



GENDER MAINSTREAMING – A POWERFUL PERFORMANCE LEVER FOR BOTH IMPACT AND BUSINESS

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM THE LATIN AMERICAN SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP ECOSYSTEM

BACKGROUND

Gender bias^[1] is something that affects us all, regardless of background, origin, age or gender. While it pervades everyday life, it also shapes organisations, from how employees of different genders are treated or recruited, to how products and services are marketed. Addressing gender biases not only drives more equity but is also a powerful lever to enhance performance: through gender mainstreaming, organisations can uncover new market segments or foster more innovative and productive workplaces.

It is with this goal that the Gender Scaling Financing Facility (GSFF) was conceived. Designed and implemented by LeFil Consulting, funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and supported through Pro Mujer, the GSFF empowered 135 social entrepreneurs across Latin America, by mainstreaming gender into their strategy, operations and daily practices, while offering both technical assistance and ever-increasing funding windows. Throughout this process, extensive quantitative and qualitative data was collected about the results of 146 initiatives to better mainstream gender in these ventures' work. To demonstrate that these efforts would be relevant and possible for most, great effort was made to ensure build a very diverse portfolio of ventures – spanning 12 sectors, featuring diverse team structures (e.g., solo and multiple founders), at varying stages of maturity, including in terms of team size, revenue and profit levels. To keep a close and unequivocal pulse on the trajectory of these ventures, we kept monitoring 37 different metrics across all initiatives, every three months, for two years.

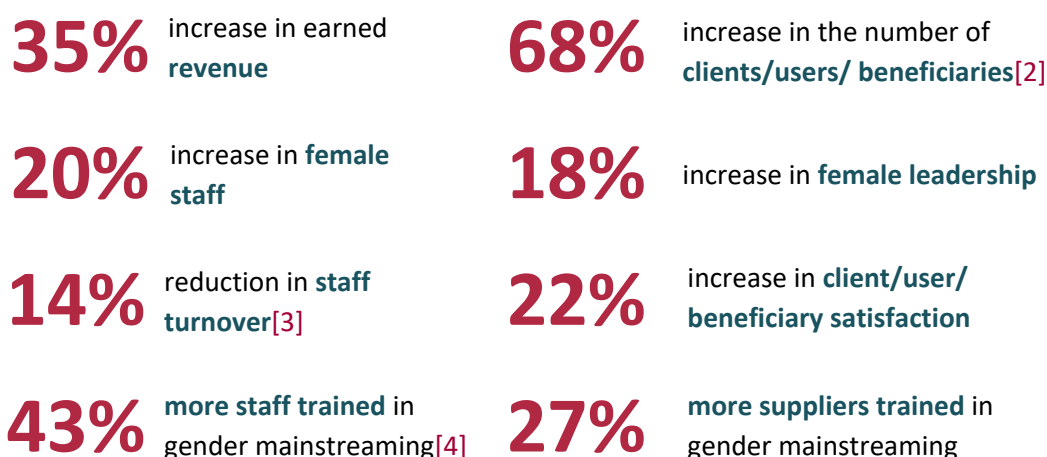
Now we can bring answers to questions such as: What are the business and social benefits from investing into gender? Which venture profiles are “better” at implementing gender mainstreaming initiatives? Which type of gender initiatives generate the biggest impact? And which are the “must have” metrics to track?

^[1] Gender bias is a form of discrimination whereby individuals are treated in a more or less favourable way based on their gender. Gender bias can be conscious or unconscious: the former refers to intentional discrimination based on the belief that one gender is superior or more suited for certain roles; the latter refers to unintentional discriminatory attitudes and behaviours resulting from automatic mental associations, stereotypes and internalised societal expectations that differ based on gender.



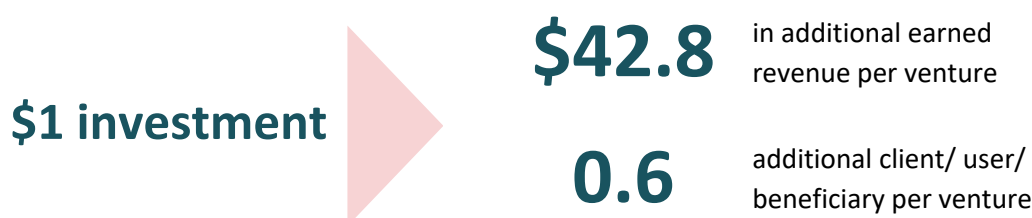
FINDINGS

Ventures in the program demonstrated notable improvements in both business and social impact outcomes, including:



Gender is an investment that disproportionately pays off:

Every USD1 invested into a venture, generated:



More diverse leadership teams fare better but any profile can thrive: ventures with gender-diverse founders excelled overall, yet no specific venture profile (in terms of sector, country, size, maturity, or financials) was a predictor of success. Essentially, any venture can successfully integrate gender initiatives. That being said, male-led ventures are more focused on driving earned revenue and team diversity as a result of doing gender work, while female-led venture prioritized expanding their customer and user base.

Most ventures see opportunities and decide to work on gender mainstreaming products and outreach efforts: 74% of ventures decided to improve the way they were designing and promoting gender-sensitive or inclusive products or services; 45% only decided to prioritize more 'internal' topics such as staff and leadership diversity through recruiting or promotion/ retention practices.

^[2] This increase in the number of end beneficiaries was computed without an outlier. Would outlier be included, the value would be a 141% increase (as the outlier experienced a 2900% increase).

^[3] The reduction in staff turnover rate was computed without an outlier. Would the outlier be included, the value would be a -5% reduction (as the outlier experienced a 39% increase in staff turnover).

^[4] The increase in proportion of staff trained to better integrate gender equality was computed without outliers. Would the outliers be included, the value would be a 50% increase (as the outliers recorded 250% and 160% increase respectively).



Initiatives focusing on improving internal operations seem to yield results more easily and faster than initiatives driving improvements for users and suppliers: the initiatives that delivered the greatest impact focused on a) fostering more diverse teams, leadership and Boards through gender-balanced hiring, b) building more diverse sales and distribution teams, as well as c) working with more gender-sensitive suppliers. In contrast, more commonly chosen initiatives, such as gender-smart communication campaigns, gender-disaggregated market research and product design with a gender lens, and training suppliers in gender mainstreaming, showed more modest, though still positive, results.

METRICS AND TOOLS

12 metrics to know how well you are doing, set targets and track progress: while we tracked 37 metrics to see which one was most relevant and impacted, we can now see which ones are ‘must-haves’ – there are 12 of them.

12 most relevant metrics

Standardised metrics (annual improvements)

Proportion of women in your organisation’s staff
Proportion of women in your organisation’s leadership
Proportion of staff (very) satisfied with work in your organisation
Annual growth rate in earned revenue of your organisation
Annual percentage increase in the number of customers/ users/ end beneficiaries served by your organisation*
Proportion of women among customers/ users/ end beneficiaries served by your organisation
Proportion of customers/ users/ end beneficiaries (very) satisfied with your organisations’ product/ service*
Proportion of woman customers/ users/ end beneficiaries of your organisation who feel (very) empowered by your product/ service
Proportion of your organisations’ strategic suppliers achieving better gender inclusion and diversity among their teams, leadership, or Boards of Directors*

Non-standardised metrics (annual improvements)

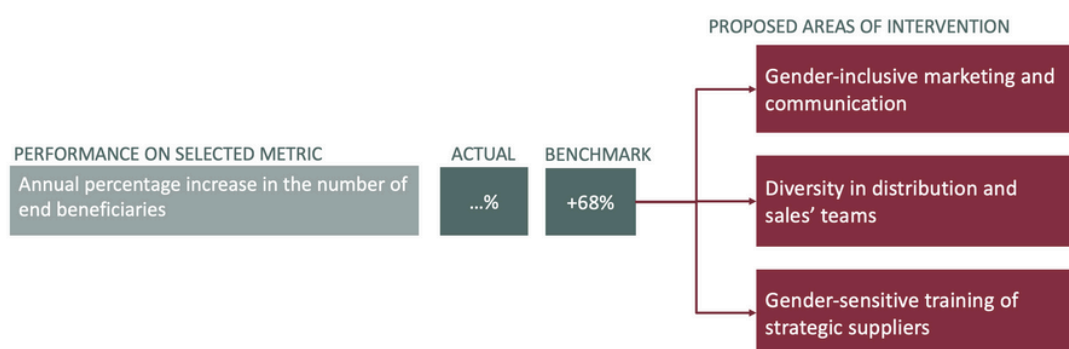
Level of average productivity achieved by your organisation’s staff (in specific, pre-defined productivity metrics)
Effectiveness of your organisation's communication tools/ activities aimed at end users/ customers/ beneficiaries
Average level of production/productivity of strategic suppliers, as a result of the implementation of gender-inclusive policies (in specific, pre-defined production/ productivity metrics)

** Metrics noted with a star are quantifiable metrics which proved to be highly impacted by gender initiatives*



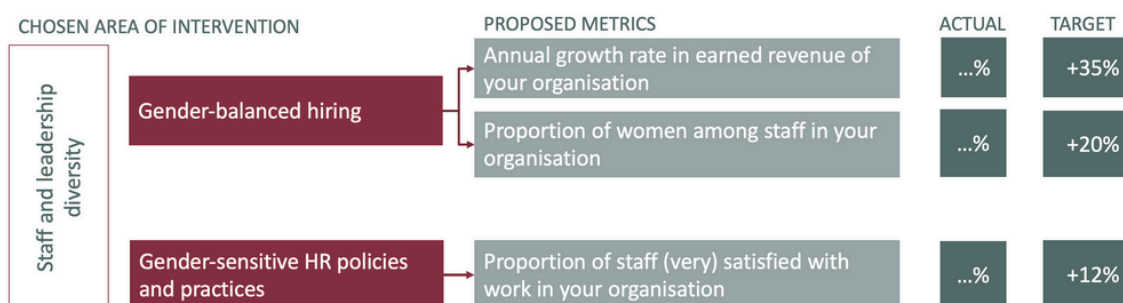
Two tools to help ventures and their investors decide on which gender initiatives to choose and which metrics to track: this first tool is designed for ventures or investors seeking to identify what gender initiatives would yield most improvements for a particular venture. It helps assess how the venture compares to average benchmarks (established through this study) for the standardised metrics listed above, and based on the results, recommends specific types of gender initiatives that can help improve those metrics.

Tool 1: Which gender initiative(s) to choose



The second tool is designed for ventures or investors that are already clear on what gender initiative they want to pursue but wonder how to track performance and quantify success best. It suggests which of the 12 metrics above, as well as other relevant metrics^[12], they could choose from and provides benchmarks to set improvement targets.

Tool 2: Which metrics to track



[12] Here, we are combining the short-listed 12 metrics with other recommended metrics, given that, for some gender initiatives, the sample size of ventures choosing the related metrics was limited.



CALL FOR ACTION

Over the past two years, the Gender Scaling Financing Facility (GSFF) significantly accelerated a large and diverse number of social ventures across the continent, and this with limited resources. The business and impact case for gender could not be clearer. The findings also helped us develop powerful and pragmatic tools for investors and ventures to undertake this journey more independently. Both the detailed findings and tools are available on www.lefilconsulting.com/gender.

Starting late 2024, and continuing until end 2025, the **GSFF+** is extending its support to impact-focused investors and Entrepreneur Support Organisations (ESOs) in order to scale up its support across the impact ecosystem in the region. It will offer technical and indirect financial assistance to help these players go a step further in incorporating a gender perspective within their own organisation and work, as well as within selected social ventures that are part of their investment or program portfolios. If you are an investors or ESO and are interested to be apart of the **GSFF+** you can apply [here as an investor](#) or [here as an ESO](#).

If you wish to transform your organisation or portfolio or are curious to learn more, please reach out to us at: gender@lefilconsulting.com.

Testimonial

“Rennueva is a venture that builds value chains for hard-to-recycle plastics and offers environmental consulting for regulatory compliance. Implementing gender-focused initiatives helped us uncover overlooked issues. Through staff training, we identified gender biases that existed not only in the workplace but also at home. Following that, we revised our maternity and paternity leave policies, hired our first female forklift operator, and are now training a second. Additionally, we created our own online gender training course for our ecosystem partners, and the ones who took the course were so enthusiastic that two requested further material to scale the learnings across their own organisation.

Overall, these efforts led to improved team performance, stronger client relationships, and more gender equity in our workforce. We are also attracting more female plastic suppliers and observed a change in how our staff communicates with them.”

Rennueva, Enrique Estrella Martínez, Founder and CFO

