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Toolkit

Advancing Agribusiness through Gender and Social Inclusion: A Practical Toolkit for Scalable Growth

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We also recognize the continued support and collaboration of national and regional partners, whose engagement ensures that the solutions developed are responsive to local needs, strengthen innovation systems, and contribute to building more resilient agrifood systems.

To learn more about CGIAR Scaling for Impact (S4I) Program, please contact: scaling@cgiar.org

About CGIAR Scaling for Impact (S4I) Program

Scaling for Impact (S4I) is a CGIAR program (2025–2030) that tests, refines, and scales innovations in food, land, and water systems. It works to align those innovations with stakeholder needs to achieve transformative impact.

Website: <https://www.cgiar.org/cgiar-research-portfolio-2025-2030/scaling-for-impact/>

About CGIAR

CGIAR is a global research partnership for a food secure future.

Visit <https://www.cgiar.org/cgiar-research-portfolio-2025-2030/> to learn more about the Science Programs in the CGIAR research portfolio.

About The Rallying Cry

The Rallying Cry supports transformation at the intersection of climate/gender and economy/ecology in Africa. Visit <https://therallyingcry.org/> to learn more about The Rallying Cry.



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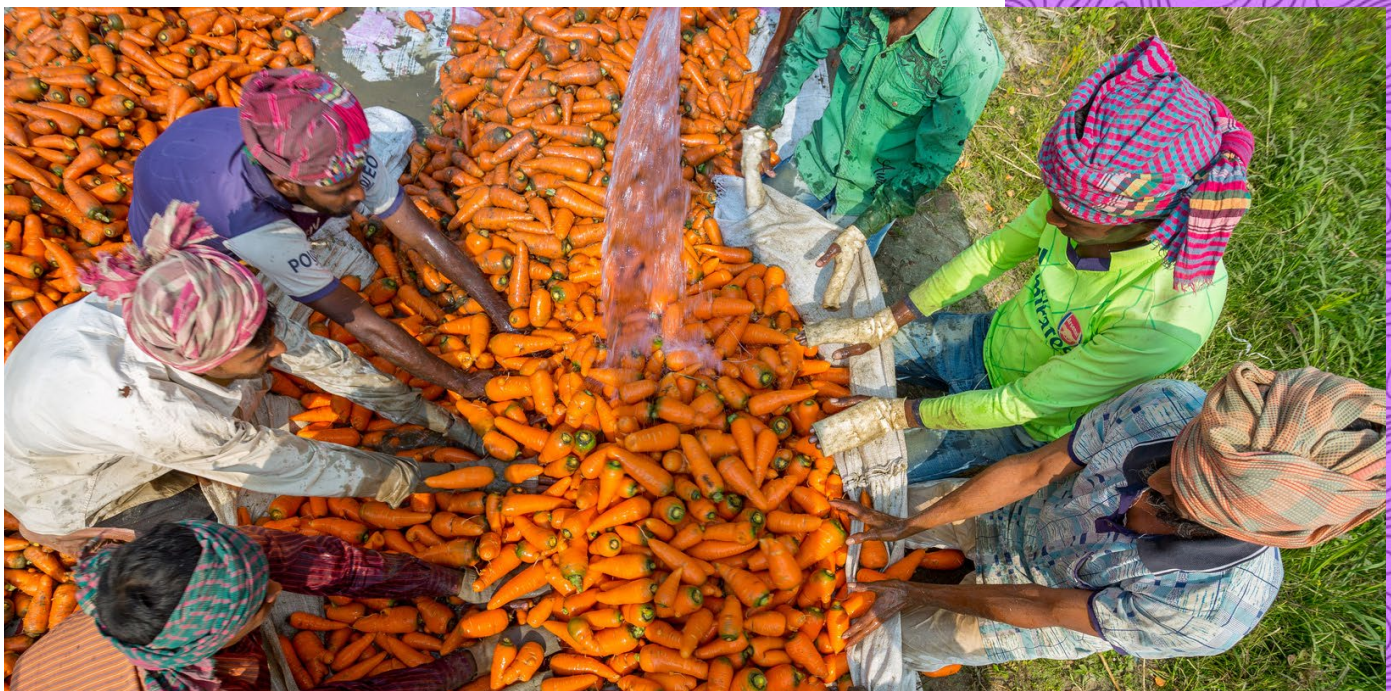
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PHOTOS

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Contents

Acknowledgments	3
Section 1. Introduction	5
i. Purpose: Why GESI is Essential for Agribusinesses	6
ii. Benefits: How GESI Aligns with Business Growth and Other Frameworks	7
Section 2. Use Guide: How to Use this Tool	8
i. Steps to Using this Tool	9
ii. Plan for Action	11
iii. Tracking Progress	16
Section 3. Framework and Resources	19
i. 2X Criteria	20
ii. Gender Responsive Business Model Canvas	21
iii. Gender at Work Framework	23
Section 4. Conclusion	27

About the Toolkit - A Tool Kit for Agribusinesses

This toolkit addresses the ongoing challenges faced by agribusinesses in embedding gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) into their decision-making for inclusive outcomes. Each step provides a clear approach to how businesses can improve transformative outcomes and is designed as a fit-for-purpose tool.

The tool is targeted at researchers supporting SMEs in their inclusivity approaches, as well as agribusinesses, on how to operationalize GESI.

It presents frameworks such as the 2X criteria, ecosystem-building models, and gender action plans (GAP) for transformative change.



Photo: Farmers practicing floating agriculture on raised seedbeds in a waterlogged landscape — an innovative adaptation to climate change that ensures year-round food production and livelihoods. **Photo Credit:** ABCDFR, CIMMYT.

Introduction to Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI)

What is Gender & Social Inclusion

Gender Equality means that men and women have **equal rights** to opportunities, rights and respect in the **work place** and **across the value chain**.

Social Inclusion refers to the inclusion of **women**, the **youth**, **people with disabilities** and other **vulnerable** groups.



Photo: Farmers practicing floating agriculture on raised seedbeds in a waterlogged landscape — an innovative adaptation to climate change that ensures year-round food production and livelihoods. **Photo Credit:** ABCDFR, CIMMYT.

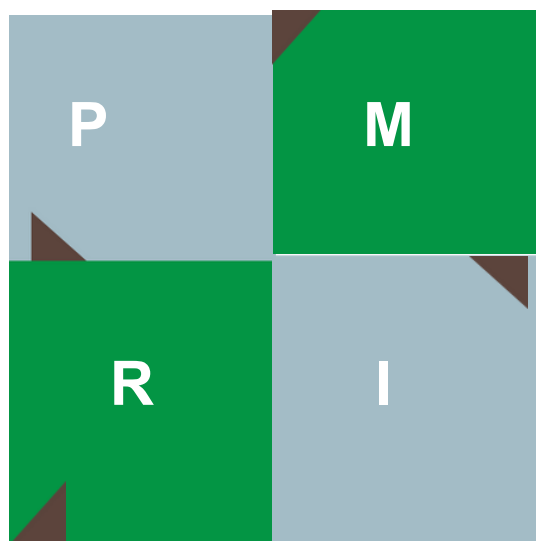
Purpose: Why GESI is Essential for Agribusinesses

UNLOCK UNTAPPED POTENTIAL:

Women and youth make up a significant portion of agricultural value chains, yet they often face systemic barriers to full participation. By addressing these barriers, agribusinesses can unlock new talent pools and innovative approaches.

ENHANCE MARKET OPPORTUNITIES:

Inclusive agribusinesses can develop products and services tailored to broader demographics, including women-led households, which often control food-related decisions and spending.



STRENGTHEN RESILIENCE:

Gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) are critical for resilience in the face of climate change. Diverse teams bring varied perspectives and adaptive strategies, essential for thriving in unpredictable environments.

MEET INVESTOR AND PARTNER EXPECTATIONS:

Increasingly, investors, donors, and partners demand gender-responsive practices. Demonstrating commitment to GESI can improve access to funding and partnerships.

Benefits: How GESI Aligns with Business Growth and Other Frameworks



Growth and Profitability:

- Women reinvest up to 90% of their income in their families and communities, driving demand for products and services.
- Gender-diverse leadership teams have been shown to improve decision-making and financial performance.



Climate-Smart Practices:

- Women often lead in adopting sustainable practices at the community level. Inclusive agribusinesses can scale these efforts, reduce emissions, and improve resource efficiency.
- Youth bring tech-driven and social innovative solutions to the agriculture sectors.



Alignment with the 2X Criteria:

- By meeting the 2X thresholds (e.g., women owning or leading 20 - 30% of a business, or targeting women as customers), businesses improve access to impact-focused funding and partnerships
- Youth bring tech-driven and social innovative solutions to the agriculture sectors.

User Guide: How to Use This Tool

Steps to using this tool

This tool is designed to be simple, practical, and actionable for agribusinesses of all sizes. Here's how to use it:

Step 1: Start with Self - Assessment:

- Use the self -scoring checklist and questions to evaluate your business's current GESI practices.
- Identify gaps based on the 2X criteria, the Gender at Work framework, and the Gender Responsive Business Model Canvas

Step 2: Plan for Action

- Prioritize areas for improvement based on your assessment results.
- Develop a clear action plan with measurable goals, focusing on quick wins and long-term strategies.

Step 3: Track your Progress

- Use the scorecard and reflection questions provided to monitor improvements over time.
- Revisit the tool periodically to refine your GESI strategies

Step 1: Self -Scoring Checklist

Self- Scoring Checklist	Yes	No
Criteria		
Ownership: At least 20-30% of the business is owned by women.		
Leadership: Women hold at least 30% of senior leadership positions.		
Employment: Women make up at least 30% of the workforce/supply chain.		
Target Market: At least 30% of customers are women or youth.		
Policies: Written gender equality and youth inclusion policies are in place.		
Training Accessibility: Training schedules and locations are inclusive of women and youth.		
Cultural Sensitivity: Measures are taken to address cultural norms that limit women's participation.		

This self -scoring checklist provides a straightforward way for agribusiness to assess their current GESI practices. Businesses can answer **Yes** or **No** to each question, with scores reflecting progress in meeting the 2X and other GESI -related criteria. The criteria in the table could be seen as goals. For example, Goal 1: **Ownership** ; Goal 2: **Leadership**, etc.

Checklist Scoring:

- 0 - 2: Limited GESI integration - significant action needed.
- 3-5: Moderate GESI integration - room for improvement.
- 6-7: Strong GESI integration - on track for sustainability.

Steps to Plan for Action after Self -Scoring for GESI

1. Review Your Results

Identify strengths and areas needing improvement from the self-scoring process. Highlight specific gaps related to gender and social inclusion (eg., representation, access, opportunities).

2. Set Clear Goals

Define what you want to achieve based on the gaps identified. Ensure goals are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound (SMART).

3. Prioritize Actions

Rank areas needing immediate attention. Focus on high-impact, achievable changes first while planning for long-term improvements.

4. Engage Stakeholders

Involve team members, partners, and community representatives to co-create solutions. Include diverse voices to ensure inclusivity in planning and implementation.

5. Develop an Action Plan

Outline concrete steps for addressing each priority area. Assign roles, responsibilities, and deadlines for implementation.

6. Allocate Resources

Identify financial, human, and technical resources required. Mobilize necessary support and partnerships to fill resource gaps.

7. Implement Changes

Execute the action plan, ensuring regular communication and team engagement. Provide training or capacity building as needed for inclusive practices.

8. Monitor and Evaluate Progress

Set up simple metrics to track improvements over time. Use tools like surveys, focus groups, or interviews to assess impact.

9. Reflect and Adjust

Regularly revisit the action plan to incorporate learnings and feedback. Adapt strategies to overcome emerging challenges.

10. Communicate Successes and Lessons

Share progress with stakeholders and celebrate wins. Document lessons learned to improve future GESI efforts.

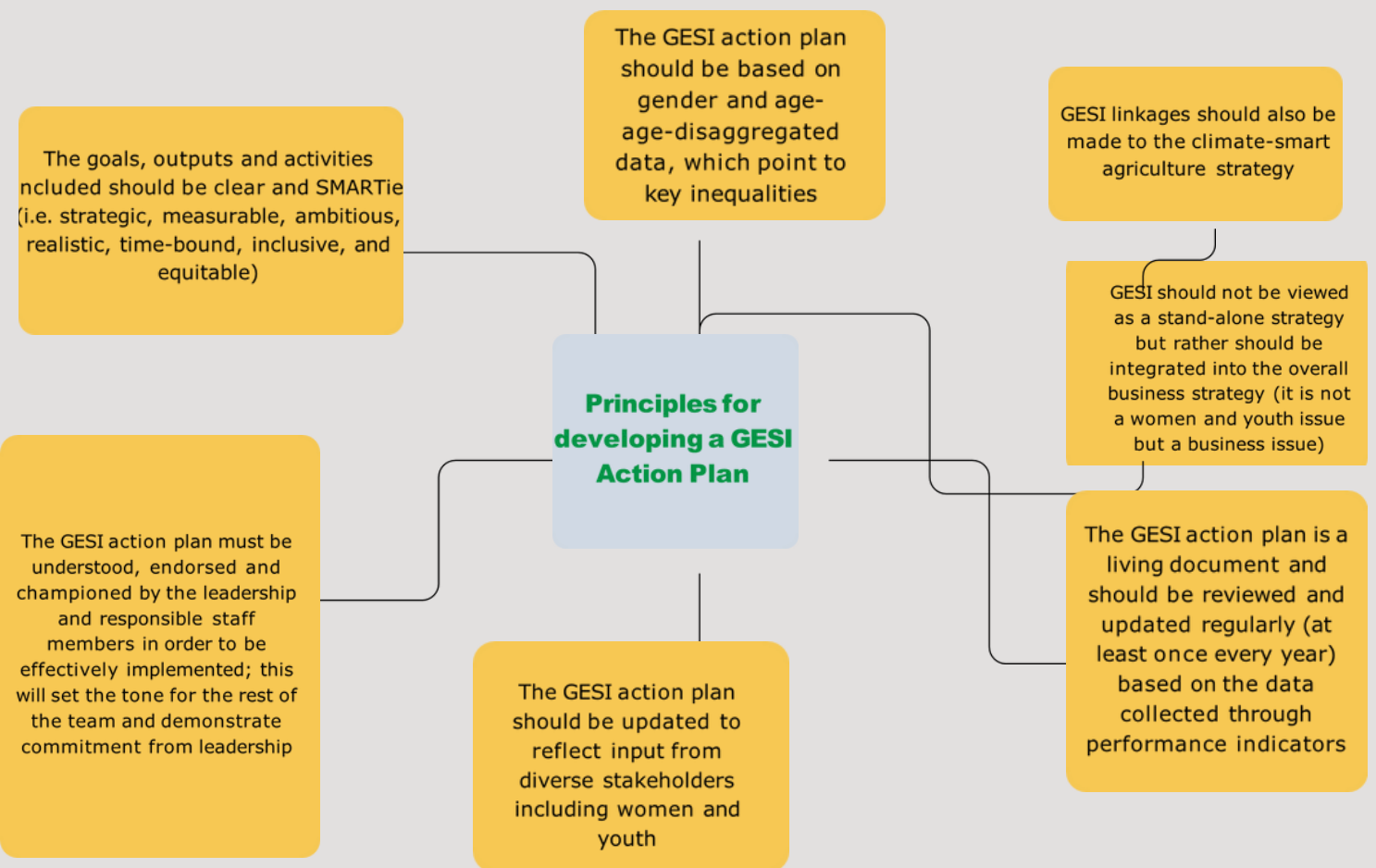
GESI Action Plan Development

What is a Gender Equality & Social Inclusion Action Plan

A Gender Equality and Social Inclusion action plan is a powerful **mainstreaming tool** that will help your business derive the benefits and impact of being inclusive.

It will **guide** you and your team in the **development and adaptation** of inclusive strategies and practices.





Step 2: Plan for Action - what do we need to work on as a company? Illustration

Goal 2: Leadership – To enhance the contribution and involvement of women and youth in driving the achievement of company goals and objectives

GESI Objectives	GESI activities/actions	Performance indicators targets	Expected Outcomes and Benefits	Responsible Entities	Timeline
2.1: To enhance GESI consciousness of leadership at individual level (GESI mainstreaming sensitization)	2.1.1: Conduct regular GESI sensitization training for management team	2.1.1: Number of GESI sensitization trainings held annually (aim for a minimum of one)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased awareness about GESI in workforce development and its implications to business performance outcomes • Increased commitment to GESI goals and outcomes • Improved working culture • Increased employee retention • Improved knowledge • Improved confidence in female and young managers 	HR Department	Indicate which quarter you aim to achieve and track progress

Note: Kindly review the resources section for more info

Tracking of Progress

Step 3: Using dashboards to track progress

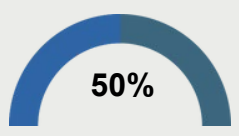
Measuring **transformative change** would require reflecting on agency, leadership, and shared ownership. Progress can be traced in phases and assessed based on the goals set by the business.

The 2x led dashboard provides a systematic way of tracking progress.



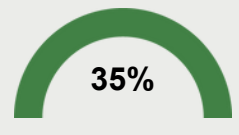
- Use a scorecard and reflection questions provided to monitor improvements overtime.
- Revisit the tool periodically to refine your GESI strategies.
- A 2X led dashboard is provided in the next slide.

2X Challenge Criteria Dashboard



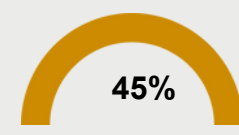
Criteria 1: Entrepreneurship & Ownership

Founded by a woman (or group of women) that retain an active role OR at least 50% of shares owned by women



Criteria 2: Leadership

At least 35% of women are in senior management or 30% of board members are women



Criteria 3: Employment

At least 45% of employees or workers are women and at least one quality employment indicator e.g. policies



Criteria 4: Supply Chain

Explicit commitment to women in the supply chain is demonstrated AND at least one quality supply chain indicator in place beyond what is legally required



Criteria 5: Products and Services

Products/services are offered that enhance the well-being of women/girls and/or drive gender equity

[Kindly visit the website for thresholds specific to your country of operation](#)

The 2X Criteria Simplified



1. Ownership:

At least 20–30% of the business must be owned by women, either individually or collectively. **Example:** A cooperative where women collectively hold a majority share in decision-making and profits.

2. Leadership:

30% of senior leadership positions or board seats must be held by women. **Example:** A farming enterprise with women-led roles in strategic decision-making and operations.

3. Employment:

At least 30% of the workforce must be female, reflecting inclusive hiring and retention practices. **Example:** Hiring practices that offer flexible schedules or on-site childcare to support working mothers.

4. Products or Services Targeted to Women:

The business must deliver at least 30% of its products or services to women customers or producers. **Example:** An agribusiness that provides women farmers with tools, seeds, or credit to enhance productivity.

Resources: Simplifying Key Concepts & Frameworks

The Gender Responsive Business Canvas Model Simplified

This section provides key concepts and a framework tailored to support agribusiness accelerators in mainstream GESI in their business. Grounded in the GESI framework for agribusiness and models tested for inclusivity



This tool adapts the traditional business model canvas by embedding gender equity considerations into all aspects of the business. Here are examples for each element.

Please see the next page for the template

Customer Relationships

- o Designing and delivering products/services in ways that address the unique needs and preferences of women, youth, and marginalized groups within our customer base

- o Applying strategies to build trust and long-term relationships with women customers and underserved communities, while addressing barriers like accessibility, affordability, and cultural norms

Key Partnerships

- o Collaborate with women's groups, NGOs, or youth organizations.
- o Example: Partnering with local women's groups to co-design training curricula

Key Activities

- o Develop processes and products that enhance inclusion.
- o Example: Providing mobile training programs for women in remote areas

Unique Value Proposition

- o Address the specific needs of women and youth.
- o Example: Offering drought-resistant crops tailored for women-led farms.

Key Resources

- o Build capacity for women and youth
- o Example: Access to credit or technology designed for small-scale women farmers

Channels

- o Use gender-sensitive marketing and delivery strategies
- o Example: Offering products through women's cooperatives or digital platforms accessible via phones

Customer Segments

- o Target underserved groups, such as women farmers or young entrepreneurs
- o Example: A microfinance institution focusing on women-owned agribusinesses

Cost Structure

- o Ensure inclusivity in cost allocation.
- o Example: Allocating budget for childcare facilities or transport subsidies for women employees.

Revenue Streams

- o Diversify income by tapping into markets driven by women consumers.
- o Example: Selling organic produce to women-run restaurants.

The Gender at Work Framework Simplified



What are the current gender and social inclusion gaps?

This framework helps businesses understand how visible and invisible factors influence GESI outcomes. Here's how these elements intersect:

1. Visible Factors (Formal Systems):

- o Policies and structures that explicitly address gender inclusion.
- o Examples: Written policies for equal pay and non-discrimination, and clear maternity leave provisions or sexual harassment protocols.

2. Invisible Factors (Cultural Norms and Informal Practices):

- o Unspoken practices or beliefs that perpetuate inequality.
- o Examples: Community perceptions that women's roles are limited to caregiving and informal exclusion of women from leadership discussions or training opportunities.

Intersection of Visible and Invisible:

A business may have formal policies (e.g., equal pay) but fail to implement them effectively because of cultural resistance. For example, women may hesitate to apply for leadership roles if community norms discourage female decision-making. Addressing both visible and invisible barriers ensures deeper and more sustainable change.

The CGIAR GESI Framework for Agribusiness

How can my business break down the barriers that women and youth face?

	INFORMAL	FORMAL
INDIVIDUAL	<p>CONSCIOUSNESS / CAPABILITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Run regular workshops for senior management and all employees about diversity • Run workshops on gender-based violence (GBV) and sexual harassment in the workplace • Carefully select champions of gender equality. Provide them with training, and then ongoing mentoring and support 	<p>RESOURCES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget resources for mentoring new female leaders • Reposition the organizational marketing approach, identify and address gender-stereotyped marketing or advertising • Develop gender-sensitive procurement systems throughout the organization, and regarding external service providers • Find or develop relevant, accessible training materials • Organize child-care or child-friendly facilities in the workplace for employees, suppliers, or smallholder farmers, e.g., during trainings • Closing the gender pay gap • Identify and publicize training and mentoring opportunities for employees, particularly for women • Publicize and celebrate the achievements of female employees • Arrange a survey of female employees regarding workplace safety and security

The CGIAR GESI Framework for Agribusiness

How can my business break down the barriers that women and youth face?

	INFORMAL	FORMAL
SYSTEMIC	<p>INFORMAL NORMS AND EXCLUSIONARY PRACTICES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct culture surveys - including online and via moderated focus group discussions • Form a strategic gender-change task group to identify and develop a comprehensive list of unexamined, deep norms within the organization or particular sections/departments. Update with the strategic gender-change task group and action plan. • Consider steps that need to be taken to create a more enabling environment, so women, men and members of other minority groups feel comfortable and thrive in the workplace - this might include ensuring that the cultural and social needs of women and men in the workplace are fully acknowledged and met, eg., by offering adequate bathroom facilities or changing rooms, or prayer rooms if different religious faiths are represented. • Develop an employee code of conduct that reflects gender equality and mutual respect. All staff members should sign it. It should be reviewed annually and updated when necessary. • Develop a bias/discriminatory reporting system that is practical and anonymous, and that any employee can utilize to report experience of discrimination. • Request anonymous feedback from employees • External procurement of products and services should be fair and provide equal opportunities to women and members of minority groups. • Review procurement practices. Look out for processes that reflect hidden bias. If necessary, revise procurement protocols. 	<p>FORMAL RULES AND POLICIES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a comprehensive gender audit of all organizational, divisional, and sectional rules, regulations, and policies. • Identify where regulations and policies need to be updated or made more gender sensitive or gender transformative. • Develop and disseminate a gender-sensitive communications policy. • Develop a gender-sensitive marketing strategy • Rework policies and procedures to reflect gender equality and diversity. • Ensure all job descriptions are gender neutral. • Review policies and procedures for recruitment, hiring, and retention of employees. • Ensure that they embody gender equality and respect for women. • Balance the composition of interviewing and recruitment panels. • Ensure job advertisements are gender neutral and inclusive.
	<p>For more information about this framework: https://hdl.handle.net/10568/130852</p>	

Conclusion

This **'How-To'** toolkit provides agribusinesses with practical guidance on integrating Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) into their operations, demonstrating how inclusivity drives business growth and resilience. By aligning with ***Ukama Ustawi's Work Package 5 (WP5)***, which aims to empower women and youth in agribusiness, this toolkit supports businesses in identifying barriers to inclusion, assessing their current practices, and applying frameworks that foster equitable participation. In doing so, it contributes to the broader goal of building climate-resilient, inclusive agri-food systems across East and Southern Africa.



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