



# WeClim Equally

Gender-smart handbook for climate entrepreneurs



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## This handbook is completed by:

Name:

Organisation:

Location:

Function within organisation:

Date:



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## Glossary

### GENDER AND CLIMATE-SPECIFIC TERMINOLOGY

#### GENDER

Refers to the characteristics of women, men, girls and boys that are socially constructed. This includes norms, behaviours and roles associated with being a woman, man, girl or boy, or gender non-conforming, as well as relationships with each other. As a social construct, gender varies from society to society and can change over time (World Health Organisation, 2021).

#### GENDER BIAS

Is a preference or prejudice toward one gender over others. Bias can be conscious or unconscious, and may manifest in many ways, both subtle and obvious (World Health Organisation, 2021) Within the context of this project, we will be talking about gender biases for all genders, and not only about biases to women.

#### GENDER INCLUSIVITY

Means including and accepting people of all genders (Quiroga, L. et al., 2018). When we talk about gender inclusivity within the context of an accelerator programme, we mean an accelerator programme that serves all genders, and where businesses involved serve all genders in their organisations and with their products/services.

#### CLIMATE CHANGE

Refers to long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns. These shifts may be natural but since the 1800s, human activities have been the main driver of climate change, primarily due to the burning of fossil fuels (like coal, oil and gas), which produces heat-trapping gases (United Nations, 2021).

#### GENDER MAINSTREAMING

Is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's, as well as men's, concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal of gender mainstreaming is to achieve gender equality (UN Women, 2020).

#### GENDER LENS

Is a perspective that pays particular attention to how gender differences and relations are relevant for investments and projects (Quiroga, L. et al., 2018).

#### GENDER EQUITY

Is the provision of fairness and justice in the distribution of benefits and responsibilities between women and men (EIGE, 2024). Although 'gender equality' and 'gender equity' are often used interchangeably, the use of 'equity' explicitly recognises that women, men and gender non-conforming people have different needs and power and that these differences should be identified and addressed in a manner that rectifies the imbalances between the genders.

#### DIVERSITY

Is the fact of many different types of things or people being included in something; a range of different things or people (Cambridge University Press, 2024).



# Introduction

## A BRIEF BREAKDOWN OF THE HANDBOOK

The **WeClim Equally gender-smart handbook** for climate entrepreneurs offers guidance and practical tools to any entrepreneur working in the climate space on how to integrate a gender perspective into their business.

This handbook aims to help you understand the topic in more detail and to explain what you can do to make your business more inclusive.

### This handbook is structured in four sections:

- 1** An introduction that makes the case for adopting a gender lens in climate businesses and how it can add value to your business. This section also allows you to create a vision and mission for your gender strategy.
- 2** An assessment of your gender-climate activities in the following four areas: (1) Leadership, (2) Organisational culture, (3) Marketplace and (4) Community.
- 3** Building on the goals you have set, you will decide which interventions and changes you will commit to integrating into your business. You will also understand how to best measure the impact of those interventions.
- 4** And finally, you will craft a business pitch that you can share with potential investors to attract funding.



“Women around the world have already demonstrated that they are leading the way on mitigating and adapting to climate change—from cooperative seed banks to early warning networks; from solar engineers to women politicians carving a path of sustainable policymaking—climate change solutions exist, but it takes the whole of the global population to find them and act on them.”

**- Roots for the future  
(Aguilar, L., Granat, M., & Owren, C., 2015)**





# The intersection between gender and climate

WHY A CLIMATE BUSINESS SHOULD CARE ABOUT GENDER

Are you ready to become a more successful entrepreneur by embracing inclusivity? We want to boost gender equality across the climate innovation sector while showing entrepreneurs that gender equality is good for business.

Many entrepreneurs have a high awareness of the importance of gender equity but struggle to put it into practice in their businesses. With this handbook, we aim to provide practical interventions that you can integrate into your business to make it more gender-inclusive.

## What is the relation between gender and climate?

While climate change affects all of us, research shows that girls and women bear the greatest burden. Women and girls bear 80% of the responsibility to produce food, and burden 2.5 times more unpaid carework. Women therefore make up a large portion of users of natural resources (like water, firewood and forest products), further increasing their work burden as these resources become more scarce due to climate change. Lastly, Van Leeuwen (2021) highlights that most distressingly, women and girls account for almost 80% of those displaced by climate-related factors.

The challenges of women are also noted by a variety of organisations working in the climate field, including those that support entrepreneurship like Cleantech Hub Colombia:

**“We know women, specifically those with children, are most vulnerable and most affected by the effects of the climate crisis. So for us it made total sense to put it [these challenges] together.”**

As women hold the main responsibility for food production and unpaid care work, it also makes them the main decision-makers in consumer purchases and an important consumer group.

**“Women have already been playing an important role in the transition to a green economy, and can drive responsible consumption and production behaviours as well as pioneer a culture of circularity at many levels and in many countries – as consumers, entrepreneurs, innovators and designers.” - Dolun, M, et al., 2021**

In the business space, there is emerging evidence that women-owned or women-led companies tend to prioritise social and environmental benefits over mere shareholder value. Furthermore, companies with greater gender diversity on their boards are significantly more likely to reduce the company’s energy consumption, greenhouse gas emissions and water use.

***For example: Companies with greater gender diversity on their boards from 2013 to 2018 were 40-60% more likely than those without such diversity to reduce the company’s energy consumption, GHG emission and water use, respectively (FP Analytics, 2019).***

## 1. Business case and goal setting

## Does gender matter?

A gender perspective aims to identify and take into account the multiple, often overlapping and mutually reinforcing sets of structural inequalities, power dynamics, and social and cultural expectations that create the day-to-day lived reality for people around the world—and tries to improve it (National Environment Management Authority, 2015).

In most societies, there are significant differences between the rights realised and opportunities available for the dominant gender (men) and the gender minorities (women and other non-conforming individuals). These include differences concerning land and resource rights; possibilities for employment, as well as salaries and advancement at work; and spaces to participate in and influence decision-making processes. In actuality, gender inequity is ingrained in sociocultural norms and values around the world.

*For example, across Africa, nearly 90% of women's jobs are in the informal sector, i.e. unregulated work, specifically in the context of agriculture and development. As a result, women are not covered by labour relations laws, meaning there is no minimum wage, social protection, maternity benefits, or pension. (FAO, 2021)*



## Why should you care about gender as a climate entrepreneur?

**1. More robust teams can innovate better:** by embracing inclusivity, and leveraging knowledge and skills from different life experiences, you are more likely to create solutions and innovations that are robust and widely adopted. Gartner research (2019) reveals that “differences of age, ethnicity, gender and other dimensions foster high performance.” Research from the World Economic Forum (2019) shows that companies that have diversity scores that are above average drive 45 per cent average revenue from innovation, compared to 26 per cent of below-average diversity scores companies.

*“Having a diverse team brings in different kinds of strengths and ideas. There is a positive energy where people can sit down and approach things from different angles.” - Rafiki Eco Solutions LTD*

**2. Women are proven to be powerful agents of change:** the number of climate innovations developed by women entrepreneurs is growing, reflecting a strong opportunity to tap into the experience of women who have so far been under-engaged and under-served by climate innovations. The unequal impact faced by women in the climate crisis means that they are often in a better position to recognise opportunities that will work. Women’s economic opportunities represent the world’s largest emerging market: a market more than twice the size of India and China combined. By 2028, women consumers will control around \$15 trillion of global consumer spending (2X framework, 2018).

*“Treating climate and gender together in investments strengthens approaches by zeroing in at the nexus to unlock solutions that reflect the reality and urgency of those most negatively affected and whose leadership and insights are imperative.” - 2X Global*

**3. Diversity is good for business and for building a strong brand:** A diverse company/team helps to bring different perspectives to all levels of your business. This can also increase the value perceived by potential investors, since a growing amount of investors are embedding a gender lens into their framework - the most common being the 2X Challenge, a campaign to mobilise private sector investment for gender equity. Gender diversity is correlated with both profitability and value creation. According to McKinsey&Company (2018), top gender inclusive companies are 21% more likely than companies that are low on gender inclusivity to outperform national industry peers.

*“It gives entrepreneurs an opportunity to brand themselves as organisations that are gender-sensitive. This results in enhanced brand image.” - Kenya Climate Innovation Center*



## Setting your goals

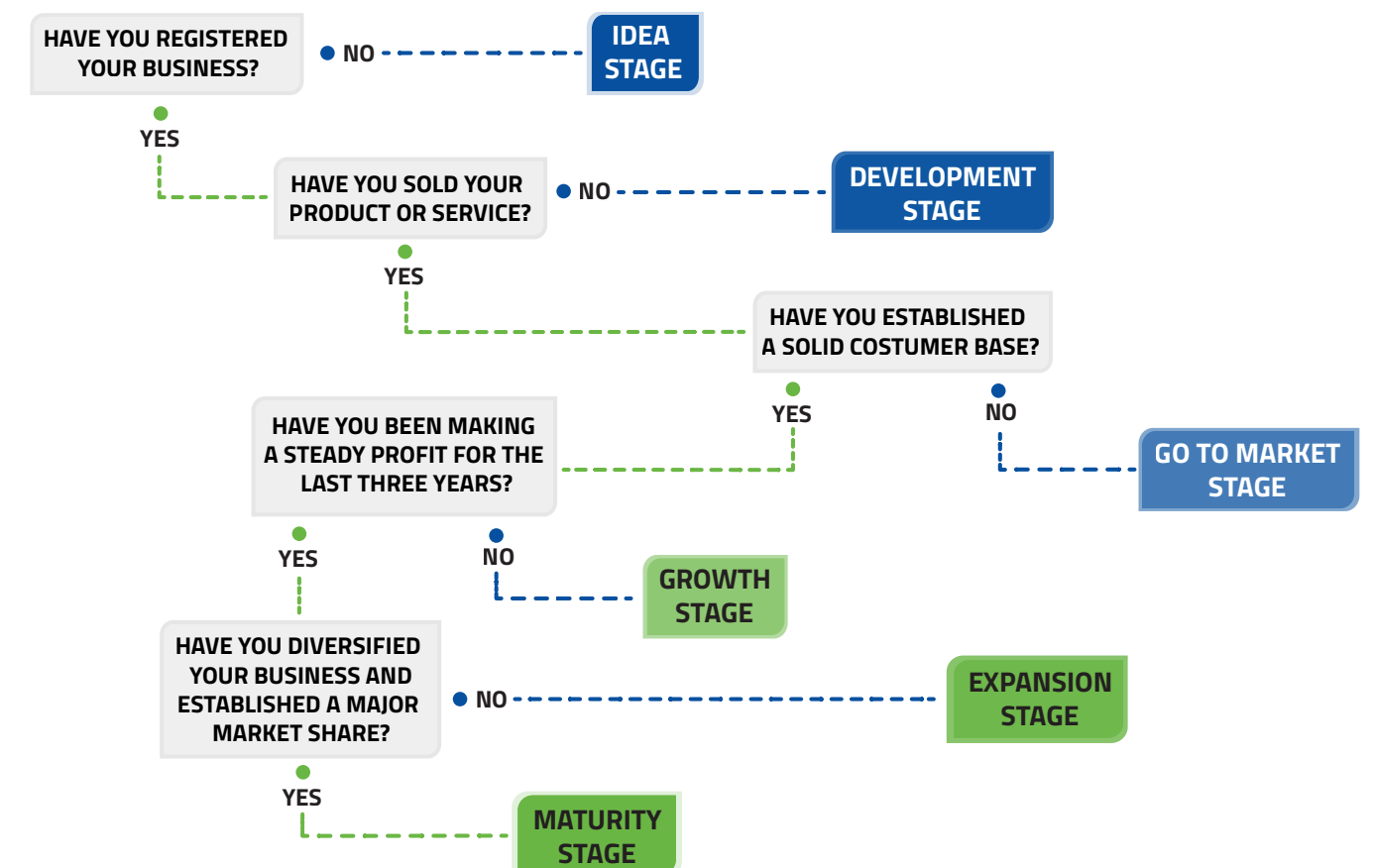
WHERE DO YOU CURRENTLY STAND, AND WHAT DO YOU WANT TO ACHIEVE?

To ensure the effective application of the content shared in this handbook, it is important that you first identify where you currently are with your business, and what you aim to achieve in terms of gender equality, diversity and inclusion. Gender mainstreaming can be a very abstract topic, but through the exercises in this handbook, we will help you develop a more concrete action plan.

First, you need to complete a short assessment to identify the stage in which your business is right now (Activity 1). Further along in the handbook, we will refer to specific interventions and practical ideas aligned with your business stage. This assessment comes from the [WeRise Toolkit for Entrepreneurs](#).



## Activity 1: What is your business stage?

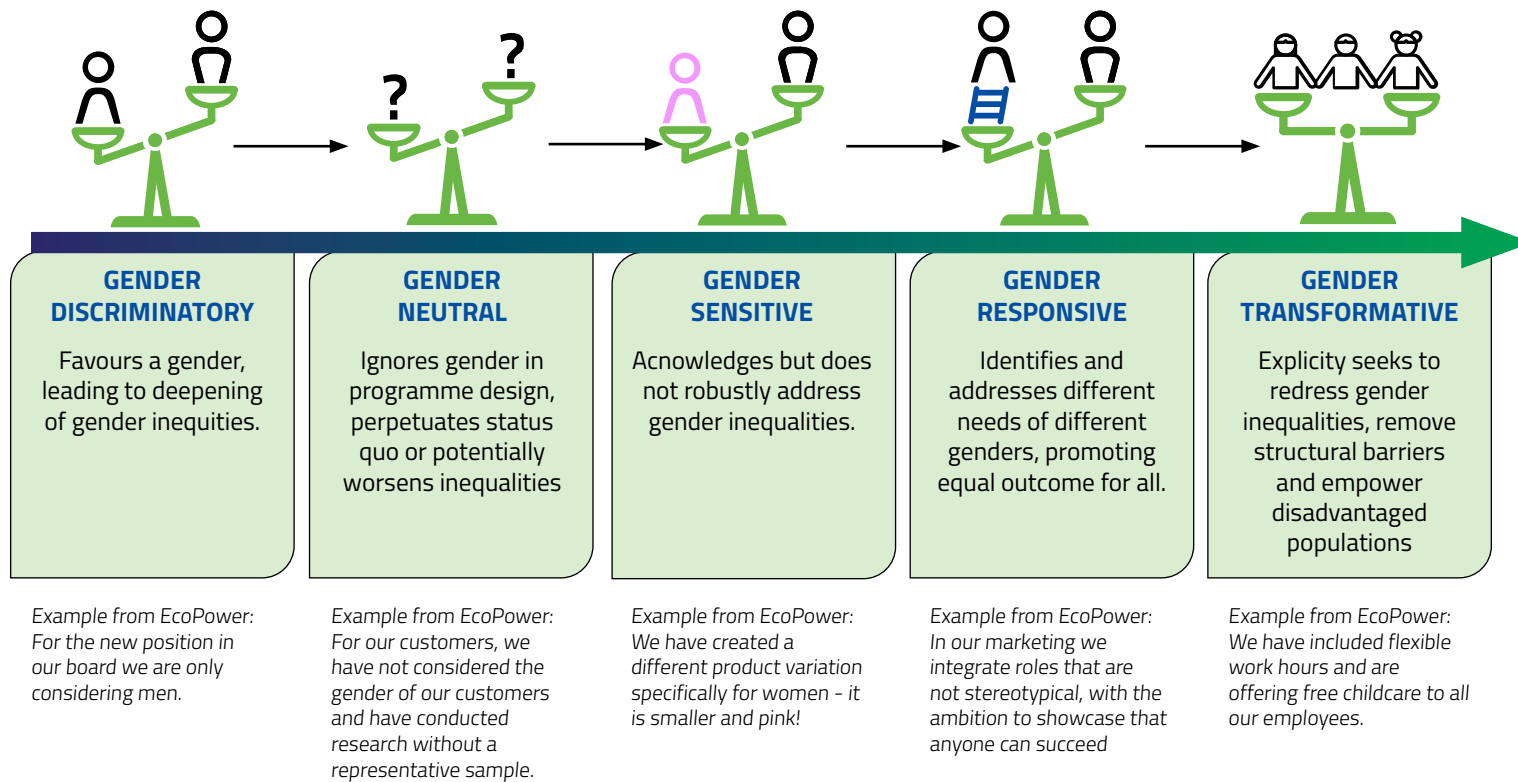


## Activity 2: What is your level on the Gender Integration Continuum?

The Gender Integration Continuum was developed by the Inter-agency Working Group and is used as a tool to help identify the extent to which actions are likely to lead to change in the root causes of gender inequalities. We acknowledge that parts of your business might be on different levels and it is important to know that you do not have to perfectly fit in one. Within this handbook, we will guide you in moving up one to two levels.

Here we will introduce you to the continuum, as later on we will refer to specific examples from existing climate entrepreneurs according to these different levels. Each example will be linked to one gender integration continuum level, ranging from gender discriminatory to gender transformative.

**Also for each step, you will also reflect on your own gender inclusion level at each step.**



Source: Adapted from [UNICEF \(2022\). Gender transformative programming.](#)

**Reflect below on where you are as an organisation**

## Activity 3: Let's set your gender target and identify potential constraints holding you back!

1. Set a gender equity vision statement ensuring it is inspiring for you and your team. A vision statement describes the long-term objective for your company, usually for a timeframe of ten years and beyond.
2. Define your gender equity mission and make sure it is actionable and realistic. A mission statement is like a roadmap of how to achieve the goals set in your vision statement. It defines the purpose of your organisation.
3. Reflect on your current situation and identify what is holding you back from achieving your gender transformation vision and mission.

VISION STATEMENT	MISSION STATEMENT
<i>For example, EcoPower's vision is to create an environment in which every household task can be done with zero emissions, making all families in Colombia resilient against climate change.</i>	<i>For example, EcoPower's mission is to develop a clean energy solution that can be used for all household tasks, with an inclusive and diverse team. Striving for gender mainstreaming in our own company, and our partners.</i>
[add company name].....'s vision is a world where : .....	[add company name] ..... 's mission is to [what company does].....
.....	.....
.....	[why your company does it].....
.....	.....
.....	and [how].....
.....	.....
.....	.....
<b>List your constraints</b>	
<i>For example, EcoPower's constraints mainly relate to financial challenges, their business is currently running well, though their financial buffer is limited to invest in changes in their ways of working to become more gender inclusive. At the same time, it has been difficult to hire a diverse team with the skill set we require.</i>	





# About the areas

## A BRIEF BREAKDOWN OF THE FOUR AREAS

The four areas in this handbook help you to decide which gender interventions and changes you will integrate into your business. Below you can find a short description of each of the areas.

The areas are adapted from the [Women's Empowerment Principles \(WEPs\)](#) established by UN Women and UN Global Compact. The WEPs are informed by international labour and human rights standards and grounded in the recognition that businesses have a stake in, and a responsibility for, gender equality and women's empowerment.

### LEADERSHIP

As climate entrepreneurs strive to address the pressing challenges of climate change, the imperative for gender inclusivity in leadership cannot be overstated. Having gender-inclusive leadership is not only a matter of social responsibility; it is a strategic business decision with many benefits.

### ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

Integrating gender inclusivity into your business strategy creates a positive impact on organisational culture, employee engagement, innovation, stakeholder relationships, and overall business resilience.

### MARKETPLACE

Incorporating gender inclusivity into the market strategy for climate entrepreneurs creates potential for increased customer loyalty, expands market reach and enhances innovative product development and sustainable growth.

### COMMUNITY

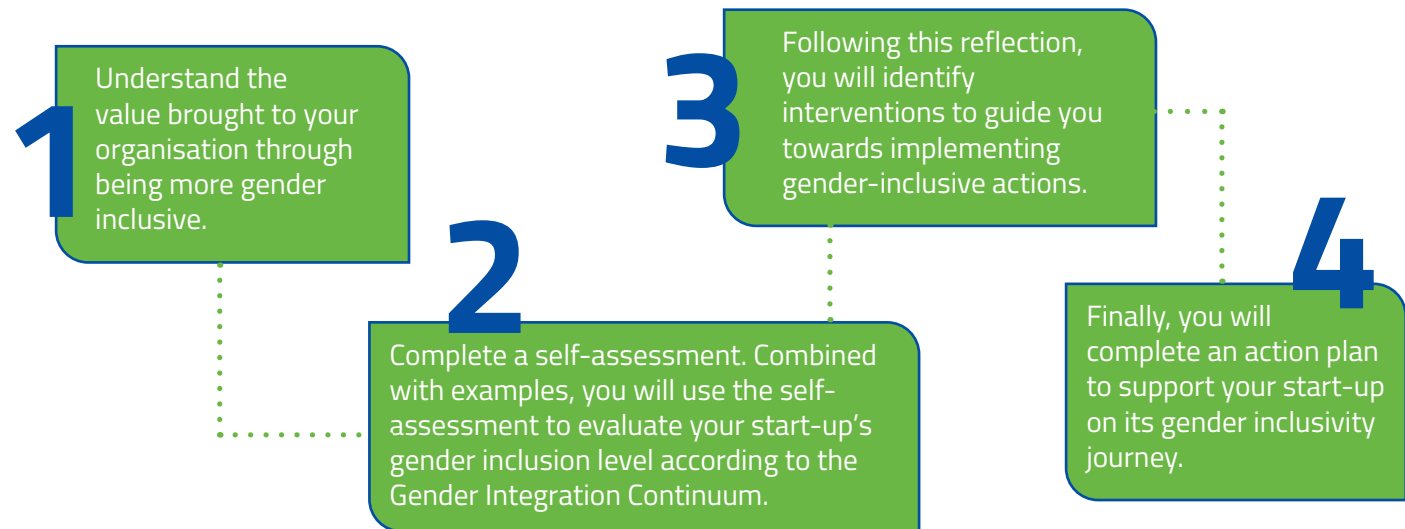
Integrating gender inclusion will help your company build stronger relationships with its partners and its community, strengthening your brand and the impact it can have.



## How to use

### HOW TO WORK THROUGH THE HANDBOOK

In each of the areas, you will:



WE MOTIVATE YOU TO REVISIT YOUR ACTION PLAN EVERY YEAR.

## 2. The four areas



# The four areas - Leadership

As climate entrepreneurs strive to address the pressing challenges of climate change, the imperative for gender inclusivity in leadership cannot be overstated. Having gender-inclusive leadership is not only a matter of social responsibility, it is a strategic business decision with many benefits.

## THE CASE

### Enhanced decision-making:

- Gender-inclusive leadership teams make more effective decisions by considering a broader spectrum of points of view.
- Improved decision-making processes lead to better risk management and strategic planning in the face of the uncertainties associated with business decisions around the climate crisis.

### Market and stakeholder relations:

- A diverse leadership team reflects the diversity of the global community, facilitating stronger connections with a broad range of stakeholders.
- Companies with gender-inclusive leadership are often perceived as more socially responsible, gaining favour with environmentally conscious consumers, investors, and governmental entities.
- Investing with a gender and climate lens can help drive competitive advantage and long-term value across talent, innovation, markets, products and services, value chains, and governance. As climate and social impact enter mainstream business models, regulation and policy, those who fail to adapt risk falling behind.
- Both gender equality and climate action cut across many other Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In the long term, there will most likely be a correlation between those companies driving positive social returns and having an impact on increased financial returns.

### Corporate reputation and brand image:

- Gender inclusivity in leadership aligns with societal expectations and contributes positively to the corporate image.
- Demonstrating a commitment to diversity and inclusion enhances the brand's reputation, attracting socially conscious investors and partners. For example, [The 2X Challenge criteria](#) set a global standard for gender finance.
- Ignoring gender can be a market risk, an operating risk, or even a reputational risk. Companies or funds may fail if they brush off the gendered needs of employees, suppliers, customers, and other stakeholders.

### Organisational resilience:

- Gender-inclusive leadership builds a resilient organisational culture that can adapt to changing market conditions and navigate uncertainties associated with climate-related challenges.
- Diverse leadership fosters an environment where adaptive strategies can be developed and implemented effectively.

### Regulatory compliance:

- Many jurisdictions and industries are adopting regulations and guidelines promoting gender diversity in leadership. In addition, impacts in gender and on issues around climate are being seen by more investors as drivers of value (or risk mitigation) that investors must incorporate into decision-making.

By fostering diverse and inclusive leadership teams, businesses can create a resilient foundation for long-term success in the dynamic field of climate entrepreneurship.



## SELF-ASSESSMENT

YES

NO

### Do your founding team and board have good gender diversity?

Diverse representation of all genders is vital to driving innovation and a more resilient business. If you are a start-up with an all male-founding team, prioritise bringing in more women as your start-up grows.



### Do you have a gender-inclusive leadership team?

Having gender-inclusive leadership means having men, women and gender non-conforming people represented and value in leadership positions such as CEO, CFO, CTO, etc. It not only contributes to a positive company image, but fosters innovation and resilience.



### Do you have equal opportunities with regard to career evolution?

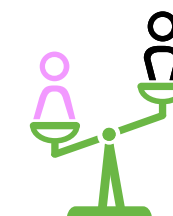
Providing equal opportunities with regard to career evolution leads to gender diverse leadership teams, as your company becomes more attractive and retains high-calibre talent for longer.



## REAL LIFE EXAMPLES

### Rafiki Eco Solutions Ltd founder in Kenya enforces equal chances for men and women in the company.

The start-up converts biomass into bio briquettes in Kenya.. Its founder ensures they have a gender-balanced team and portrays different genders as equal partners.



GENDER SENSITIVE

**"Leadership roles should be assigned on merit. I believe any gender can lead. And it starts as early as the recruitment process. I make sure not to be gender-biassed during the interviews."** - Rafiki Eco Solutions Ltd

### Kenya Climate Innovation Center offers dedicated support to women entrepreneurs' applications.

The organisation aspires to support as many men entrepreneurs as women entrepreneurs and measures gender representation in their programmes. As they receive fewer applications from women entrepreneurs, they decided to offer additional support to women when applying to the programme to boost the number of quality applications. When women entrepreneurs get accepted into the programme, the curriculum is the same for everyone.



GENDER RESPONSIVE

**"We try to encourage more women to apply to the programme. If we share an opportunity and we observe that women did not apply, we will ask about the challenges they faced and we offer to support them in drafting a proposal and pitch deck. We support women in submitting a good application."** - Kenya Climate Innovation Center.

## Activity - Gender integration continuum

Look at your self-assessment and the examples. Reflect on where you stand on the continuum for this specific area and include where you want to be:



### INTERVENTIONS

#### 1. Map out your leadership team, reflect on your gender bias and set out your goals.

To start, you need to reflect on your current leadership team and their roles, gender, and expertise. For example, who is in the founding team, who is leading projects/teams, and who received a promotion in the past two years? Consider this by reviewing the percentage or number of men, women and other genders in certain roles within your team. Try to provide as much detail as possible. Reflect on the variety of genders and expertise areas in your leadership team, and based on this reflection, set your goals.

#### 2. Develop and follow a policy for the application and hiring process for key leadership positions, to providing equal opportunities for all (future) leadership.

Reflect on your current application and hiring process and ensure you make it gender inclusive. This can relate to who your hiring team is, as well as to what kind of questions you ask. Affinity bias nudges people to like/prefer others who are more similar to them (in terms of gender, class, education, etc). With this policy, you have in place measures to overcome this bias and ensure your hiring team is aware of it.

#### 3. If you are a man in a leadership position, make it the norm in your business to challenge gender bias or prejudice in your day-to-day work.

You may be working in a country or culture where gender discrimination is normal. Ensure your company's culture calls out gender prejudice or stereotyping, whether it's internally or with external stakeholders. Leading by example will allow other staff to speak up and for women in your organisation to feel valued and respected.

## Activity - Action plan

Look at your self-assessment and the potential interventions. For all of the questions that you have answered with a "No", try to ideate how you could turn them into a "Yes". You can use the interventions listed as a starting point. Write your ideas down below.



## The four areas - Organisational culture

Integrating gender inclusivity into your organisation creates a positive impact on organisational culture, employee engagement, innovation, stakeholder relationships, and overall business resilience.



### THE CASE

#### Enhanced organisational culture:

- A gender-inclusive workplace fosters a culture of equality, respect, and collaboration.
- Employees are more likely to feel valued and appreciated, leading to increased job satisfaction and a positive work environment.

#### Improved employee engagement:

- Gender diversity correlates with higher levels of employee engagement and commitment.
- An inclusive workplace encourages employees to bring their authentic selves to work, promoting a sense of belonging and dedication to the organisation's mission.

#### Innovation and creativity:

- Diverse teams are more innovative and creative.
- Varied perspectives contribute to the development of unique and effective solutions to climate-related challenges, fostering a culture of continuous improvement.

#### Talent attraction and retention:

- A commitment to gender inclusivity enhances the organisation's reputation, making it more appealing to a diverse talent pool.
- Inclusive workplaces are better positioned to attract and retain talent, crucial for driving innovation and achieving business objectives.

#### Resilient business operations:

- Gender diversity mitigates risks associated with workforce shortages, turnover, and talent gaps.
- Organisations with inclusive practices are more resilient to external shocks, ensuring business continuity in the face of challenges posed by climate-related disruptions.

This commitment not only aligns with ethical principles but also strengthens the foundation for long-term success and positive impact in the fight against climate change.







## SELF-ASSESSMENT

### Is there equal pay for all genders with similar skill sets in your company?

By having equal pay for all genders with similar skill sets you will comply with employees' expectations, enhancing talent attraction and retention.

YES

NO



### Are all genders equally represented at every level of your organisation?

In climate-focused companies, men are often more represented in leadership and management roles than women. It is important to have all genders equally represented through all levels in your organisation to live up to employees' and investors' expectations.



### Are there different educational backgrounds and skill sets at all levels of your organisation?

Teams including people of different educational backgrounds and skill sets are more adaptable, and can more easily come up with effective and innovative solutions, which are two substantial benefits when it comes to the climate sector.



### Do you offer equal training opportunities, especially in jobs where there is a gender imbalance and/or gender stereotypes?

Many jobs in the climate sector are impacted by gender stereotypes: plastic waste pickers for instance are mostly women, whereas the people operating the machines to recycle the plastic are men. These situations lead to a massive gender imbalance in certain jobs. Having equal training opportunities in your company contributes to limiting gender imbalance and fighting against gender stereotypes, allowing your company to have all genders equally represented throughout the organisation.



### During recruitment, do you ensure there is diversity in the people interviewed?

To have diverse teams working in your company, you need to start from the recruitment process and ensure that you are talking to people from different backgrounds (eg. socioeconomic, nationality, age, gender).



### Are the hiring panels gender-diverse?

People tend to recruit people who are similar to themselves. This bias, in a men-dominated climate sector, can lead to a greater gender imbalance. Having diversity among the interviewers can limit this bias.



### Do you have a sexual harassment policy?

It is essential to have and enforce a policy that shows your commitment to providing a safe environment for all its employees free from discrimination on any ground and from harassment at work including sexual harassment.



### Can employees anonymously report misconduct?

It is important to have anonymous reporting mechanisms in place to ensure employees' safety. In the climate sector, where men are the majority of founders and team leads, it is all the more important for the management to demonstrate to all employees that no misconduct will be tolerated.



YES

NO

### Have you given your employees training on recognising and addressing gender bias in the workplace?

Training your employees on recognizing and addressing gender bias gives them skills and tools that employees can later use and that will improve the workplace for everyone.



### Do you have paid parental leave for employees of all genders?

Having paid parental leave for your employees helps with talent acquisition and retention, as it allows for a more even distribution of responsibilities between both parents, lessening the burden that often falls on women by default. Even if there is state sponsored support, consider topping this up or offering extra support to those who wish to take parental leave.



### Are you flexible with your employees' working hours?

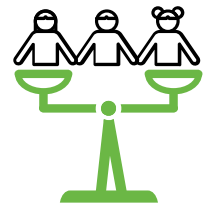
Your staff has obligations and activities outside of the workplace and, contrary to what is often believed in start-ups with few employees, allowing some flexibility in working hours is possible. It is a great way to contribute to your employees' well-being and satisfaction towards the employer and enable a better work-life balance for all.



## REAL LIFE EXAMPLES

### Limu Plastic in Kenya challenges its employees' mindsets about gender-based role distribution.

Sebastian co-founded Limu Plastic with his wife. In their plastic recycling company, most men operate the machinery while women are tasked with plastic sorting. Sebastian wants to change that. He likes to encourage women to do "men's tasks" and men to do "women's tasks". He gives similar opportunities and lets the men and women decide. They get the freedom to choose what they want to do.



#### GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE

**"The challenge is to break the cultural barrier people believe in. The moment you encourage a woman to operate machinery, her mindset starts to change. When given equal opportunity, women can do better than men." - Limu Plastics recruitment process. I make sure not to be gender-biased during the interviews." - Rafiki Eco Solutions Ltd**



#### GENDER RESPONSIVE

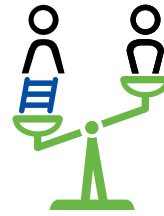
### Xiclo in Colombia uses inclusive writing in job offers.

In Spanish, you can write in the masculine or the feminine form. Not too long ago at Xiclo (reusable food packages), all job offers were written from a man's perspective. The founder has decided to change that and to have all job offers written universally, to address all genders.

**"It is a challenge to include all genders when you speak and write. It requires practice and concentration but I want to make sure to speak to everyone, not just to men." - Xiclo**

### Green Ventures Tanzania aims to address gender imbalance in the workforce through women's training programmes.

Green Ventures Tanzania transforms plastic waste into affordable and durable products such as furniture. For that the company hires carpenters but the CEO and founder never received any application from a woman and thinks there is a limited number of women carpenters in Tanzania. One solution the CEO envisions to enable inclusion is to start a programme to train women to become carpenters.



#### GENDER RESPONSIVE

"I had a conversation with some carpenters, they say most people growing up here hardly see women carpenters. It is hard for women to imagine that they could be in this role. Gender-based role distribution is shaped by what people see around them in Tanzania." - Green Ventures Tanzania

### Activity - Gender integration continuum

Look at your self-assessment and the examples. Reflect on where you stand on the continuum for this specific area and include where you want to be.



#### INTERVENTIONS

##### 1. Map out your organisational structure, evaluate and set goals.

List the different roles in your team and the people working in each position. Review the division of genders, expertise areas, education background, etc, within your team. Try to give a percentage to this division, and set your targets for the organisation.

##### 2. Develop and follow a policy to provide equal opportunities for all (future) employees.

This policy should indicate your point of view in terms of childcare, equal pay, parental leave, a reporting mechanism, and flexible working hours. This can help parents, particularly mothers, ensure continuity in their careers. For example, if they are compelled to resign for lack of affordable, quality childcare, you might lose out on great talent within your business. Refer to [Empowering Women at Work: Companies Policies and Practices for Gender Equality from ILO, EU and UN Women | 2020](#).

**3. Eliminate bias from your recruitment system.** Without the right recruitment system, multiple biases can play an important, but unconscious role in who you hire. For example, discrimination against good candidates can result from affinity bias, namely the tendency of people to connect with others who share similar interests, experiences and backgrounds. This can lead to companies hiring people-based individuals instead of the 'company culture' fit. Visit this [webpage](#) from Frontier Incubators to see how you can eliminate gender bias from your recruitment process and allow all genders equal opportunities in the selection process.

**4. Create awareness around gender bias in your team.** If you realise that your team is not aware of gender biases and not very interested in thinking about this aspect, then try to organise a gender bias awareness session. Increased internal awareness will help to reflect on the level of inclusivity in the organisation, coming from all layers of the team. Check if you can access gender training for you and your team via an Entrepreneurship Support Organisation or meet with your small team and reflect on gender in the organisational culture.

**5. Examine and evaluate the salaries of your workforce.** By gathering salary information and conducting thorough analyses, you can identify disparities in pay based on gender across organisational levels and roles. Use Chapter 4 of the ILO (2008) [report on gender-neutral job evaluation for equal pay](#) to guide you through this process. Addressing discrepancies in compensation systems can be achieved by establishing clear thresholds, targets, and maximums for pay raises or bonuses, ensuring fair and merit-based distribution of rewards among all genders. Use Chapter 8 of the ILO (2008) [report on gender-neutral job evaluation for equal pay](#) to guide you. Transparency in salary structures leads to reducing the pay gap.



### Activity - Action plan

Look at your self-assessment and the potential interventions. For all the questions you have answered with a "No", try to ideate how you could turn them into a "Yes". You can use the interventions listed as a starting point. Write your ideas down below.



### The four areas - Marketplace

Incorporating gender inclusivity into the market strategy for climate entrepreneurs may increase customer loyalty, expand market reach and enhance innovative product development and sustainable growth.



#### THE CASE

##### Expanded market reach:

- A gender-inclusive approach broadens your appeal to diverse consumer segments, tapping into a wider market base.
- Addressing the needs and preferences of diverse genders ensures that your products and services resonate with a larger and more varied audience.
- Operating in a global marketplace requires cultural sensitivity and an understanding of diverse societal norms.
- A gender-inclusive approach ensures that your products and marketing campaigns resonate with diverse cultures, facilitating successful global expansion.

##### Customer loyalty and competitive advantage:

- Demonstrating a commitment to gender equality builds trust and loyalty among customers who align with your values, fostering long-term brand affinity.
- It positions your brand as a leader in ethical and sustainable business practices, differentiating your products and services from competitors.

##### Innovative product development:

- Diverse teams bring a range of perspectives and ideas critical for innovative product development, serving diverse customer bases.
- Leveraging the creativity stemming from diverse experiences enables the creation of solutions that better address the unique challenges posed by climate change.



**Positive public relations and marketing:**

- A gender-inclusive marketplace strategy provides opportunities for positive media coverage and marketing campaigns that resonate with socially conscious consumers.
- Such initiatives contribute to a positive brand image, setting your climate entrepreneurship venture apart in a crowded market.

**Attracting diverse partnerships:**

- Businesses that prioritise gender inclusivity are more likely to attract partnerships and collaborations with like-minded organisations.
- Collaborations with diverse partners can open new avenues for innovation, shared resources, and joint initiatives to address climate challenges.

By embracing diversity in your customer outreach, product development, and marketing efforts, your business can achieve sustainable growth, build a loyal customer base and contribute to positive social and environmental impact.

In an era where consumers increasingly demand purpose-driven businesses, gender inclusivity is a powerful tool for climate entrepreneurs to drive positive change and create lasting value.



**SELF-ASSESSMENT**

**Is your market research inclusive of diverse genders?**

Most of the online available market research is around men. There is only limited information available on women. So to ensure you start the development of your product/service idea well, your market research should contain information gathered from all genders.

YES NO

**During market research, did you identify challenges/needs for a diverse group of participants?**

When elaborating personas, it is valuable to understand the different needs and challenges of diverse groups. This will inform product/service development, as well as marketing and distribution strategies.

**Does your product/service design involve a diverse group?**

Involving diverse groups early on in your journey will lead to the creation of products or services that appeal to a broad and diverse range of clients. By doing so, you make sure that your company broadens its potential target group.

**During product/service design, have you specifically taken into account the needs of women/marginalised groups who are confronted by climate challenges most frequently?**

As women are more heavily impacted by climate issues and make up a large share of climate-related consumers, it is critical to include them - and other marginalised groups - in your product/service design. Women could be the priority target group when commercialising your product/service.

**Is your final product truly accessible for the target group you are trying to reach? Are you not unintentionally excluding people due to the accessibility of the product/service?**

To ensure that you are reaching the target customers you aim for, you need to strategically choose the location and (online) platforms through which products and services are made available. An example is if the product is available within an inaccessible, bad-lit part of town, it is most likely difficult for women to access your solution. Similarly, certain online platforms appeal more to different genders, so you need to ensure that you pick a platform that fits your target group.

YES NO

**Do you use inclusive language and representation in your marketing materials?**

Using inclusive language ('they' instead of masculine pronouns to express neutrality) and representation (people of different ages, genders, abilities, socioeconomic groups etc.) in your marketing materials enables your company to appeal to diverse consumer segments thus growing your market base.

**Do your marketing materials portray customers to whom all genders can relate?**

Customers form stronger ties with companies that they can relate to and therefore showcase increased brand loyalty and lower churn rates. For your potential customers to relate to your products/services, your company needs to portray relatable and diverse personas.

**Is the communication of your brand values inclusive of all genders?**

Be consistent and always ensure that your brand values communicate inclusiveness of all genders as this will resonate with your customer base and build loyalty.

**Do your communication materials avoid showing gender stereotypes, meaning that all genders are presented in a diversity of roles and innovations?**

Even in the climate sector, there's a risk that companies fall into gender stereotypes in their communication materials. For example, companies that focus on clean cooking may only show women using their products, or a renewable energy company only showing men using biomaterials.

**In your marketing materials, have you explicitly promoted the elements of your product/service that appeal to your women customers?**

When conducting your gender inclusive market research, you most likely have identified elements that appeal directly to your women customers. To better engage with them, you can emphasise these elements. This idea is not to convey gender stereotypes such as the woman will be the only one using the clean cooking stove. But to highlight the fact that during the clean cooking stove design, you have taken into consideration women's desires and that these are now a part of the final product.

**Are you actively collaborating with women-led companies (vendors, suppliers)?**

Gender inclusion does not only apply to your start-up but the whole value chain. Therefore, to make an impact as a gender inclusive climate start-up, you're expected to actively collaborate with a diverse set of companies with leadership across genders.

**Are your business partners (e.g. investors, consultancies) gender-inclusive?**

Gender inclusion does not only apply to your start-up but the whole climate sector. Make a conscious decision to partner with women-led / gender inclusive stakeholders.

**Are you actively collaborating with companies (vendors, suppliers) that prioritise the environment, are actively working on climate issues, and are not harming the environment?**

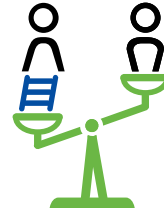
As your own company is actively committed to making a positive impact in the climate field, you should prioritise working with suppliers, vendors and partners that share the same values as you. If not actively alleviating climate issues, you should at least be mindful that your suppliers, vendors and partners are not harming the environment, as this goes against your values and could damage the brand image you are building.



## REAL LIFE EXAMPLES

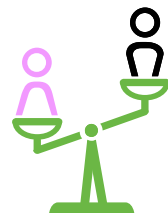
### SEOS Energy in Colombia developed an appealing offer to empower women.

In Colombia, men are most likely to be making financial decisions about the household. To even out this imbalance, SEOS Energy (solar energy fintech) decided to focus on end-users and incentivise women to take a financial loan. For example, if a woman is taking a loan, SEOS Energy offers them preferred interest rates.



#### GENDER RESPONSIVE

**“Currently 35% to 40% of our customer base are women. We have applicants that changed the loan owner from the man to the woman when they heard about the benefit.”** - SEOS Energy



#### GENDER SENSITIVE

### Lakegen Enterprises and Limu Plastic in Kenya are actively working with women.

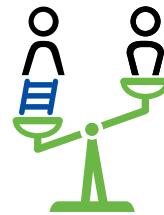
Lakegen sells biodiesel to farmers in rural areas where most farmers are men.

**“Our first customer was a woman, so now women farmers are a big market for us. Women farmers tend to rely more on local production and are also more focused than men farmers, who often have a side job for example in construction”.**

Limu Plastic is a plastic recycling company that buys most of its plastics from women aggregators.  
**“At the dumpsite, out of ten people, one is a man and nine are women”.**

### SEOS Energy in Colombia prioritises working with women-led companies.

The energy industry is heavily dominated by men, therefore it is difficult to find gender-inclusive companies in the field of solar panel installation. SEOS Energy decided to prioritise working with solar panel installation companies that either are women-owned, have women as shareholders, or have women in management positions.



#### GENDER RESPONSIVE

**“We had people asking us if that would work if they put a woman in charge of sales. They see it as a transactional thing. But this is not our plan. We want to see a gender-inclusive mindset in our partners.”** - SEOS Energy



## Activity - Gender integration continuum

Look at your self-assessment and the examples. Reflect on where you stand on the continuum for this specific area and include where you want to be.



## INTERVENTIONS

### 1. Gather your team and discuss your product/service development.

Make sure to have a diverse group, and think about how your product/service is excluding certain people (in the design and distribution). Can you act on it and make a change? If yes, what can you do about it? Collaboratively with your team, elaborate a plan of action.

To identify marginalised consumer groups, reflect on the [Wheel of Privilege and Power](#) and adapt it to your situation. Think about how you can address these marginalised groups better with your products and services.

### 3. Use gender-responsive communication in your marketing materials.

Unrelated to whom you are targeting with your marketing and what your format might be, you must be aware of how language can either reinforce or subvert gender inequalities. Within our communication materials, we need to challenge ourselves to eliminate gender norms and stereotypes associated with both women and men. For example, within all communication pieces, use the singular 'they' instead of masculine pronouns to express neutrality and use gender-neutral terms like humankind, instead of mankind.

**a.** Look at the [Ten Principles of Gender Responsive Communication for Development](#) by UNDP (2018) to see more of these tips on how to eliminate gender norms.

**b.** Explore the incorporation of feminine values into your brand identity. [Beyond the Powergirl \(2020\)](#) gives options. You can see if these align with your brand's personality. For further inspiration, consider reading the e-book of [Beyond the Powergirl \(2016\)](#).

**c.** To avoid harmful gender stereotypes that can increase the burden on women and girls, consider applying the 3Ps – Presence, Perspective and Personality. Find more information on the [Promoting Positive Gender Roles in Marketing and Advertising](#) from UNICEF and UN Women (2020).

### 2. Research your target group and redefine it.

Are you having difficulties answering some questions in the persona and do you realise that you do not know your customers too well? Then it is important to gather this information before you start your work. Therefore, research the target audience that you want to reach within your product/service. This could be done in a light-touch way where you speak to other colleagues, friends and/or family members who might understand this persona better. Alternatively, you could take some more time and conduct a survey or interviews with the people you try to engage with. In this way, you can learn about their beliefs, aspirations and why they would want to use your product/service.

### 4. Get to know the current supplier/partner situation and get to action.

Simply ask your supplier to share with you how they are currently working with women as their suppliers, employees or customers. Are they actively working on climate issues and limiting their emissions?

**a.** Define publicly your objective: Determine the number of women-owned suppliers/partners you aim to collaborate with in the upcoming year. Determine the number of climate-smart businesses you intend to engage with as suppliers/partners within the same timeframe. Share this objective both internally and externally.

**b.** Create awareness with your current suppliers: Share your learnings in your network, and discuss with your existing suppliers how they can improve. This way you do not need to change suppliers, but might be able to stick to your previous ones.

**c.** Connect with women-led and climate-smart suppliers: Proactively seek out these suppliers, as they may not approach you directly. Engage with business associations and women's and/or climate networks to find suppliers/partners aligned with your objectives.

**d.** Build the partnership: Agree on the terms of collaboration and see how you can support each other as entrepreneurs - for instance through providing business skills training or mentorship.



## Activity - Action plan

Look at your self-assessment and the potential interventions. For all the questions you have answered with a “No”, try to ideate how you could turn them into a “Yes”. You can use the interventions listed as a starting point. Write your ideas down below.

## The four areas - Community

Integrating gender inclusion will help your company build stronger relationships with its partners and its community, and you will likely have a greater communication and advocacy impact.

### THE CASE

#### Stronger relations with the partners and with people in the community:

- Gender inclusive engagement practices show respect for the community’s diversity and contribute to positive perceptions of your company (and staff) as a responsible and inclusive partner.
- It facilitates collaborative efforts with a broad range of stakeholders such as investors, governments, NGOs, community leaders, etc. and thus strengthens the effectiveness of climate initiatives.

#### Greater communication and advocacy impact:

- Gender inclusive communications mobilise a wider audience to support policies and initiatives addressing climate change.
- Empowering diverse voices fosters a sense of community ownership and strengthens the resilience of climate initiatives by addressing the unique challenges different demographics face.



### SELF-ASSESSMENT

**Has your organisation written and publicly communicated a clear vision and mission statement about gender equality, diversity, general inclusion and climate?**

*Publicly communicating about how diversity, inclusion and climate are included in your start-up’s vision and mission statement contributes to a positive brand image.*

YES NO

**Have you communicated your gender and climate strategy and ambitions with your consumers, employees, investors, donors, and other entrepreneurs and stakeholders?**

*Communicating about your gender and climate strategy and ambitions with business partners and other entrepreneurs is a good way to find gender-inclusive, climate-oriented partners to work with. You may attract funding by communicating about your gender and climate strategy and ambitions with donors and investors. With employees, it is about making them feel included in the strategy and committed to your start-up’s mission. With consumers, your gender and climate strategy may be what distinguishes you from the competition.*

YES NO

**Do you frequently evaluate and review your gender inclusion targets as well as your climate targets?**

*After publicly communicating about your gender and climate strategy and ambitions, stakeholders expect to know how you are progressing. Frequently evaluating your gender inclusion and climate targets is a good way to keep track of your progress and to know if your targets need to be redefined.*

**Do you share your progress publicly?**

*Publicly communicating about your progress is important to update your consumers, employees, and investors. It also inspires other stakeholders from the climate sector (entrepreneurs, donors, investors, etc.).*

**Are you sharing learnings, and able to learn from partner organisations with a similar focus on climate and gender?**

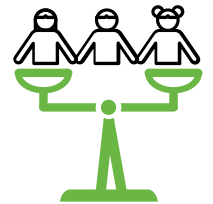
*Being part of a network of gender-inclusive, climate entrepreneurs is a great way to learn from others and to share your learnings with them.*


### REAL LIFE EXAMPLES

**SEOS Energy is part of a women’s network.**

One of the co-founders of SEOS Energy is part of a network of women in finance and is actively participating in the events. Through this network, SEOS Energy has been able to build good relationships with investors.



GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE

**“I could not say being part of this network brought us to participate in X number of events. But it has for sure played a role in differentiating SEOS Energy and our founding team from others.” - SEOS Energy**



GENDER RESPONSIVE

**Cleantech Hub Colombia (ESO) is organising networking opportunities for women in climate.**

Cleantech Hub Colombia realised that women work well together when they belong to the same community. A community feeling often arises and it can bring new opportunities for women entrepreneurs. After establishing groups for women in tech and energy, Cleantech Hub Colombia wants to start a group for women in climate and organise social events to put women CEOs and founders in the spotlight.

## Activity - Gender integration continuum

Look at your self-assessment and the examples. Reflect on where you stand on the continuum for this specific area and include where you want to be.



### INTERVENTIONS

**1. Define, validate and share your vision and mission statement.** On page 13 of this handbook you have identified your vision and mission statement, reflect and prepare for validation. To validate your strategy you can take a different approach depending on your business stage:

- a. Test this existing statement in your team, and with close partners.
- b. Test and improve your vision and mission statement with your customer base.
- c. Sit together with your communications team and develop a version that you believe can be shared externally. Combine the statement with a visual representation.

**2. Set your targets and communicate on the status of achievement.** Based on your vision and mission statement, and the completion of this handbook, you will have a clear idea of what you want to work on related to gender. Share these activities with the world. In combination with this goal, connect several measurable targets. Share your current status on these targets and update frequently.

**3. Become part of a network.** By ensuring the sharing of learnings on topics related to gender and climate, we can grow together and ensure you do not make similar mistakes as others might have made before. We motivate you to become part of a sharing network or to create your own by frequently checking in with other entrepreneurs who have a similar interest.

- a. Join the Women Empowerment Principles. All businesses stand to benefit from gender equality and women's empowerment. The WEPs platform offers the private sector a global network of like-minded companies and guidance on advancing gender equality and women's empowerment in the workplace, marketplace and community. Sign up [here](#).

## Activity - Action plan

Look at your self-assessment and the potential interventions. For all the questions you have answered with a "No", try to ideate how you could turn them into a "Yes". You can use the interventions listed as a starting point. Write your ideas down below.



## 3. Crafting a business pitch



**Let's determine which interventions and changes you will commit to and integrate into your business, as well as how you can measure the impact of those interventions. You will then be able to pitch your approach to investors and other valuable stakeholders.**

In every step, you have ideated on interventions that you can work on in your business to improve your gender-climate inclusivity. Now that you have an idea about all of the things you can do, reflect on your mission and vision statement, and think about what impact you want to achieve within this step. With which interventions can you create the most valuable impact?

Based on this reflection, list your three to five interventions that you would like to prioritise in the box below. We motivate you to choose at least one intervention per step.

Let's make a plan for the selected interventions:

WHAT?	HOW?	WITH WHO/WHAT?	WHEN?
<i>E.g. Include inclusive language and representation in my marketing materials</i>	<i>E.g. Review current materials, do research and make at least three gender-inclusive marketing materials (1 online post, 1 poster and 1 audio snippet). Reflect on the public response to these materials and continue to learn.</i>	<i>E.g. Ask for help from a gender expert in your network.</i>	<i>E.g. In the next 6 months (with a set date - eg. May 31st)</i>

Let's determine how you can measure the impact of the selected interventions.

Selected intervention	Define the indicators What specific indicators could you measure to follow up on the impact of the activity?	Measurement plan Who will collect the data from your team and how will they do it?	Timing of monitoring When will you measure this impact and how frequently?

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## EXTERNAL RESOURCES - FOR THE FOUR AREAS

### LEADERSHIP

- The [2X Challenge criteria](#) set a global standard for what it means to invest in women.
- Find information on understanding gender bias in the [WeRise Toolkit for Entrepreneurs tool 3](#).

### ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

- For policies providing equal opportunities for all employees, refer to [Empowering Women at Work: Companies Policies and Practices for Gender Equality](#) from ILO, EU and UN Women.
- Gives guidance on how to eliminate gender bias from the recruitment process and allow all genders equal opportunities in the selection process.
- Use chapter 4 of ILO's [report on gender-neutral job evaluation for equal pay](#) as a step-by-step guide on job evaluation methods, and chapter 8 on estimating wage gaps for jobs of equal value and making pay adjustments.

### MARKETPLACE

- [The Wheel of Privilege and Power](#) is a starting basis to identify marginalised groups - although it may require adaptations to the company's local context.
- Eliminate gender norms with UNDP's [Ten Principles of Gender Responsive Communication for Development](#).
- [Beyond the Powergirl \(2016\)](#) imagines many positive female identities, qualities and values; with [the test](#), companies can see what feminine values could fit their brand personality.
- To avoid harmful gender stereotypes that can increase the burden on women and girls, consider applying the 3Ps - [Presence, Perspective and Personality](#) from Promoting Positive Gender Roles in Marketing and Advertising by UNICEF and UN Women.

### COMMUNITY

- The WEPs platform offers the private sector a global network of like-minded companies and guidance on advancing gender equality and women's empowerment in the workplace, marketplace and community. Find more information [here](#).

## FACILITATOR TIPS

This section is to support those who are facilitating a session on the gender handbook for start-ups, with a focus on areas to highlight and ways to engage entrepreneurs.

### ● Gender inclusion level

Get familiar with the gender inclusion levels - from discriminatory to transformative - and what each level means by going through [UNICEF's Promoting Diversity and Inclusion in the advertising playbook](#). The playbook is designed to support diverse types of organisations, regardless of what level they are at on their gender mainstreaming journey. The playbook suggests a common language to address stereotypes and discrimination and gathers tools to create inclusive guidelines and strategies, along with a multitude of examples from companies globally.

When discussing a company's gender inclusion level, it challenges the entrepreneur to reveal what they mean when using certain phrasing. For example, saying you hire and promote people solely based on merit can sound good, but can be a typical answer for gender-blind companies.

### ● Frequency of handbook revisit

The frequency of when companies should revisit the handbook will depend on the business stage they are at. For companies at the 'idea' until 'go-to-market' stage it may be relevant to revisit the handbook yearly, while companies at the growth, expansion or maturity stage may choose to revisit the handbook every two years.

### ● Challenge entrepreneurs to go for multiple gender-inclusive interventions

When thinking about being more gender inclusive, it might be easy to think of one intervention and settle. For example, to have 50% of your workforce men and 50% women. However, there is often more to be done. Are all genders equally represented through all levels of the organisation? Are there equal training opportunities, especially in jobs where there is a gender imbalance and/or gender stereotypes? A combination of inclusive efforts might be feasible and could help the company to see greater progress in gender inclusion.

As the facilitator, you can help entrepreneurs prioritise interventions that are the most relevant in their context.

### ● Challenge entrepreneurs to reflect on the feasibility of their chosen interventions

It is one thing to come up with new ideas on how to become more gender inclusive as a company. However, it is another to implement and track these interventions. Challenging companies on the feasibility of the interventions chosen will allow for the best ideas to be implemented. For example, redoing customer research to be inclusive of all genders would require too much money and time, especially when the teams already have a lot of immediate tasks. Finding an intervention that works for the size and capacity of that organisation will mean it is more likely to be implemented well.

### ● Make sure to give examples of what certain interventions could look like in practice

Research the companies to understand what product/service they are providing, as well as their marketing materials and social media content. Based on this, you may already have identified possible areas of improvement. You may notice some gender norms and stereotypes associated with women or men that the company could eliminate. For example, within communication pieces, you can suggest they use gender-neutral terms such as 'they', instead of masculine pronouns in order to be inclusive of all genders. In addition, it's important to provide examples that the entrepreneur can relate to.



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European Union



[www.climate-kic.org](http://www.climate-kic.org)