience these elements, where they may privilege one gender over another, and takes action to make the programme more gender accessible, inclusive and equitable.

Women-only Accelerator: A programme that is designed specifically to meet the needs of women entrepreneurs and only allows women or those who identify as women* to participate.

Hybrid Accelerator: A mixed gender programme that applies a gender lens as well as including women-only components of the programme to address specific needs of women entrepreneur.

The following table gives you some guidance on how to determine which of these approaches fits best to your programme.

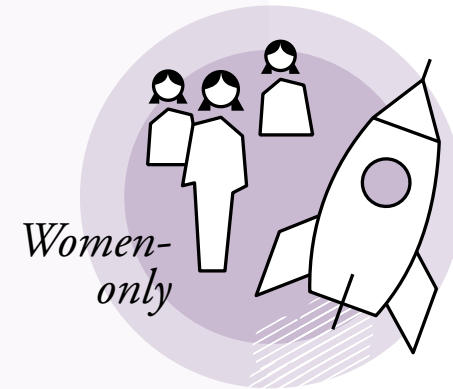
“After running three different cohorts of The Scale up Academy accelerator, we found that a more inclusive approach at this stage of the ecosystem was needed. We believe that segregating women entrepreneurs in acceleration programs could prevent them from learning how to overcome many challenges and obstacles that are not just women-specific. Moreover, startups at this stage of growth, need to build a good network of connections with other businesses and investors. For that reason, we felt an accelerator accepting both men and women entrepreneurs would be more impactful and would equip women with the necessary skills and tools to operate in the actual ecosystem.” – **KAPITA Business Hub Scaleup Programme**

“You can focus on programmes that support women-led ventures only but you still want that programme to be integrated within the broader ecosystem otherwise it creates a bubble and this won’t lead to the women founders being on the same stage as men. You want spaces for the women to be comfortable, but then we still need to ensure women are visible in the spaces where they’re not by default included – those are the places where the big money and attention is” – **Women Founders Accelerator, Albania**

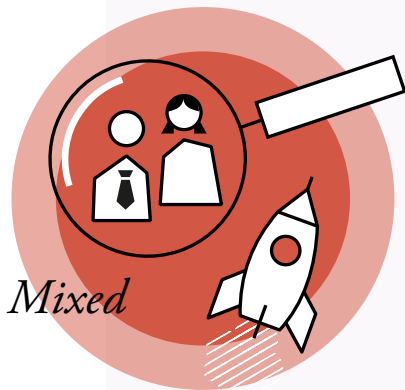
TABLE 2: Decision guidance on running a women-only, mixed gender or hybrid acceleration programme

RUN A WOMEN-ONLY PROGRAMME IF ...

- › Women in the local context are particularly limited by **strict gender norms**.
- › Women entrepreneurs in the pipeline require **additional skills or knowledge** to meet the selection criteria of current accelerator programmes.
- › Women would benefit from **a safe space to learn and share** strategies for overcoming the barriers they face.
- › There is **a sufficient pipeline** of women-led ventures or an interest in building the pipeline.
- › The programme aims to **build women's networks**.
- › The programme has access to **experienced women mentors and facilitators**.
- › The programme is focused on a **traditionally male-dominated sector** like energy or technology where women need additional support to break into the industry and there is interest/capacity to build the pipeline of women-led ventures.

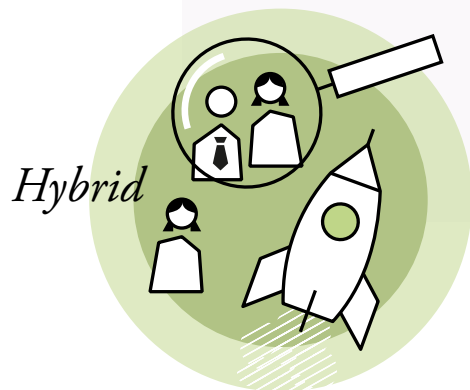


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APPLY A GENDER LENS TO A MIXED GENDER PROGRAMME IF ...

- › The programme is being run in a **young ecosystem** where there is a **small pipeline** of women-led ventures.
- › The programme is focused on a **traditionally male-dominated** sector like energy or technology and there is little interest/capacity to build the pipeline of women-led ventures.
- › The programme is focused on a very **niche kind of entrepreneur** (i.e. Rural-based healthcare ventures) and there is little interest/capacity to build the pipeline of women-led ventures.
- › The programme aims to **tackle gender inequality by educating and encouraging men** to play a role in the solution, by facilitating learning opportunities between men and women or by integrating women into male dominated networks.
- › Women-led ventures in the local context **feel comfortable to speak about the unique barriers** they face in a mixed gender setting.
- › The programme wants to **stimulate innovation** and would benefit from engaging a diverse range of perspectives and ideas.
- › There is an **existing mixed gender programme and limited capacity** to run an additional women-only programme.



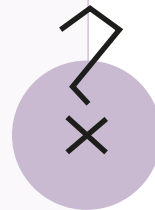
RUN A HYBRID PROGRAMME IF ...

A women-only programme isn't possible but women require additional capacity building and/or would benefit from a safe space to discuss and share strategies for overcoming the barriers they face. A hybrid programme provides the opportunity to run a mixed gender programme that incorporates women-only elements like a women-led affinity group or targeted curriculum content/sessions specifically for women that address their specific needs.

(Source: Authors)

WHAT IS A SUFFICIENT PIPELINE?

This will depend on the number of entrepreneurs the programme aims to accept into each cohort and how many cohorts will be run each year. For most programmes this will be **around 10–20 ventures per year**. To achieve a sufficient pipeline, there should be at least that many women-led ventures in the community that meet the programme criteria. We explore strategies to build the pipeline of women-led ventures in **Module 3**.



DIAGNOSTIC TOOL

Whether you already run an Accelerator programme or are in the process of designing a new programme, this self-diagnosis will help you identify where you have already considered gender within the programme design and implementation. This tool will then help you determine the key areas where additional thinking and strategies are needed to apply a gender lens to the programme and direct you to sections of the handbook that will be most useful in addressing these gaps. You can also use

this information to identify what you would like to prioritise in your Gender Action Plan, which we will introduce in the next section.

If you have already decided what kind of programme you will be running (mixed gender vs. women-only), you can navigate to the **self-diagnosis** for that type of programme.

FIGURE 8: Self Diagnosis Tool

Accelerating Women Entrepreneurs: A Handbook for Practitioners > Self Diagnosis Tool for Mixed-Gender Accelerators

Self Diagnosis Tool for Mixed-Gender Accelerators

Whether you already run an Accelerator program or are in the process of designing a new programme, this self-diagnosis tool will help you identify where you have already considered gender within the programme design and implementation. It will then help you determine the key areas where additional thinking and gender lens strategies are needed and direct you to sections of the handbook that will be most useful in addressing these gaps. Please note, your ability to answer these questions may depend on your level of involvement in the design and implementation of your programmes therefore you may need to complete this with your project partner(s).

	Is this true for you?		If you answered NO, how would you best describe your current situation		
	YES This is true for us	NO We're not there yet	Not started	In progress	Already in practice
PROGRAMME DESIGN					
The curriculum has been designed to create equal value for and be inclusive of all genders, including delivering sessions that educate entrepreneurs on gender issues and how gender relates to entrepreneurship (for example Gender 101 or Gender in Products & Services) or address key gaps in knowledge or barriers to growth for any gendered group (for example, Imposter Syndrome or Negotiation Skills for women founders).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The programme has been designed to ensure that the timing, cost, location and format is inclusive of all genders.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
RECRUITMENT					
Marketing and communications are accessible to, and inclusive of, all genders. For example through the use of gender inclusive or targeted channels, the use of gender inclusive imagery, gender neutral language, and/or an explicit invitation to applicants of all genders.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The application process has been designed to be accessible to and inclusive of all genders for example through the format offered, the language used or the inclusion of specific targets for applicants from women-led ventures.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(Source: Authors)

→ **Template: Self Diagnosis Tool**

DEVELOPING A GENDER ACTION PLAN

A gender action plan is a tool to help Accelerator teams prioritise gender lens strategies and devise an approach for implementing and measuring the impact of those strategies.

It supports teams to identify:

- › A gender-related problem or challenge the programme wants to address.
- › An objective that the programme wants to achieve in order to address the problem.
- › A few key strategies to implement that will contribute towards achieving the objective.
- › Who will be responsible for implementing the strategies.
- › Indicators that will be used to measure the success of the chosen strategies.
- › How data will be collected.

Ideally, this action plan will be linked to an overarching **gender strategy** that outlines a broader vision for tackling gender inequality within an organisation and the key objectives that will drive progress towards that vision.

WHY IT MATTERS

For teams that are new to applying a gender lens, establishing a clear and simple action plan will help the team start small and focus on addressing one key gender-related challenge at a time and test 1–2 key strategies to address that problem. It also helps teams allocate and prioritise resources and keep each other accountable.

GENDER ACTION PLAN TEMPLATE & INSTRUCTIONS

To develop a gender action plan, organise a time to gather the programme delivery team and facilitate a collaborative process following the steps below:

- 1. Identify a gender related problem or challenge** – Use the outcomes from your self-diagnosis to identify potential areas of focus or current gender issues the Accelerator programme faces. These may include a lack of diversity in programme applicants, a programme design that doesn't meet the needs of women-led ventures, or difficulty attracting women mentors. Aim to start with the biggest challenge or one that the team feels will have the greatest impact on increasing gender equality within the programme if solved.
- 2. Identify an objective** – What change would you like to see by addressing this gender issue? What is the goal of the strategies you aim to implement? This could be to achieve a 50/50 gender split in applicants for the programme or to secure at least three women mentors for the programme.
- 3. Select a strategy or two you would like to implement.** Consult the handbook modules to identify possible strategies or adapt suggested strategies to suit your local context. Consider what resources are available and how difficult or time consuming the strategies may be to implement based on the programme's capacity. Also consider whether the strategies have been backed by research (for example, a more gender diverse selection panel has been proven to increase the participation of women in Accelerator programmes). If so, the strategies will still need to be tested in the programme's particular context. If not, consider what assumptions you are making and what research may be necessary to test those particular strategies.
- 4. Determine who is best placed to lead on implementing each strategy.** This may be a programme designer, programme manager, or a partner organisation depending on the programme's capacity.
- 5. Identify appropriate qualitative and quantitative indicators to measure the success of the strategies you aim to implement.** As you can see in the example action plan below, to measure the success of efforts to increase the diversity of programme facilitators and mentors, the gender split of the programme delivery team will be measured (quantitative). Participants will also be asked to what extent they found they were supported by the programme mentors/facilitators (qualitative). See the Metrics section of [Module 6](#) to find other example indicators.
- 6. Determine how data will be collected** – Will the programme send pre and post-programme surveys? Conduct interviews? [See Module 6](#) for more on data collection methods and best practices.

TABLE 2: Example Gender Action Plan

Problem	Objective	Strategies	Responsibility	Deadline	Quantitative Indicators	Collection	Qualitative Indicators	Collection
Lack of diversity in our programme participants.	Ensure our programme design and delivery supports all founders, regardless of gender.	Increase diversity of our facilitators and mentors.	Programme Manager	July 2022	Gender split of speakers, mentors, facilitators or other leadership roles	Post-recruitment Analysis	To what extent did you find you were supported by your mentors/facilitators?	Post-programme survey and interview
		Review and amend content and format to ensure it meets the needs of both genders.	Learning Designer	May 2022	NPS rating of programme by gender	Post-programme Analysis	To what extent was the delivery of the programme suitable to you? (eg. location, time, mode, format) What made it suitable/not suitable?	Post-programme survey and interview



(Source: Authors)

→ **Template: Gender Action Plan**

Complete your own Gender Action Plan using the template [here](#).

For teams that have already begun applying a gender lens to their programme or have greater capacity, this action plan can be expanded to include multiple problems you would like to address and/or multiple strategies that will be implemented to address the problem.

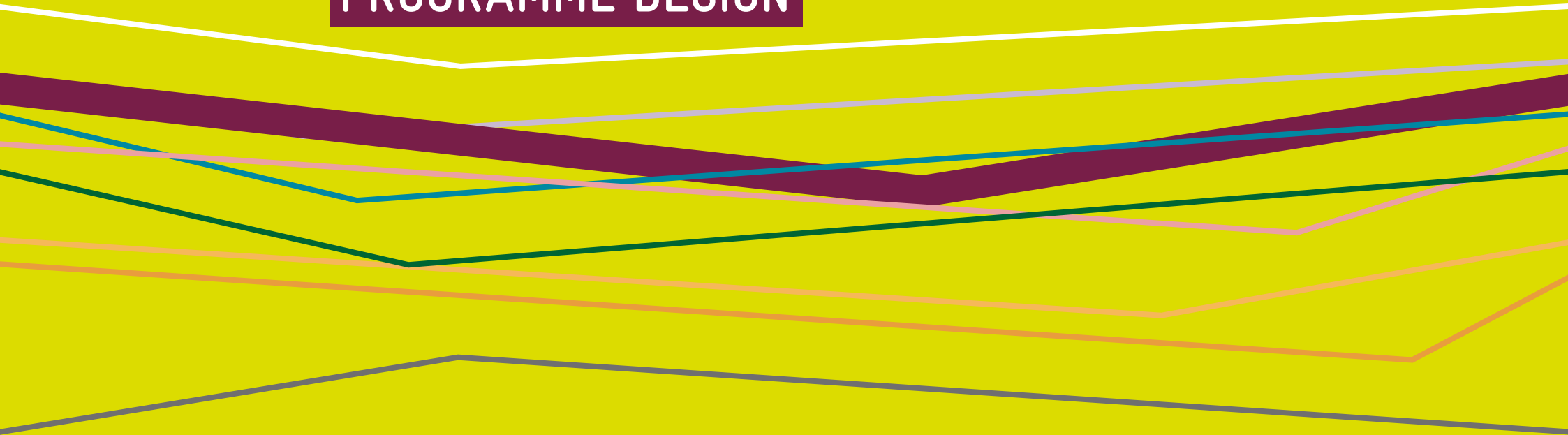
You may also like to go a step further, looking beyond how you can apply a gender lens to your programme and exploring how you can consider gender within your own operations. This would involve considering how the organisation itself supports gender diversity, equality, and inclusion at all levels of the organisation including the board, team and culture. Visit the [GLIA toolkit](#) to learn more about common gender issues at the organisational level and key strategies for addressing these issues.



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MODULE 2

PROGRAMME DESIGN



Module 2 **Programme Design**

ACCELERATION BASICS: PROGRAMME DESIGN

Designing an Accelerator programme involves bringing together a range of educational and business support components - like training, mentorship, network development and finance. These components will vary across programmes in their content, duration, structure, delivery method and team.

In thinking about the programme design there are a few key questions to consider:

- 1. What are the key skills/knowledge the ventures need?**
Financial management, risk management, communications/marketing, lean-startup, etc.
- 2. What kinds of support will the programme provide?**
Training, mentorship, masterclasses, network development, co-working space, demo day, investor connections, etc.
- 3. How will it provide support?** Via workshops, 1-1 support, online learning, events, peer mentoring, office hours, etc.?
- 4. How long will it provide support for?** Three months? Six months? 12 months? Will it provide any post-programme support to alumni?

- 5. What will the funding structure look like?** Will you take equity in participating ventures or will you have corporate sponsorship or offer other paid services like office space?
- 6. Who are the key stakeholders/delivery team?** Programme partners, sponsors, managers, facilitators, mentors, investors.

“When designing the programme, think about the post-exit continuity of the work you have started. This is important to do from day one and can influence your programme design. We focused a lot on partnering with the ecosystem and setting up ‘networks’ of entrepreneurs that would support the growth of their ventures beyond our programme.” – Her & Now

WHY IT MATTERS

Good programme design takes a **human-centred** approach and ensures that the programme responds to the validated needs and pain points of participants. Applying a gender lens to programme design follows this same approach, considering difference in the experience, expectations, abilities and needs of each gender and adapting programme components to respond to these differences. The design is the backbone of the programme, can set the programme apart with a unique value proposition, and will ultimately drive its impact and success.

LOGISTICS & FORMAT

The logistics and structure of an Accelerator programme will determine how ventures experience the content. If these are not designed with all genders in mind, the programme may be inaccessible for some people. Consider the following reflection questions and example strategies to make your programme design more accessible and inclusive for women led ventures.

TIMING/DURATION

- › Adjust the timing of workshops/events/mentor meetings to **avoid school pick-ups or bed time** for those with children.
- › Consider whether a **residential or overnight programme** will be feasible for mothers of young children and those who

may be breastfeeding. Can the programme allow young babies to join and offer **child care or a private room** for breastfeeding mothers?

LOCATION

- › Hold face to face components in a location where women will feel **safe to travel**. Is the location culturally acceptable and easily accessible?
- › Consider whether significant travel will discourage women from applying. Can the programme **provide transport or offer a stipend** to cover or subsidise the travel costs?
- › Run a **digital programme** to increase accessibility.
- › Offer programme components in **varying locations** so that participants from certain areas are not disadvantaged.

“We found that a duration of seven months was good. We required one weekend per month when we held it in person or one day per week for an online programme. This made it more accessible to do in and around business and other responsibilities.” – Her & Now

“In Iraq, women cannot just meet male investors in a cafe, that’s not acceptable. So running the programme in a socially acceptable place like an innovation centre allows women to be able to engage in the programme and meet investors.” – KAPITA Business Hub Scaleup Programme

FORMAT

- › Swap a demo day for facilitation of more **intimate conversations** with investors - Women often perform better in a less competitive environment.
- › Integrate a **peer review process** which has been proven to get more funding to women-led ventures. Read more on Village Capital's innovative peer review approach and the potential it has for a more inclusive investment process [here](#).
- › Integrating a **strong community element** for women to connect with and support each other.

“In the beginning we had to give a lot of space for women to share their experiences and why they chose to start a business (often due to a personal experience), then we focused more on the business side. Consider having an onboarding weekend where entrepreneurs get to know one another and share their stories as a way to build trust and community.” – Her & Now

PROGRAMME STAKEHOLDERS (PROGRAMME MANAGERS/FACILITATORS/MENTORS/INVESTORS)

- › Ensure there is good **representation from women** on the programme team. Can the programme integrate success stories of women-led ventures into the design? Invite successful women alumni to be guest speakers, mentors or ambassadors for the programme.
- › Consider requiring everyone involved in programme design and delivery to complete **gender sensitivity training** so that they can gain awareness of how their own biases may impact their role, and learn how to address these.
- › Consider the **organisational culture** – is gender equality baked into the DNA of the project/organisation? Read more about how to apply a gender lens to the programme delivery team, advisory board and culture [here](#).

CURRICULUM

An Accelerator programme curriculum will usually consist of a range of learning experiences.

FIGURE 8: Standard topics in Accelerator curriculums



Considering gender through the process of developing this curriculum will help your project team ensure that the content meets the needs of all genders and provides equal value.

REQUIRED EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE LEVELS

- › Include any required additional technical knowledge as part of a **pre-accelerator programme** or adapt the content to ensure it doesn't disadvantage women or other gendered groups. For example, if the programme requires entrepreneurs to have a certain level of financial literacy, women may be disadvantaged – consider including a separate module for women to complete ahead of the programme.

LANGUAGE AND EXAMPLES

- › Review and adapt curriculum language to be **inclusive of all genders** (i. e. change any gender specific language like businessman, policeman, etc. to the gender neutral version - business executive/entrepreneur, police officer). **Avoid jargon** where possible or language that assumes a certain level of expertise.
- › As part of programme case studies, showcase **successful women entrepreneurs** in order to provide role models for women participants.
- › Use examples throughout the content that women can relate to.
- › Consider what is motivating women vs men to become entrepreneurs, how does this impact the way they want to grow their business? Adapt the way you frame your content to acknowledge the **different motivations** in the room. For example, women may be more likely to be motivated by their family and a desire for flexibility or a desire to have a social impact.

WOMEN/GENDER-FOCUSED CONTENT

- › Include additional modules to build technical skills that women lack, for example **basic financial or IT skills**, or test different ways of explaining concepts to see what resonates with women.
- › Women who suffer from **lack of confidence**, **imposter syndrome** or difficulty accessing finance, may require specific support around overcoming these barriers. Consider including modules on these topics.
- › Women may also need additional support in soft skills like **negotiation, pitching, presenting**.
- › Include content to raise participants' awareness of **gender disparities and power dynamics** that may impact their own entrepreneurial journey. Some programmes have found it useful to create a **'safe space' where women can address the fears and obstacles they face** as they go against the local gender norms and deal with challenges like sexual harassment when doing business.
- › Include content on how to **apply a gender lens to product & service** development to support founders to think about how they are impacting gender inequities through their own work.
- › Include content to develop women's **leadership capabilities** and a space for them to discuss the challenges they face leading as a woman.

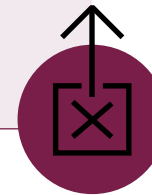
(© GIZ/Iraq)

“Focus on the entrepreneur as much as the enterprise. A lot of our entrepreneurs have not seen themselves as a primary financial actor in their families. They have never been told that they have the potential to build an enterprise that can create jobs. From there, you can teach them what it takes to be a leader versus an entrepreneur” – Her & Now



ADDITIONAL READINGS ON GENDER-LENS PROGRAMME DESIGN

- › [Strategies to apply a gender lens to Curriculum Content – GLIA](#)
- › [Designing an impactful programme – GLIA](#)
- › [Startup Accelerator Programmes – A Practice Guide – Nesta \(UK\)](#)



RESOURCES ON CURRICULUM CONTENT

- › [Gender & Power 101 – Example Curriculum Content](#)
- › [Negotiation Skills for Women Founders – Example Curriculum Content](#)
- › [Imposter Syndrome – Example Curriculum Content](#)
- › [Gender in Products & Services – Example Curriculum Content](#)



MODULE 3

RECRUITMENT



Module 3 **Recruitment**

ACCELERATION BASICS: RECRUITMENT

An Accelerator recruitment process involves finding and attracting the best ventures that meet the programme criteria and will most benefit from the support the programme provides. It typically entails a marketing and advertising campaign that leverages a combination of traditional media, social media, local networks, investors, universities, conferences/events, alumni referrals and head-hunting. It may also include strategies to develop the pipeline of eligible entrepreneurs.

It involves an application process that invites entrepreneurs to express interest in the programme. They also provide basic information about their venture communicating how they meet the programme criteria and why they should be selected. Some programmes choose to have a set recruitment phase (typically a few months long) while others run a rolling recruitment phase and accept applications at any time.

To run a successful recruitment process:

- › **Know who you are looking for and where to find them** – Set clear criteria, and target your recruitment channels to reach ventures most likely to meet that criteria.

- › **Look for quality over quantity** – While it is important for your marketing campaign to have good reach, there isn't a need to focus on ambitious application targets. It is better to have 15 strong applicants who meet your criteria than 300 that don't.
- › **Communicate your value proposition** – Why should an entrepreneur apply to your programme over another? What will they walk away with?

WHY IT MATTERS

A programme that invests in getting the recruitment process right will be more likely to attract the kinds of ventures that are ready for and interested in what the programme has to offer. It leads to a stronger pool of ventures and saves time in assessing applicants who do not meet the programme criteria. Applying a gender lens to the recruitment process enables a programme to find and attract a gender diverse pool of applicants and ensure that the process doesn't disadvantage one gender over another. Given Accelerator programmes have historically had fewer applications from women-led ventures, the recruitment phase is an important point of intervention in creating equal access for all genders.

MARKETING & ADVERTISING

The first step is to develop a marketing and advertising strategy. This involves determining the channels to be used, marketing materials to be developed, and a timeline for the marketing campaign. If the communication channels or materials do not take into account gender differences, the programme can easily miss out on quality applicants. Consider the following reflection questions and example strategies to adapt your marketing and advertising strategy to reach and attract more women-led ventures:

CHANNELS

- › Ensure your channels reach all genders - do women have access to the internet or other channels you are using to recruit? Can you **specifically target partners or channels that will reach more women**, for example women's groups? Consider placing advertisements in areas that women frequent on a daily basis, for example in schools or shopping centres.
- › Hold **informational events** to answer questions about the programme and help women-led ventures understand their eligibility for the programme and the value they will receive. Hold these in settings where there is already an established level of trust so women feel comfortable and safe attending (i.e. community meetings, NGOs, businesses etc.).
- › Consider an **informational event targeted at husbands, families** and other close community members to bring them

along on the journey and educate them on what the women founders will be learning and how it will benefit their family.

- › **Leverage women alumni** to become ambassadors for the programme and refer potential applicants.
- › Leverage recommendations from **community and tribal leaders** who may know women who would benefit from the programme.

“Focus and allocate time on mobilisation and recruitment. We use a mixed approach to include community influencers and use referrals instead of just online scouting. Invite alumni to become ambassadors for your programme to generate your pipeline. We included gender sensitive visuals in our marketing collateral and ran in-person and online Q&A sessions to share what acceleration is. We also engaged community influencers to help convince women-led ventures that this is a good opportunity.” – Her & Now

GENDER INCLUSIVE MARKETING MATERIALS

- › Ensure language used in your marketing materials is gender-inclusive, and welcoming for women. For example, 'Our organisation is committed to gender equality, diversity and inclusion. We offer dedicated facilities and support for young mothers.' See examples of gender inclusive language [here](#) (page 18).

- › Include images of women entrepreneurs in the marketing materials so they see themselves as potential applicants.
- › Include clear information about programme times, dates, transport costs, and the overall time commitment required. Based on caring responsibilities and/or safety issues, women's participation will be more dependent more on these logistics so make sure they can find the information easily.
- › Consider removing any entrepreneurship-specific jargon to be more relatable to women who may not see themselves as 'entrepreneurs.' For example, refer instead to people who are selling a product/service.

See [GLIA's Framework on reviewing marketing collateral](#) for more guidance.

GENDER DIVERSITY OF FACILITATORS & MENTORS

- › Does your website and other marketing materials clearly show that all genders are represented in the programme delivery team? Women want to see facilitators and mentors they can relate to. Ensure they are represented in how you showcase your programme delivery team.

APPLICATION PROCESS

The application process details how ventures express interest in the programme and provide the basic information you need to assess their suitability for the programme. This typically involves the submission of either an online or paper application. It is important to assess the application form itself and the process required in order to ensure that neither favour one gender over another.

SET TARGETS

- › If you are running a mixed gender programme, **set a goal for the number of women applicants** you aim to attract.

APPLICATION ACCESSIBILITY

- › Consider **offering the application in differing formats** to ensure it is accessible to women / people of all genders. i. e. online vs. paper vs. presenting their venture in person.
- › Offer the option to access **in-person support** to complete the application.
- › Hold multiple **information sessions** that offer guidance on filling in the form.
- › Provide paper applications in a local shop or other place that women visit frequently.

APPLICATION LANGUAGE

- › Offer the application in the **local language or multiple languages** if necessary and remove any technical language or requests for information that may privilege one gender over another. For example, if women-led ventures are likely to have lower financial literacy, ensure the questions and requests for information around financials are kept simple.

“It is best to break away from using a lot of jargon like “accelerator” and “incubator.” Most women entrepreneurs didn’t know whether they should apply for our ‘idea’ stage programme or the ‘already established business’ programme as many lacked basic skills, so we included a diagnostic panel to help them identify if they are a good fit for the programme and which programme is most suited to their venture.” – Her & Now

APPLICATION CONTENT

- › Highlight the selection criteria on the application form and include a specific invitation to women-led ventures or an **explicit statement inviting applicants of all genders** so it is clear who is eligible to apply. Women are less likely to apply if they don't meet all criteria so make sure each one is necessary or specify between essential and desirable.
- › **Offer a phone number to call** if there are questions about the application form.
- › Use **simple wording** and offer the option to use photos or drawings to convey information.

ENTREPRENEUR PIPELINE

Depending on the maturity of the local ecosystem and the specific sector the Accelerator programme is targeting, you may make changes to your recruitment and application process and still not see an increase in applications from women-led ventures. If this is the case, there is likely a need to implement strategies or partner with organisations who are already working to develop a gender diverse pipeline of entrepreneurs.

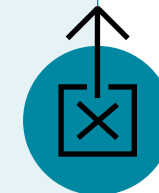
A small pipeline of women-led ventures can be due to a number of factors including but not limited to: social norms and cultural perceptions of women's roles in society and who

can be an entrepreneur; a gender gap in education, particularly in STEM-related subjects; and gender differences in venture maturity.

Consider the following strategies to build the pipeline of women-led ventures:

- › **Run bootcamps, hackathons** or other events to support women to develop an entrepreneurial idea and meet potential co-founders or team members.
- › **Run a pre-accelerator programme** specifically for women who have an idea but need support getting it off the ground or who are at an earlier stage than your programme supports.
- › **Engage Universities** and run short events or give informational talks to students of relevant subjects to spark interest in entrepreneurship and help women see it as a viable career path. Include Business and STEM-related subjects but also include subjects like the humanities where there are often more women students. Can you help them see how their skills could contribute to a startup?
- › If the pipeline is also small at the University level, you may need to **consider partnering at the school level** to encourage interest in those traditionally male-dominated subjects from a younger age.
- › Consider a **targeted communications strategy** with the aim of changing the local perception of who can be an entrepreneur.

ADDITIONAL READINGS ON GENDER-LENS RECRUITMENT



- › [Applying a gender lens to recruitment - GLIA](#)
- › [Selecting a cohort - GLIA](#)
- › [Impact Hub's Guide to Gender Lens Acceleration \(pages 41-44\)](#)

MODULE 4
SELECTION



Module 4 Selection

ACCELERATION BASICS: SELECTION

Selecting ventures for an Accelerator programme involves the development of clear criteria, a defined process to assess applicants against that criteria, and a panel who decides which applications to accept into the programme. The process typically entails an initial review of applications, an interview process for shortlisted applicants, and a final panel discussion to decide on selected ventures. The selection panel will usually include key members of the programme delivery team and may also include mentors, investors or other programme stakeholders.

WHY IT MATTERS

Selecting the right ventures for the programme is crucial for the programme's success. For example, if ventures are at the wrong stage of development (a very early stage idea or a business too far into growth) or the entrepreneur is not serious about growing the venture, the programme will not be relevant or impactful for them. Applying a gender lens to the selection process helps to identify and avoid potential bias that may lead to more applicants of one gender being selected over another. It ensures that entrepreneurs of all genders have an equal opportunity to be selected.

SELECTION PROCESS

CRITERIA

- › **Set clear criteria** ahead of your selection process to minimise bias. Consider what you value in an entrepreneur/venture – is it an innovative idea? A strong team? Traction (evidence of market demand and momentum like increasing revenues/profit, customer acquisition, and/or customer retention)? Growth ambitions? Then set a **clear rating scale** (1–4 for example) and define what each rating (1, 2, 3, and 4) looks like for each criteria so panel members can assess them in the same way, regardless of gender.
- › **Evaluate these criteria** for gender differences and determine whether any of them preference one gender over another. For example, women-led ventures may be at an earlier stage than other applicants or have lower growth ambitions and you may need to adjust your criteria to cater for more women founders to be successful. You may want to consider other ways to assess growth potential outside of asking the entrepreneur their growth ambitions, for example by asking about market size.

See [GLIA Framework on Selection Criteria for Entrepreneurs](#) for more guidance on adapting your selection criteria.

PANEL

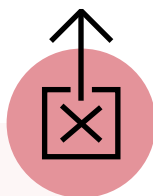
- › Include **gender diversity in your selection panel** and ensure that all voices are heard.
- › Create a **briefing** for your selection panel with key strategies to help members **minimise their own biases**.

PROCESS

- › **Set a target** for the number of women-led ventures that will be selected. Some organisations aim for gender parity in programme participants, others require at least 30 % of ventures to be from either gender.

ADDITIONAL READINGS ON GENDER-LENS SELECTION

- › [Impact Hub's Guide to Gender Lens Acceleration \(pgs 45-47\)](#)
- › [Selection of Entrepreneurs – GLIA](#)
- › [Selecting a Cohort – GLIA](#)
- › [Attracting & Selecting the right entrepreneurs for your incubator or accelerator – Frontier Incubators](#)



*“It is important for projects to look beyond the government definition of what is a woman-led enterprise. The definition may be that 51 % of the enterprise is owned by women, but when you look closer, men are still making decisions and pitching. Some enterprises lie about their gender split in ownership because it gives them access to government schemes” – **Her & Now***

- › **Review the interview process** and consider how to remove bias – for example by asking the same questions of all applicants, using a scoring rubric to score answers, and determining ahead of time what a strong and weak answer looks like. Read more in [GLIA's Framework for Reviewing Interview Questions and Process](#).
- › Consider a blind selection process that removes gender, name, age, and other identifiers. Read more in [GLIA's Framework for Running a Blind Selection Process](#).
- › Consider avoiding interview formats such as elevator pitches that are known to privilege men.

MODULE 5

PROGRAMME DELIVERY



Module 5 **Programme Delivery**

ACCELERATION BASICS: DELIVERY

The delivery of an Accelerator programme will usually entail the facilitation of in-person or online learning sessions, 1–1 mentoring sessions, peer learning opportunities and/or networking opportunities with investors or potential customers. These sessions may be delivered by programme facilitators, experts, mentors, or investors. Learning activities will vary in their format (i. e. lecture style, small group discussion, one-on-one support, partner collaboration) and delivery method (i. e. in-person vs. online).

It is good practice to integrate a range of delivery formats and methods to cater for different personalities and learning styles. Some entrepreneurs will prefer to work independently, others in groups. Some may be visual learners while others will need to see the written content or to physically apply it to their venture in order to absorb the knowledge. GALI's **recent report** highlights the important role that peer learning and collaboration plays in Acceleration, an approach that many of the most effective programmes have incorporated.

The programme delivery team is key to the success of the programme. Entrepreneurs want to learn from facilitators and mentors who understand the context they are operating in or have sat in their shoes and successfully built a business from nothing. They need to trust in the expertise of the people teaching them and so it is important to recruit a team that has relevant experience and an understanding of the local context.

WHY IT MATTERS

Who delivers your content and how it is delivered has a big impact on how well it is received. You can develop an excellent curriculum but if the way it is delivered privileges certain people (for example, online vs. in-person) or your facilitators/mentors can't relate to the realities of the ventures you are supporting, your programme will struggle to meet its objectives. Applying a gender lens to programme delivery ensures that the language, format and delivery method of the learning activities take into consideration the needs and ideal learning conditions of people of all genders. It also ensures that the people who deliver your programme are equipped to meet the needs of all participants regardless of gender.

CONTENT DELIVERY

The way your content is delivered can impact whether entrepreneurs can equally access, engage with, and benefit from the programme.

LANGUAGE

- › Consider a **support facilitator or interpreter** if education levels differ in your context.
- › Ensure language used is **gender inclusive** – use “everyone” rather than “ladies & gentleman” or “guys”, “entrepreneur” rather than businessman, and consider asking for participants’ preferred pronouns.

FORMAT

- › Understand what a **safe learning environment** looks like for all genders and be deliberate about where and how you deliver the programme. For example, acknowledge where power lies and think about how you can create space in each session for all genders to feel comfortable sharing and to be heard. This might look like offering opportunities for questions to be asked anonymously if women could feel uncomfortable asking questions publicly, or creating a safe space and asking permission from all entrepreneurs, especially women entrepreneurs, for you to call upon them to share if they’re less likely to speak up, especially in mixed gender programmes.

- › Integrate **peer sharing and collaborative learning opportunities**. Women often prefer collaboration over competition.
- › Consider **introducing technical content gradually**. For example, the first session could be 70 % informal sharing, 30 % technical content with the next session being 60 % sharing, 40 % technical content and so on.
- › Consider a **“buddy system”** that matches entrepreneurs up with one of their peers for accountability, connection and support.

METHOD

- › Consider **virtual programmes** or events where possible if women in your context have access to the necessary technology / internet. This can increase access for women who are balancing work and family life. See below for more gender lens considerations for online programme delivery.

“The transition to online programming led to fewer dropouts as it’s easier for women to balance it with their other responsibilities, but we found offline was better for building community.” – Her & Now

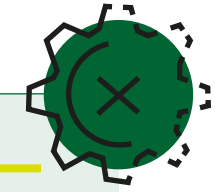


TABLE 3: Virtual programmes and events – benefits, challenges and tips

BENEFITS

- › More flexible and therefore **more accessible and attractive** to women who are juggling childcare and other domestic responsibilities.
- › **Removes the need to travel** to a workshop/event which can be costly and may present safety concerns for women in certain contexts.
- › **Encourages participation** from women who prefer contributing through the ‘chat’ function or making anonymous contributions via tools like Jamboard or Miro. They may prefer this, for example, because they are less confident speaking in a group or are more introverted.

CHALLENGES

- › Women may be less likely to have **access to technology/internet** connection required for a virtual programme/event.
- › Women may require some support/capacity building in **digital literacy**.
- › If the programme is aiming to increase participation of women at events where the conversation and contributions are typically male-dominated, it can be **difficult to measure increases in participation** particularly if it is a large event and the gender of attendees is not recorded or participation is anonymous.
- › Women dialing in from home may be more likely to need to multitask (i.e. if children are at home) whereas in person they may be able to be more focused.

TIPS

- › **Leverage break-out rooms** for more intimate pair or small group activities which often appeal to women.
- › **Consider what technology women will be most likely to have access to.** Can you design an online learning programme using a widely used app like Whatsapp as **Technoserve** has done?
- › Consider covering or **subsidising the mobile data costs** needed to attend the virtual event or complete the digital programme.

Read more from ANDE & Argidius Foundation on digital delivery of Entrepreneurship Support Programmes [here](#).

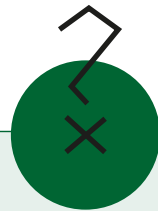
(Source: Authors)

FACILITATORS & MENTORS

Who delivers your programme can impact how well the content is received and whether entrepreneurs feel safe and understood.

DIVERSITY

- › Aim for gender diversity in your programme delivery team in order to ensure that participants of all genders feel their perspective and experience is understood. In mentors for example, **some research** has shown that entrepreneurs with same gender mentors reported better business performance.



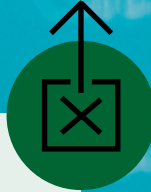
DIFFICULTY FINDING WOMEN MENTORS/ FACILITATORS?

- › Recruit alumni who naturally emerge as leaders/mentor figures and build their capacity as mentors over time.
- › Head-hunt experienced women entrepreneurs or industry experts who may not self-select to be a mentor.
- › Partner with formal mentor platforms or networks like **Micromentor.org**
- › Partner with other entrepreneurship support organisations locally or internationally to increase access to a more diverse pool of mentors.

“Our Mentorship programme was one of the bigger gains for participating ventures as it’s very hard for women entrepreneurs to access quality mentors. We had a mix of mentors and began by engaging with industry experts but then realised that leadership mentors might be even more relevant for early stage enterprises and we relied on our existing networks to find these. Ventures were interested in female mentors and trainers but that was really difficult to find. For the Indian context, as long as you have a good onboarding process in place it can be beneficial to have male mentors and trainers in order to provide different perspectives. The onboarding process is also an important education piece for the ecosystem. You need to think about enabling your mentors, your service providers etc. to better be able to support women entrepreneurs and reduce their biases.” – Her & Now

CODE OF CONDUCT

- › Have a clear code of conduct that outlines **what behaviour is acceptable** and how unacceptable behaviour will be dealt with.
- › Include a clear process around how to **confidentially make a complaint** or communicate a breach of the code of conduct so women know they are safe to report any incidents of harassment, violence, discrimination etc.
- › Consider a **collaborative process** to develop the code of conduct in order to establish joint values and expectations for the programme and encourage all team members to have ownership over the result.



ADDITIONAL READINGS ON GENDER-LENS PROGRAMME DELIVERY

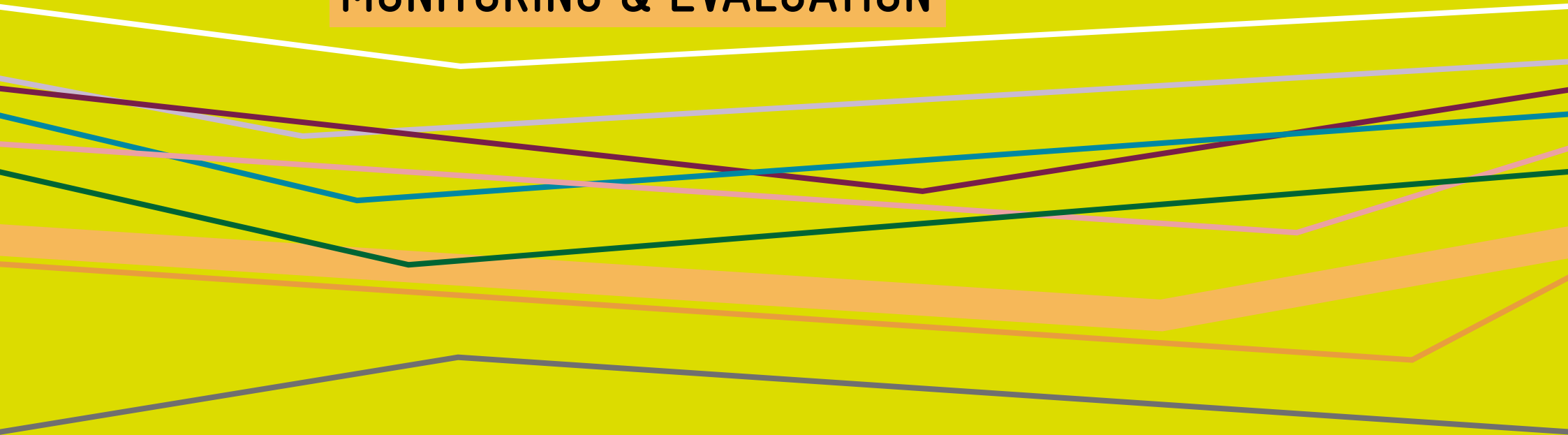
- > Programme Delivery – GLIA
- > Supporting Entrepreneurs – GIAA



(© GIZ/Iraq)

MODULE 6

MONITORING & EVALUATION



Module 6 **Monitoring & Evaluation**

ACCELERATION BASICS: MONITORING & EVALUATION

In order to assess the Accelerator programme's effectiveness, a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework should be developed. An **M&E Framework** establishes the main objectives of the programme, the intended outcomes of the programme activities, and identifies the key indicators the programme will use to measure progress towards those outcomes. An M&E Framework also typically outlines the key assumptions and risks involved in delivering the programme.

Once a framework has been established and key indicators have been chosen, a **baseline measurement** for each indicator will need to be captured before the programme activities take place. This acts as a starting point to which all data collected during and after the programme will be compared. For example, if the indicator is the number of jobs created, the programme will measure the number of jobs each venture has created before participating in the programme and again at regular intervals for a period of time after the programme has been delivered.

Data collected at regular intervals is then analysed for patterns and trends. Accelerators will specifically be interested in the impact that training and support has had on the entrepreneur

themselves and their venture's success and growth. The programme will also want to look for any unintended consequences of the programme activities and document key challenges, learnings and success stories. The information is then used to improve the programme and report to key stakeholders on programme effectiveness and progress against the programme's objectives.

Accelerator programmes face common challenges in measuring impact and effectiveness.

- 1. Data Collection** – An Accelerator is reliant on the ability of the ventures they support to measure and report back their own data like revenue growth, jobs created, and investment received. Given the early stage of these ventures, they often do not have the time or resources to dedicate to their own M&E process and Accelerators can struggle to obtain accurate and timely data.
- 2. Capacity** – Given the difficulty of capturing data from programme participants, Accelerator programmes experience their own challenges with dedicating appropriate time and resources to the M&E process.

3. Attribution – Attribution in this context refers to the extent to which an Accelerator can attribute a venture’s growth to their programme activities. Given the fact that many entrepreneurs receive various kinds of support and even participate in multiple Accelerator programmes, it can be difficult for one programme to make the case that the success of the venture has been due to their programme.

We will explore possible solutions to these challenges in this section as well as key considerations for measuring the impact of an Accelerator programme that applies a gender lens. For additional considerations and tips, see [Impact Measurement Principles for Entrepreneurship Support](#).



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WHY IT MATTERS

Accelerators are driven to monitor and evaluate their programmes in order to:

- › **Measure social impact** and quantify their contributions to job creation, poverty alleviation, economic growth, gender equality and more.
- › **Determine programme effectiveness** and whether the programme is having the intended results. Are participating ventures growing more significantly than ventures that did not participate in the programme? In the case of an Accelerator that applies a gender lens, are women-led ventures receiving the support they need to overcome the specific barriers to growth that they face?
- › **Determine value for money** and how cost-effective the programme is. GALI has provided a useful **report** and method to help programmes either calculate what it costs the programme to create one job or what the benefit of the programme is to the venture in additional capital raised. For example, **Uncharted** reports that for every \$1 USD that funds Uncharted, one company they support will receive \$21 USD in follow-on funding.
- › **Improve decision making and programme design** by using the data collected and lessons learned to inform key decisions and suggest improvements to the programme based on feedback and results.

- › **Be accountable to programme funders** by communicating how the programme is meeting its objectives in a cost-effective way.
- › **Communicate the value of the programme to various stakeholders** which allows the programme to attract entrepreneurs, secure the best mentors, attract new funders and partners, etc.

It is particularly important to measure the **impact Accelerators have on gender** in order to:

- › **Identify gender differences** in Acceleration and new opportunities to close the gender gap in entrepreneurship.
- › **Strengthen the business case** for applying a gender lens to Acceleration by gathering additional data points and evidence of the positive impact gender lens strategies have on the success of women-led ventures.
- › **Advocate** for more organisations to take a gender lens approach to acceleration or to make the case for policy-makers to adopt new policies that improve the business environment for women-led ventures.

CHOOSING INDICATORS

WHAT IS A GENDER INDICATOR?

A gender indicator is a measure of gender-related changes over time.

Quantitative gender indicators will capture gender-related changes that can be counted, and are usually represented as a number, ratio or percentage. These will be disaggregated by gender in order to compare differences between men, women and other genders. For example the number of women, men and other genders who saw increases in revenue after completing an Accelerator programme.

Qualitative gender indicators will capture gender-related changes in experiences, attitudes, opinions or feelings. For example how confident women entrepreneurs feel after attending a workshop on negotiation skills or the extent to which women feel a sense of belonging and inclusion at programme networking events.

HOW TO CHOOSE APPROPRIATE INDICATORS:

- 1. Consider the local context** – Where are the biggest disparities between women and men entrepreneurs locally? Is it participation rates in programmes? Access to networks? Access to finance? Involve key stakeholders in a collaborative approach to select indicators that reflect what they believe progress looks like for women-led ventures in that context.
- 2. Consider programme capacity** – Who will be responsible for designing the measurement framework, collecting and analysing the data, and communicating progress? What sort of budget is available? Does the implementing organisation have a dedicated M&E resource or do they need support to develop the M&E framework or gather and analyse data? Programme capacity will help to determine a realistic number of indicators and the kinds of indicators that can be easily tracked using the available resources.
- 3. Consider venture capacity** – What is the average team size and annual budget? Is the venture likely to have the capacity and resources to capture accurate data? Choose indicators that will be easiest to capture for the venture teams.
- 4. Consider the priorities of various stakeholders** – Some programme funders or partners may be interested only in job creation, others may want to see a change in social norms or perceptions. Who is invested in the programme and what

change are they hoping to see? While these motivations should be considered, they should be balanced with what the local community and women entrepreneurs themselves would prioritise.

5. Consult the following Metrics section to find example indicators that can be used to measure the impact of the gender lens strategies that will be implemented. Use these as a starting point and adapt them or co-develop new indicators based on the needs of the local context and the programme's capacity.

“When choosing indicators, programmes should remember that success should be measured by the programme goal (success of the women-led ventures and value created for them) and not the outputs (number of workshops or projects being implemented).” – Women Founders Accelerator Albania



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METRICS

Here you will find example indicators you can consider using to track your progress against your gender objectives. We encourage you to consider your project's context and capacity when choosing indicators.

See the [Gender Indicators section](#) of the GLIA Toolkit or [Impact Hub's Guide to Gender Lens Acceleration](#) for other potential indicators you may like to consider.

PROGRAMME DESIGN & DELIVERY

Gender Objective:

To create a programme that will:

- › Be attractive and accessible to more women-led ventures,
- › Enable people of all genders to fully participate in and complete the programme, and
- › Enable people of all genders to receive equal value from the programme activities (i. e. see an increase in confidence, business/leadership skills, etc.)

Example Indicators:

Quantitative

Short-term:

- › Ratio of women-led vs male-led ventures participating in, and completing the programme
- › Gender split of speakers, mentors, facilitators, investors, selection panel members or other leadership roles
- › Number (#) of programme staff/stakeholders who participated in gender equity/bias training
- › Number (#) of women-focused modules, support interventions or network building events delivered
- › **Net Promoter Score** (NPS) rating of programme by gender
- › NPS rating per masterclass, mentoring session, etc. by gender

Intermediate:

- › Percentage (%) entrepreneurs who have reported an increase in skill knowledge by gender
- › Percentage (%) entrepreneurs who have reported an increase in confidence in applying skills by gender
- › Percentage (%) entrepreneurs making a change to their businesses related to learning by gender
- › Percentage (%) entrepreneurs self-reporting an increase in leadership skills (i. e. motivation and resilience, clarity of vision, wellbeing, etc.) by gender
- › Percentage (%) entrepreneurs self-reporting an increase in access to mentors by gender

- › Percentage (%) entrepreneurs self-reporting an expansion in business network (i.e. business partners, investors / funders) by gender
- › Percentage (%) mentors/facilitators (by gender) rated positively by entrepreneurs

Long Term:

- › Venture survival rate, by gender
- › Percentage (%) of entrepreneurs reporting increased revenues, by gender
- › Profit margins post-acceleration, by gender
- › Average number of full-time positions created by women vs men entrepreneurs post-acceleration
- › Percentage (%) of entrepreneurs raising capital (equity, debt, philanthropic capital) by gender
- › Dollar value (\$) of investment raised (equity, debt, philanthropic capital) by gender

Qualitative

Questions to be answered by participating entrepreneurs:

- › In your own opinion, what is the most significant change that took place in your venture over the course of this programme?
- › To what extent did you feel the programme facilitators understood your experiences and could relate to your context?
- › To what extent did you feel your mentor understood your experiences and could relate to you / your context?
- › To what extent did you find that the programme facilitators were able to support you in the areas of need that you identified?
- › To what extent did you find that your mentor was able to support you in the areas of need that you identified?
- › To what extent did you feel comfortable sharing your experiences with the programme facilitators?
- › To what extent did you feel comfortable sharing your experiences with your mentor?

RECRUITMENT

Gender Objective:

To increase the diversity of applicants or, for a women-only programme, recruit a target number of women-led ventures.

Example Indicators:

- › Number (#) of promotion events for women entrepreneurs
- › Application form tested for gender bias
- › Application process & communication reviewed for gender inclusion
- › Types of outreach partners engaged
- › Gender split of attendees at pre-application events
- › Gender split of applicants

DATA COLLECTION TIPS

- › Training to entrepreneurs on data collection
- › Incentives for survey completion
- › Phone support for survey completion
- › Online apps/tools like **Atlan**, **Accelerator App**, or **Social Suite**

SELECTION

Gender Objective:

To increase the diversity of selected applicants or, for a women-only programme, to select a target number of women-led ventures.

Example Indicators:

Quantitative:

- › Gender split of shortlisted applicants
- › Gender split of selection panel
- › Selection profile and criteria tested and adapted for gender equity
- › Gender bias training for selection panel members conducted
- › Gender split of successful applicants

Qualitative:

- › To what extent do you feel the recruitment process was accessible and inclusive? (break down to different stages: programme advertisement, application, shortlist, interview, selection) Why?

ECOSYSTEM CHANGE

Gender Objectives:

- › Improve access to finance for women-led ventures
- › Improve the business environment for women-led ventures through policy reform
- › Improve access to domestic and international markets
- › Broaden gender norms and stereotypes

Example Indicators:

Finance

Quantitative

- › Percentage (%) of entrepreneurs raising capital (equity, debt, philanthropic capital) by gender
- › Amount (\$) of investment raised (equity, debt, philanthropic capital) by gender
- › Number (#) of funders with a gender-lens investing framework
- › Percentage (%) of investors self-reporting as competent to mainstream gender equity
- › Number (#) of investors who participated in gender equity / bias training

Qualitative

- › To what extent did you find the funding process accessible and easy to fulfil?
- › To what extent did you find the funding process transparent and clear?
- › To what extent were you satisfied with the result or the feedback for your funding application?

Policy

- › Policy tracking on government core commitments to gender equality
- › Number (#) of submissions to government around gender equality
- › Number (#) of government initiatives in advancing gender equality
- › Amount (\$) of government spent on initiatives in advancing gender equality
- › Number (#) of submissions made to government, gender equity advocacy networks, etc.

Markets

Quantitative

- › Number (#) of new markets accessed
- › Number (#) of new network/industry connections
- › Number (#) of new customers gained

Qualitative

- › Have you made any new industry connections? What type of connections have been facilitated and how has the relationship been significant for your business' growth?
- › Have you received support to expand to new markets? What type of support has been most instrumental?

Culture

Quantitative

- › Number (#) of gender competency trainings held
- › Number (#) of ambassadors engaged by gender
- › Number (#) of gender equity advocacy campaigns run
- › Reach of campaigns

Qualitative

- › To what extent do you feel your ideas about gender roles and stereotypes have been changed by this campaign?

GENDER DISAGGREGATED DATA

In order to measure differences in how each gendered group experiences the Accelerator programme, remember to **ask for gender in the initial application form and in any anonymous surveys**. Some Accelerators ask for gender, while **others are now asking for preferred pronouns** (she/her, he/him, they/them) to be more inclusive. Consider what is most appropriate in the programme's local context and language.

COLLECTING & ANALYSING DATA

Once indicators have been identified, you will need to determine how and when to collect and analyse the data. For each indicator that will be measured, follow these steps:

1. **Decide on the collection method** – Consider how gender may impact how data is collected. How might gender differences, power dynamics or bias impact the accuracy of the data? For example, is a woman likely to be honest in an interview about the obstacles she faces in growing her business with her husband or another man in the room? Consider whether an in-person or phone interview, survey or focus group would be most likely to capture accurate, unbiased data (read more on different data collection methods [here](#)).
2. **Decide when data will be collected** – Many accelerator programmes will have entrepreneurs complete a pre and post-programme survey and then surveys or interviews every 6–12 months for a number of years following the programme. If using interviews or focus groups, consider what days/times women would most likely be available to participate.
3. **Measure a baseline** – Capture a measurement for each indicator before the programme begins. For example, if the programme is measuring the number of women who see an increase in confidence as a result of the programme, the baseline could be captured in a pre-programme survey or

interview and then compared to a post-programme survey or interview. Baseline data like annual revenue and employees also may be captured in the initial programme application form.

4. **Set a target** – As a team, set a goal for each indicator. If measuring the number or percentage of applications from women-led ventures - decide on a target number/percentage that is both realistic and ambitious. Look to historical data or the outcomes of other local programmes to set realistic targets.
5. **Collect the data** – Ensure all data is disaggregated by gender. To tackle the challenges many accelerators face in collecting data from entrepreneurs, consider providing training on data collection or hands-on support to improve reporting rates. Also consider incentives for survey completion, or phone support to complete the survey where necessary. Some programmes also use online apps or tools like Atlan, Accelerator App, or Social Suite (for social impact accelerators). See more on best practice data collection strategies here.
6. **Analyse the data** – Look for patterns and trends in the data. If running a mixed gender programme, look for gender differences in the data - how do women-led ventures differ in terms of revenue growth, access to finance, confidence levels or satisfaction with the programme content or mentors? How can the programme be adapted to cater for these differences?

“We initially asked the entrepreneurs to report back to us every two months but we really struggled to capture accurate data that often. In order to ensure the accuracy of the data and a good response rate, we suggest exploring different approaches: Consider using an app or online tool rather than excel sheets. The response rate is much better when entrepreneurs have the option to respond in their native language. Choose the right type of questions and be selective with the data you track.”

We track revenue growth, number of employees, number of women employed, number of beneficiaries (especially useful for artisans), number of market linkages, capital needs, and self image of the entrepreneurs (how they feel and view themselves as entrepreneurs). One indicator we have found to be most valuable is how women entrepreneurs have been able to build networks. A lot of networks in India are considered ‘old boys clubs’ so breaking into these networks is a good indicator of progress. Self-image is another important indicator and we have seen that our participants tend to report increased confidence and assertiveness which will benefit them well beyond the programme.” – Her & Now

COMMUNICATING PROGRESS

Once you have collected and analysed the data, the programme is ready to communicate the gender-related impact it has had. Consider:

Who is the audience?

This will usually include funders, partners, participants themselves, and / or wider ecosystem players. These various actors will have different interests and motivations that should be considered when deciding how to frame the impact of the programme.

How will you communicate progress?

Will it be through a formal report? A newsletter? An event or conference panel discussion? How will the information included differ for each of these channels/methods? Which channels/methods will have the biggest impact on influencing other ecosystem players to take a gender lens approach? Consider leveraging formal networks like **ANDE** who have wide reach and are highly respected across the ecosystem.

How can you make the case for attribution?

Determine how the programme will communicate the link between the programme activities and the changes that have been measured in the programme participants. For example, if women-led ventures participating in your programme see an increase in access to capital, how can you be sure they wouldn't have accessed that capital without your programme? You can consider using a control group as **GALI** has done to measure Accelerator effectiveness. This involves surveying applicants to the programme who were not selected and comparing, for example, their annual revenue, employee and equity growth to that of the ventures that were selected for the programme. If there is limited capacity to collect this additional data, consider comparing the results of programme participants to results from other similar programmes or use **GALI's benchmarking tool** to compare them to the average results across programmes in the global GALI dataset (note that you can filter results by the gender of the founding team to compare results to women-led ventures only).



ADDITIONAL READINGS ON GENDER-LENS M&E

- › **GIZ Guidelines on designing a gender-sensitive Results Based Monitoring System**
- › **Oxfam Quick Guide to Gender-Sensitive Indicators**
- › **BRIDGE Indicators for Gender Equality & Women's Empowerment**
- › **GALI Benchmarking Tool**
- › **Impact Hub's Guide to Gender Lens Acceleration**
- › **Impact Measurement Principles for Entrepreneurship Support**



CASE STUDY: KAPITA BUSINESS HUB'S SCALEUP ACADEMY

Let's take a deeper look at one of our Case Study projects, some of the gender lens strategies they have applied, and the impact the programme has had.

- › GIZ has supported the establishment of the **KAPITA Business Hub's ScaleUp Academy**, providing technical support and network development through the design and implementation phase of **three cohorts**. GIZ has also **provided financial support** to Iraq's angel investor network.
- › Based in Baghdad, Iraq, ScaleUp Academy is an accelerator programme that aims to equip **technology-based startups** with the ability to understand and overcome the challenges they face in sustainably growing their businesses and help them **achieve a scalable and investment-ready business model**.
- › The Academy admits founders and key team members into a **nine week intensive programme** that includes both general and tailor-made sessions. Over the course of the programme, business development experts work with the founders to develop and implement their growth strategy. The Academy provides free marketing services for participants and partners with Asaicell, a major telecommunications company in Iraq, to provide in-kind services to the startups.
- › The Academy **targets both genders equally** to find the best technology startups with potential for scale. Currently, 33% of participating startups are women-owned but the programme aims to reach 50%.
- › They **attract women entrepreneurs through targeted campaigns** that promote the success stories of their women graduates, communicate the importance of women entrepreneurs' participation, and highlight the programme's business growth opportunities. The programme also organises

Women in Business events, where women entrepreneurs and key figures in the ecosystem come together to discuss the current challenges, possible solutions, and available opportunities for Iraqi women entrepreneurs, and how they can further engage in and contribute to the local entrepreneurial scene. These events raise awareness of the critical role that women play in the ecosystem, promote their participation, and offer women graduates an opportunity to share their journey and success stories.

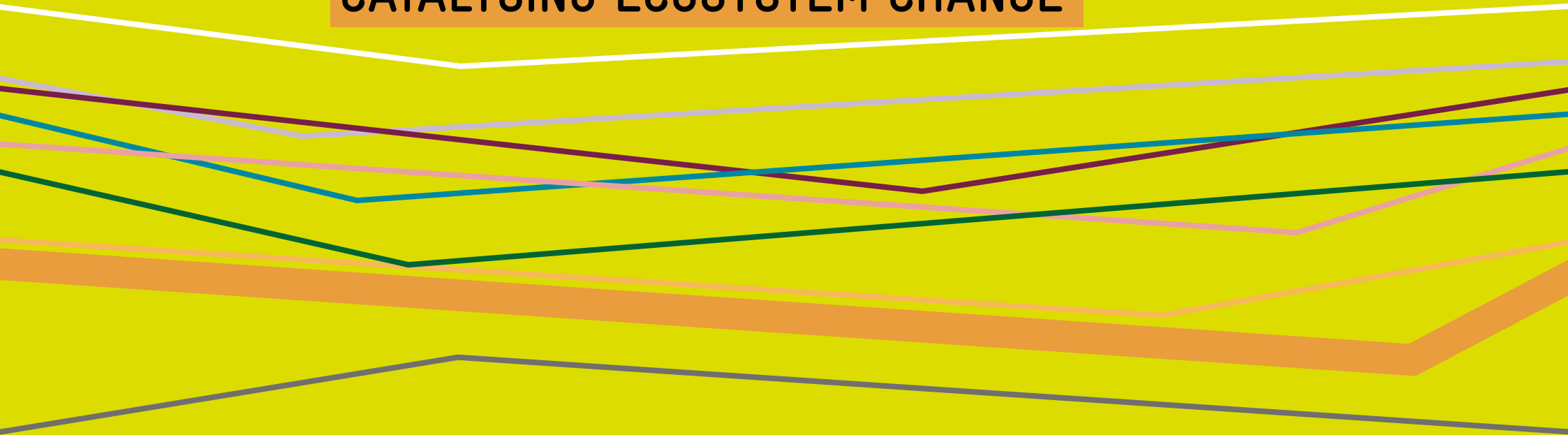
- › The Scale Up Academy **provides solutions to the following main challenges** women entrepreneurs face. The programme addresses:
 - › **Social norms** that restrict women's ability to participate in training & events through campaigns that normalise women's participation and showcase women role models.
 - › **Lack of access to education** through capacity building that enables women-led ventures to participate in the private sector.
 - › **Lack of access to finance** through investment readiness support and connections to Iraqi Angel Investors network
 - › **Geographic limitation** through a hybrid method of training and tailored dates/timing that helps women from regional provinces attend.
- › Since 2020, the programme has worked with 6 women entrepreneurs who have gone on to create 19 jobs, see an average of 54% growth in revenue, and report expanded networks, new skills and an improved business model.

Find out more about the project [here](#).

(Source: Authors)

MODULE 7

CATALYSING ECOSYSTEM CHANGE



Module 7 **Catalysing Ecosystem Change**

ACCELERATION BASICS: CATALYSING ECOSYSTEM CHANGE

Accelerators are just one type of support that entrepreneurs have reported to be useful in building their ventures. Once a venture leaves a programme, they need strong, supportive ecosystems around them.

Watch our short explanatory video on ecosystems here!

[Strengthening entrepreneurial ecosystems – a guide developed by GIZ – YouTube](#)



As has been detailed in [GIZ's Guide to Strengthening Entrepreneurial Ecosystems](#), besides support organisations like accelerators, there are other factors that contribute to a venture's success including accessible markets (access to domestic and international customers and networks), accessible

finance, supportive government & regulatory frameworks, a supportive culture and more.

Given accelerators act as intermediaries who work directly with ventures, deeply understanding their needs, and with other players in the ecosystem like funders, technical experts, mentors, and government institutions, they are well placed to play an influential role in addressing the barriers entrepreneurs face in the wider ecosystems.

WHY IT MATTERS

Addressing the barriers entrepreneurs face outside of the Accelerator programme itself, benefits not only the current cohort, but also all alumni ventures and all other ventures in the ecosystem. It maximises the impact of the Accelerator programme, ensuring that the business environment ventures are operating in is set up to help them succeed. This is particularly important when it comes to women-led ventures who face greater barriers to accessing finance, combatting prevailing social norms, and overcoming discriminatory policies and regulatory frameworks.

This module highlights a few key areas an Accelerator can catalyse improved support for women-led ventures across the ecosystem.

FINANCE

Accelerators are uniquely placed to understand the needs of women-led ventures and why they are not being met. They can then play a role in educating and encouraging funders to apply a gender lens to their investments or in developing their own innovative solutions to close the gender gap in finance. Explore the following strategies to increase women-led ventures' access to capital:

- › **Finance women-led ventures directly.** Consider direct debt or equity funding or other innovative investment vehicles like **revenue based financing**, crowdfunding/**peer-to-peer lending**, or **inventory financing**. Programs may also provide small grants to help ventures test new ideas or overcome barriers to growth. This may include providing grants that unlock larger funding opportunities. For example, in South Africa, some funders request that ventures contribute cash worth 20–40% of the investment size, which can be very difficult for early stage ventures.
- › **Partner with funders** who are willing to fund women-led ventures and/or consider innovative investment vehicles that better meet their needs. An Accelerator can play a powerful role in de-risking the investment both through the trust the programme has already built with the entrepreneur and through the ongoing support it can provide post-investment. For example, in the Pacific Islands, a partnership between **Pacific RISE** and **Red Hat Impact** established a Pacific Trade Finance Vehicle to **de-risk the supply chain** for menstrual health ventures by bulk purchasing production materials from China and selling these on to the individual ventures on payment terms that they are most comfortable with.
- › **Work with investors and other funders to apply a gender lens to the investment process.** For investors, this may involve increasing the gender diversity of decision makers at investment firms, reviewing the criteria used in the due diligence process and whether it privileges one gender over another, or introducing policies and procedures that minimise unconscious bias. Read more on gender lens investing **here** and **here**.
- › **Facilitate conversations between funders** and founders to foster a better understanding of the pain points, needs and lived experiences of women-led ventures as well as the interests, motivations and concerns of funders. This can

help to address the misalignment between the demand and supply side of funding.

- › **Equip women entrepreneurs with the knowledge to critically assess and access the most appropriate forms of capital** to support the growth of their ventures. For example, Villgro Philippines has recently launched an **access-to-finance platform** for women entrepreneurs to connect with investors, financial institutions, among others. Additionally, **Her Africa** is developing an investment readiness programme to help women-led ventures understand their capital needs, confidently navigate the investment landscape, and facilitate connections to investment opportunities that best suit their venture stage and needs.

“Property ownership among women in India is less than 10%. Hence, we are working with financial institutions to enable more collateral-free loans to women entrepreneurs. Additionally, we have also created a module for financial institutions to better serve women entrepreneurs who are seeking credit.” – Her & Now

POLICY

Government policies and regulatory frameworks can either help or hinder the growth and success of women-led businesses. Accelerators can partner with government ministries or other ecosystem players to advocate for policy changes that foster a more conducive business environment for women.

- › **Partner with other accelerators and incubators to lobby for particular policy changes** like those that improve land ownership, business registration, family or tax policies that support women’s participation in entrepreneurship or the labour force and their ability to access the support and capital they need to grow. See the **ICR Report on Business Reforms to Support Women-owned Businesses in ACP Countries** for more on suggested policy changes.
- › **Advocate for policies that encourage accelerators and incubators to adopt a gender lens.** For example, in India and the Philippines, the government plays a role in approving and regulating accelerator programmes and could influence the strategies that these programmes put in place to level the playing field for women-led ventures.
- › **Use gender disaggregated data** to lobby for changes to policies that disadvantage particular genders.
- › **Support ventures to develop equitable internal policies** to combat gender bias and discrimination.

MARKETS

Women-led ventures often lack access to the domestic and international customer networks and markets that can support their growth. Accelerators can consider strategies that open doors to new markets or facilitate easier access to existing markets for women entrepreneurs.

- › **Facilitate connections to key industry contacts** like business advisors, large customers or suppliers, or potential partners that can help women entrepreneurs access additional support and build the social capital they need to grow sustainably.
- › **Provide transportation support** to enable women to access markets that are far from their household.
- › **Support women entrepreneurs through the process of securing the permissions/certifications** necessary to trade in certain markets or lobby the government for these processes to be improved to increase access for women.
- › **Provide or link women-led ventures with e-commerce training** to expand access to new markets.
- › **Partner with other Accelerators / Incubators** in other geographical locations / markets to give ventures opportunities for learning and exchange.
- › **Partner with trade organisations** that help ventures access new markets.

CULTURE

Social norms and cultural stereotypes can also present major barriers for women-led ventures. Accelerators can work to challenge social norms directly with entrepreneurs as well as through initiatives that help to shift these norms in the wider community.

- › **Revisit recruitment strategies** in **module 3** that build family and community support for women entrepreneurs.
- › **Leverage male ambassadors** where rigid gender norms still exist. This can help ease conformity to these norms and reduce perceived risks around women's engagement in entrepreneurship.
- › **Consider strategies to shift cultural perceptions of women's roles** in society and their participation in entrepreneurship.

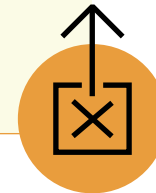
For example, *Her & Now* created a **film campaign**, adapted from a campaign run in Northern Africa, which had the aim of raising public awareness around woman-led ventures and increasing the entrepreneurs' confidence as they saw themselves on screen.



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ADDITIONAL READINGS ON CATALYSING ECOSYSTEM CHANGE

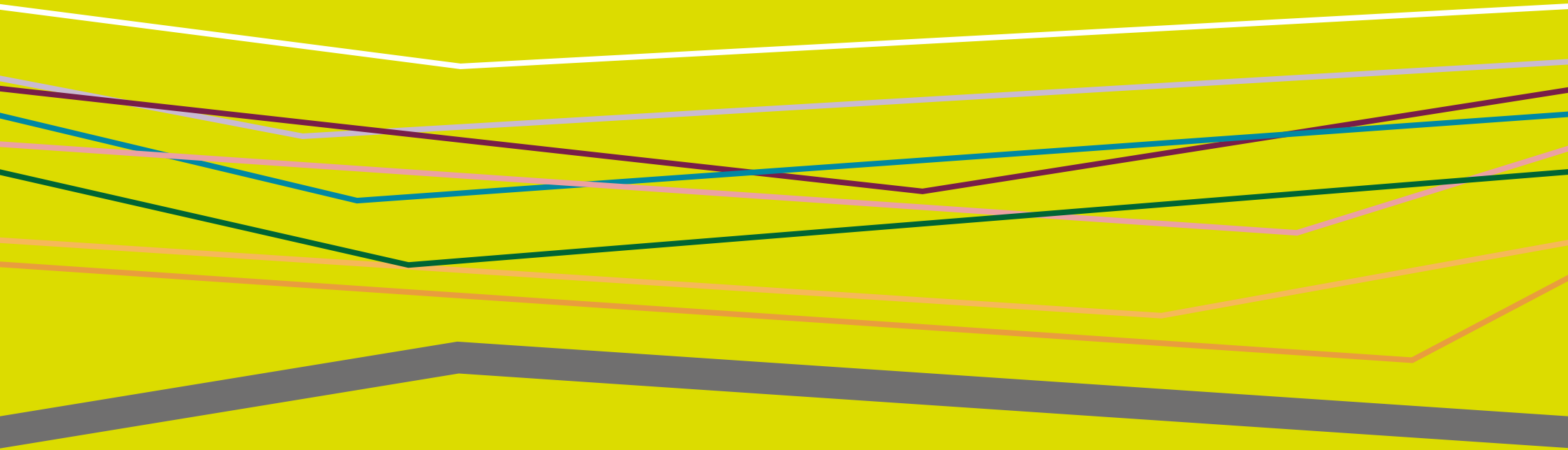
- › Investment Vehicle Innovations – Bertha Centre/Oxford Said Business School
- › Practical Strategies to Catalyse Women-led Access-to-Energy Ventures in India – IRCW/Shell Foundation/UK Government
- › Five ways policy could close the gender gap in Entrepreneurship-UN Women
- › Ecosystem Gender Lens Strategies – GLIA
- › Enhancing Women's Market Access and Promoting Pro-poor Growth – OECD
- › Increasing access to market for rural women through E-commerce – USAID Market Links
- › Beyond-21: Cross-border Gender Lens Investing Programme
- › Her & Now Trailers
- › Her & Now Moderation Guideline



Endnotes

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- 27 OECD.org, 2020, [COVID-19 threatens to undo progress made in closing the gender gap in entrepreneurship](#)

APPENDIX



Appendix

→ ~~Template: Self Diagnosis~~

→ ~~Template: Gender Action Plan~~



Self Diagnosis Tool for Mixed-Gender Accelerators

Whether you already run an Accelerator program or are in the process of designing a new programme, this self-diagnosis tool will help you identify where you have already considered gender within the programme design and implementation. It will then help you determine the key areas where additional thinking and gender lens strategies are needed and direct you

to sections of the handbook that will be most useful in addressing these gaps. Please note, your ability to answer these questions may depend on your level of involvement in the design and implementation of your programmes therefore you may need to complete this with your project partner(s).

	Is this true for you?		If you answered NO, how would you best describe your current situation		
	YES This is true for us	NO We're not there yet	Not started	In progress	Already in practice
PROGRAMME DESIGN					
The curriculum has been designed to create equal value for and be inclusive of all genders, including delivering sessions that educate entrepreneurs on gender issues and how gender relates to entrepreneurship (for example Gender 101 or Gender in Products & Services) or address key gaps in knowledge or barriers to growth for any gendered group (for example, Imposter Syndrome or Negotiation Skills for women founders).					
The programme has been designed to ensure that the timing, cost, location and format is inclusive of all genders.					
RECRUITMENT					
Marketing and communications are accessible to, and inclusive of, all genders. For example through the use of gender inclusive or targeted channels, the use of gender inclusive imagery, gender neutral language, and/or an explicit invitation to applicants of all genders.					
The application process has been designed to be accessible to and inclusive of all genders for example through the format offered, the language used or the inclusion of specific targets for applicants from women-led ventures.					



	Is this true for you?		If you answered NO, how would you best describe your current situation		
	YES This is true for us	NO We're not there yet	Not started	In progress	Already in practice
SELECTION					
All genders are equally represented among the founders the programme selects to support.					
The programme has processes in place to ensure no founder is discriminated against due to their gender during the application and selection process.					
There is gender diversity in the programme selection panel.					
DELIVERY					
All genders are equally represented among the programme facilitators and mentors. They are provided with the skills and knowledge to recognise and address gender bias within their role.					
MONITORING & EVALUATION					
The programme collects gender disaggregated data in order to understand differences in how each gender experiences and benefits from the program.					
The programme considers how gender impacts the way data is collected.					
ECOSYSTEM ENGAGEMENT					
The programme team understands that power dynamics may influence the investor/ entrepreneur relationship and plays an active role to create more equitable decisions and create access to funding for all founders based on the merits of their venture and remove any bias in relation to the gender of the founder.					
The programme team understands the systemic and regulatory issues that exist within the local ecosystem, which disadvantage certain genders, and works to disrupt negative power dynamics and affect positive change.					



Self Diagnosis Tool for Women-Only Accelerators

Whether you already run an Accelerator program or are in the process of designing a new programme, this self-diagnosis tool will help you identify where you have already considered gender within the programme design and implementation. It will then help you determine the key areas where additional thinking and gender lens strategies are needed and direct you

to sections of the handbook that will be most useful in addressing these gaps. Please note, your ability to answer these questions may depend on your level of involvement in the design and implementation of your programmes therefore you may need to complete this with your project partner(s).

	Is this true for you?		If you answered NO, how would you best describe your current situation		
	YES This is true for us	NO We're not there yet	Not started	In progress	Already in practice
PROGRAMME DESIGN					
The curriculum has been designed to meet the needs of women entrepreneurs, including specific content to address key gaps in knowledge or barriers to growth like negotiation skills or overcoming imposter syndrome.					
The programme has been designed to ensure that the timing, cost, location and format best meets the needs of women entrepreneurs.					
RECRUITMENT					
Marketing and communications have been designed specifically to attract women founders. For example through the use of targeted channels and/or imagery and language that includes and appeals to women.					
The application proces has been designed to meet the needs of women founders for example through the format offered and language used.					
SELECTION					
The programme considers intersectionality in the selection process and is deliberate about selecting women of all backgrounds and experiences for the program.					



	Is this true for you?		If you answered NO, how would you best describe your current situation		
	YES This is true for us	NO We're not there yet	Not started	In progress	Already in practice
The programme has processes in place to ensure no founder is discriminated against due to their race, sexual orientation, etc. during our application and selection process.					
Women are represented in the programme selection panel.					
DELIVERY					
Experienced women facilitators and mentors lead the program team. They are provided with the skills and knowledge to recognise and address gender bias within their role.					
MONITORING & EVALUATION					
The programme considers how gender impacts the way data is collected.					
ECOSYSTEM ENGAGEMENT					
The programme team understands that power dynamics may influence the investor/entrepreneur relationship and plays an active role to create more equitable decisions and create access to funding for women entrepreneurs based on the merits of their venture and remove any bias in relation to the gender of the founder.					
The programme team understands the systemic and regulatory issues that exist within the local ecosystem, which disadvantage certain genders, and works to disrupt negative power dynamics and affect positive change.					



Gender Action Plan Template

A Gender Action Plan is a tool to help Accelerator teams prioritise gender lens strategies and devise an approach for implementing and measuring the impact of those strategies. Working from left to right in the table below:

1. identify the gender-related problem/challenge you are aiming to address.
2. Record the objective you want to achieve.
3. Next, using the handbook, identify 1–2 strategies you would like to implement to achieve your objective.
4. In the following two columns, identify who will be leading on implementing these strategies and when you hope they will be completed.
5. Finally, use the handbook to identify both quantitative and qualitative indicators you will use to measure the success of your strategies and how you will collect the data.

Refer to the example plan for support and complete your own on the next page:

EXAMPLE GENDER ACTION PLAN:

Problem	Objective	Strategies	Responsibility	Deadline	Quantitative Indicators	Collection	Qualitative Indicators	Collection
Lack of diversity in our programme participants.	Ensure our programme design and delivery supports all founders, regardless of gender.	Increase diversity of our facilitators and mentors.	Programme Manager	July 2022	Gender split of speakers, mentors, facilitators or other leadership roles	Post-recruitment Analysis	To what extent did you find you were supported by your mentors/facilitators?	Post-programme survey and interview
		Review and amend content and format to ensure it meets the needs of both genders.	Learning Designer	May 2022	NPS rating of programme by gender	Post-programme Analysis	To what extent was the delivery of the programme suitable to you? (eg. location, time, mode, format) What made it suitable/not suitable?	Post-programme survey and interview



TEMPLATE GENDER ACTION PLAN:

click on the table cells to fill them in

Problem	Objective	Strategies	Responsibility	Deadline	Quantitative Indicators	Collection	Qualitative Indicators	Collection
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