



A POWERING AGRICULTURE GUIDE ON INTEGRATING GENDER IN THE MARKETING OF CLEAN ENERGY SOLUTIONS TO AGRICULTURAL USERS



WHAT IS THE PURPOSE FOR THIS GUIDE?

This guide will help you consider and develop gender-responsive marketing strategies to target men and women as potential users of your clean energy solution (CES). It will provide you with the necessary tools to enhance your strategic marketing activities to female customers in particular, who are often under-targeted and under-served even though they represent a significant market segment. The insights and tools included in this guide are based on international best practices in gender-responsive marketing. At the end of this document, you will find a practical checklist that will help you assess the extent to which your marketing strategies effectively target and reach both male and female clients. You will also find a list of resources for further information on this topic.



Women now drive the world economy

“Globally, they control about \$20 trillion in annual consumer spending, and that figure could climb as high as \$28 trillion in the next five years. Their \$13 trillion in total yearly earnings could reach \$18 trillion in the same period. In aggregate, women represent a growth market bigger than China and India combined—more than twice as big, in fact. Given those numbers, it would be foolish to ignore or underestimate the female consumer. And yet many companies do just that, even ones that are confident they have a winning strategy when it comes to women.”

Credit: Harvard Business Review (2009)

WHY DOES MARKETING TO WOMEN MAKE COMMERCIAL SENSE?

Approximately 43% of the agricultural labor force in developing countries are women (FAO 2011). Women are also the fastest-growing cohort of entrepreneurs and business owners in developing countries (ICRW 2012). This trend represents a significant growth opportunity for your CES.

Purchasing habits and motivations of male and female consumers are inherently different. In order to successfully market to women, you must develop appropriately tailored messages and strategies. Lack of investment in understanding the female target demographic often leads to **common marketing failures** (Kraft and Weber 2012), including:

- An assumption that marketing messages designed for a male audience will apply equally to females
- Failure to involve women in the design and marketing of products to their demographic
- Failure to develop a relationship with women consumers that garners interest and trust and promotes successful adoption of the product
- Treatment of women as one homogenous group

In many cases women tend to have a broad range of criteria for purchasing goods, so *“when you meet the expectations of women, you generally exceed the expectations of men (Barletta, 2014).”*

BEST PRACTICES FOR MARKETING CES TECHNOLOGIES TO WOMEN

Below are some practices that you can use to market your CES to potential women and men users:



Integrate gender analysis within all market research.

- Ensure your product design is gender-responsive. Successful marketing of your CES to male and female end users starts with a gender-responsive product design that sufficiently solves a problem for, and is attractive to, both women and men by reducing labor or time spent on agricultural activities.

For more information on gender-responsive product design, you may consult [A Powering Agriculture Guide on Integrating Gender in the Product Development of Clean Energy Solutions](#).

- Use market research to determine the variations in needs and characteristics among target consumers, including women. Try to understand the potential costs and benefits of the adoption of your CES. Use the research to analyze common constraints to purchasing your CES and identify potential solutions.
- Develop tailored marketing strategies that speak directly to female consumers based on the results of the market research. Some ways you may do this include:
 - **Keep in mind that women are not homogenous.** Among female farmers who may benefit from your CES are women of a variety of ages, incomes, and land ownership status, married women and women heads of households, rural women

and semi-urban women. These factors and others will determine the target consumers' comfort level with new technology, agency in making purchasing decisions, and ability to finance the technology. Develop different messaging, materials, packaging, and communication media for different targeted markets.

- **Ask.** The best way to market products and services to women is to simply ask what they want—they will tell you. Hold focus group discussions with different male and female consumer segments. Discuss the types of messages and images that resonate best with them; and based on what they tell you, develop differentiated materials and strategies accordingly.
- **Learn about what has worked.** Some resources with tips include: [Marketing to Women: Keys to Success, 8 Tips for Successfully Marketing to Women](#), and [Top 10 Things Everyone Should Know About Women Consumers](#).



Communicate the benefits of your CES utilizing experiential and word-of-mouth techniques.

- Clearly communicate to women what specific benefits and costs they will incur with the adoption of your CES. Women are discerning consumers with a view toward long-term benefits. Your marketing strategy should focus on solutions to problems that they care about—saving time, easing labor, and making homes and communities safer and more enjoyable places to live.
- Be sure to communicate to women the positive impact of your CES on the wider community, because women appreciate products that contribute to the social good.

- Use methods of communication that rely on personal dialogue using honesty, common sense, warmth and experience rather than the “pushing” of information. Organize casual meetups/ marketing events around informal gatherings and existing social organizations at convenient community locations. This approach will tap into the fact that women enjoy community with other women who share common interests. Use stories and anecdotes that relate to a woman's own situation.



Make marketing information and purchases easy and convenient.

- Create easier and more convenient sales channels to reach women, such as door-to-door sales. It is well documented that women globally don't make enough time for themselves and are still far more burdened than men by household tasks ([Harvard Business Review 2009](#)).
- Show women that your CES can make their lives easier in a way that is convenient for them. For example:
 - Make sure that product demonstrations and events are held in accessible locations at various times based on typical time constraints (e.g., don't schedule during meal times when women are busy feeding their families).
 - Provide information with mobile solutions, and introduce flexible and easy payment options for the product.
 - Create an eco-system around marketing and sales that makes it easy, with minimal time commitment, for clients to learn about and purchase your CES.



Hire women and tap into existing social networks for the marketing and sales

of CES technologies. Hiring women as sales representatives for new technologies not only has the benefit of providing income and professional development opportunities for women, but also increases your chance of marketing success. The literature demonstrates that women respond best to female salespersons who can “speak their language” and relate to their anticipated experience with a technology. When you understand the demographic of the buyer and match it in the seller, your chances of success go up. Accordingly, if your buyers are 70% women, then 70% of your sales force should be women. Women also tend to use other people’s opinions in making decisions about purchases, making women who successfully adopt a CES agricultural technology one of the best resources for recruiting other female consumers.



Offer a package of complementary services to build a relationship with

female consumers and support technology access and adoption. Particularly when working with low-income and rural women, offering a product alone may not be enough. Offering a package of complementary services can increase desirability of a product and enable women to purchase and adopt a new technology. Such a package should be designed to promote women’s economic advancement and can include financial services (e.g., “pay-as-you-go” plans, linkages to microcredit), education and training on technology implementation, ongoing technical support/repair services, linkages to markets, pathways to sales and marketing positions, and social networking opportunities. Organizing casual group marketing events organized around a topic important to women (e.g., child safety, nutrition, stress relief, communication, etc.) can be a successful outreach model.

Solar Sister uses direct marketing of solar lanterns for women’s economic empowerment

Solar Sister, based in Uganda, utilizes a direct-marketing, female-driven approach to encourage adoption of micro solar lanterns and other micro solar products. Their key marketing strategy is recruitment of female Solar Sister Entrepreneurs (SSEs). The SSEs are the primary product marketers and sales agents in rural areas who collect feedback from customers on design and functionality of the products for ongoing redesign. SSEs receive technical training in solar product use, as well as in business and marketing tactics “through existing networks to create a sustained demand for more and different solar products.” Solar Sister makes becoming an SSE feasible for poor women by providing them with their first inventory on consignment (with repayment via revenues minus margin), after which the SSEs can order lanterns as per customer demand. For SSEs who excel, Solar Sister links them to technical training by the product manufacturer and financing to support business growth. (ICRW 2012)

Kopernik increases demand for fuel-efficient cook stoves with package of complementary services

In Bojonegoro and Lombok, Indonesia, Kopernik worked with local NGO partners to purchase and distribute fuel-efficient biomass cookstoves with a focus on women consumers. Kopernik's strategy included hosting cookstove demonstration fairs for rural villagers and liaising with local women's groups to recruit female sales agents. They also provided technical training for buyers and users on how to use the cookstove and training of sales agents in marketing and bookkeeping. Kopernik also provided flexible purchase solutions by offering a deferred payment installation plan (with payment schedules determined by the women's groups) and provision of cookstoves on a consignment basis to female sales agents to mitigate lack of start-up capital. This approach has led to successful dissemination of cookstoves (with over 90% female clientele) and allowed Kopernik and its NGO partner to generate revenues that help to cover organizational costs. (ICRW 2012)



Don't forget the men. This guide focuses predominantly on strategies to reach the more frequently overlooked client base of women. Pro-women marketing can create positive support and change, but how this impacts relationships with men, and vice versa, should be understood. Some specific actions that can be used include:

- **Use images and stories in marketing materials of strong women, and of women and men working together positively.** This can be a great catalyst for men who see the upside of increased productive benefits—and income—and want to support their mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters. This imagery can also inspire women and girls.
- **Understand the dynamics between women and men within communities in developing countries.** Men, particularly in developing countries, are often community and household gatekeepers with significant decision-making power. Meeting with influential community leaders to ask questions about how women and men make decisions in their community is critical to understanding how this works.

- **Identify male champions and equitable male/female role models who will advocate for women to adopt technology.** Public speaking at community events, on radio programs, etc. by influential male champions can go a long way in creating a positive environment. Strategically working with equitable male/female couples in product demonstrations, for example, can also send a message and lay the groundwork for successful technology adoption and purchase from a wider customer base.



SELF-ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST: IS MY MARKETING STRATEGY MAXIMIZING REACH TO MEN AND WOMEN?

1	CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do I understand the demographic characteristics of my targeted male and female consumers (including age, income, position in household, land ownership status and geographic location) and how these influence the costs and benefits of technology adoption?
2	RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the market research consider different priorities, roles, and decision-making power of women and men in relationship to how they may purchase or use my technology? Do gender-specific market research findings inform the design of marketing strategies specific to the various demographics of male and female consumers? Does the monitoring and evaluation plan include quantitative and qualitative data collection regarding purchase, adoption and impact of CES technology by both male and female consumers, as individuals and households?
3	INITIAL PILOTING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are local male leaders, male businessmen, and others engaged to advocate for women's uptake of technology and promotion of entrepreneurship to foster a supportive environment for women? Do market demonstration plots strategically choose empowered females and equitable male/female farm owners to set a positive example for other men and women? Are both male and female sales and marketing staff trained on how to effectively target male and female clients differently?
4	EARLY ADOPTION/DISTRIBUTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the recruitment strategy for sales/marketing positions include adequate targeting and quotas for female hires? Do marketing events and CES demonstrations take into consideration location and time preferences of both women and men, and hold separate male and female events as needed? Does the marketing material and approach emphasize relationship-building between the customer and salesperson? Do marketing materials portray women in empowered, strong, and uplifting roles, and men in caring and supportive roles? Does the marketing strategy leverage existing social networks, such as women's groups, as a platform and location for marketing events?
5	MARKET GROWTH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are technical and business training, or other professional growth and mentorship opportunities, provided equitably to both male and female sales agents? Does collected data on the experience of both male and female technology consumers inform the redesign of product of products and marketing strategies?
6	WIDE-SCALE ADOPTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the marketing strategy leverage promotion of complementary services (e.g., flexible financing, ease of purchase, social networking opportunities) which promote technology access, and successful and sustainable adoption for male and female consumers?

SOURCES AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

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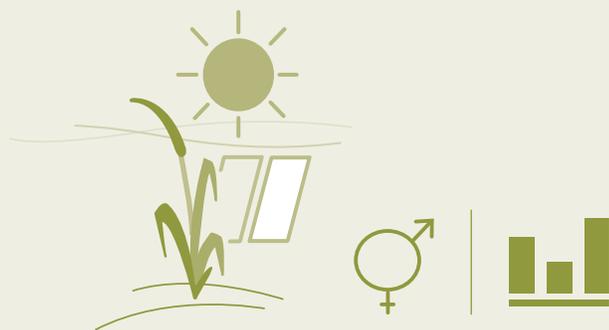
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POWERING AGRICULTURE:

AN ENERGY GRAND CHALLENGE FOR DEVELOPMENT



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Further information about Powering Agriculture can be found at PoweringAg.org

