

March 2024

Barriers, Opportunities, and Exemplars

*Women's Economic Empowerment
and Financial Inclusion*

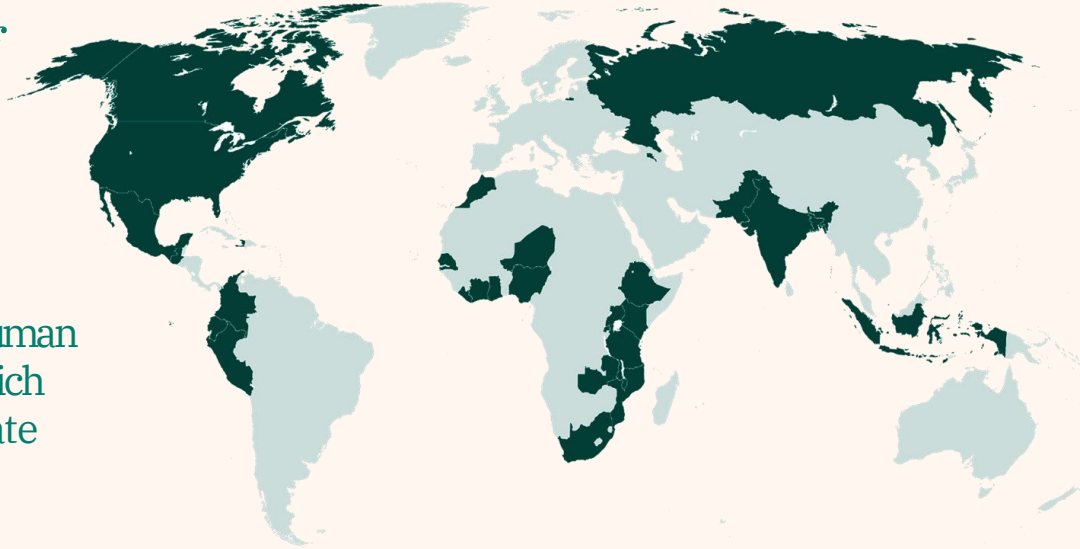


BILL & MELINDA
GATES foundation



GRID Impact is a collective of researchers and designers committed to social impact.

Together, we work to combine the best methodologies and tools to understand human behavior, partner with communities in which our co-designed solutions live, and co-create equity centered sustainable products.



Project Overview

The goal of this work has been to **examine a set of barriers inhibiting women's access to and usage of financial services.**

We strive to determine **which barriers are most resonant to different women in different markets,** and **make recommendations** about the kinds of **interventions** that could address them.



Ultimately, our goal is to remove barriers to women's economic empowerment in the financial inclusion arena.



The general sentiment is that *all barriers contribute to an inequitable financial system* that makes it difficult for women to access and use services and products in ways that will allow them to *achieve economic empowerment.*



Can we identify barriers that are relevant and not yet resolved in specific markets to *center programs and interventions on critical issues* facing women?

Barrier Categories



Prerequisites



Accessibility



Cost



Social Norms



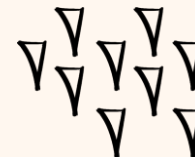
**Information Availability
& Capability**



**Product &
Service Quality**



**Human
Resources**



**Consumer
Protection**

Full List of Barriers (1 of 2)



Prerequisites >

Broader legal constraints
(e.g. male signature) >

Internet/Mobile connectivity >

KYC requirements >

Lack of credit history
(for credit products only) >

Digital/Foundational ID >

Phone/SIM ownership >



Accessibility >

Mobility constraints (e.g.
legal curfews, norms) >

Distance from bank/
FSP/CICO agent >



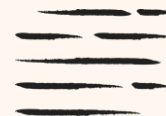
Cost >

Cost of mobile/internet >

Cost of using DFS
(incl. transaction cost) >

Perceived and/or
lack of money >

Non-transparent fee
structures / hidden costs >



Information Availability & Capability >

Lack of peers/family/
network who use DFS >

Basic literacy and numeracy >

Digital literacy >

Financial literacy >

Unclear or unavailable
info about products/uses >

Unclear or difficult
process to open account >

Full List of Barriers (2 of 2)



Product & Service Quality >

Reliability of payments system and network >

Reliability and quality of in-person services >

Lack of products that meet women's needs >

Lack of products and services that create value >

Navigability of user interface of the digital product >



Consumer Protection >

Potential (or actual) privacy violations >

Predatory lending >

Over-charging >

Fraud, scams, and/or fear of making mistakes >

Online/Phone/Social media harassment >

Difficulty resolving complaints >



Human Resources >

Lack of women in leadership at DFS providers and policy-makers >

Lack of female agents >



Social Norms >

Ambivalence or antagonism towards women's financial independence >

Expectation that men control HH finances >

Women's disproportionate performance of unpaid care work >

Biases that center men as financial customers >

Financial Inclusion Segments

01

**Excluded,
marginalized**

02

**Excluded,
high potential**

03

**Included,
underserved**

04

**Included, not
underserved**



*Lower potential
for inclusion*

*Greater potential
for inclusion*

Barriers Relevant Across All Four Segments

Prerequisites

Broader legal constraints (e.g. male signature)

Cost

Cost of using DFS (incl. transaction cost)

Cost of mobile/internet

Social Norms

Biases that center men as financial customers

Expectation that men control HH finances

Ambivalence or antagonism towards women's financial independence

Women's disproportionate performance of unpaid care work

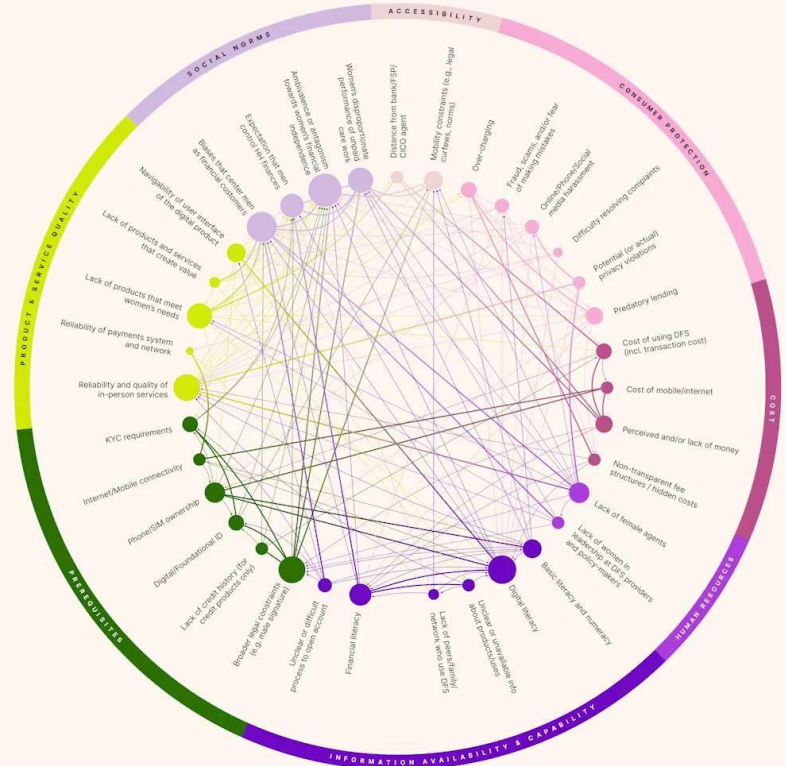
Human Resources

Lack of female agents

Some barriers typical for the largest segments in each market may be *more or less relevant based on local context*. This doesn't mean other barriers should be ignored or deprioritized.

Rather, in all markets, *one should take a contextualized approach* to determine which barriers need to be addressed more urgently than others based on what has already been resolved or attempted in the market.

Connected Barriers Map



Sub-Saharan Africa



Largest Segment of Women

By Country

Segment 1

Excluded, marginalized

Segment 2

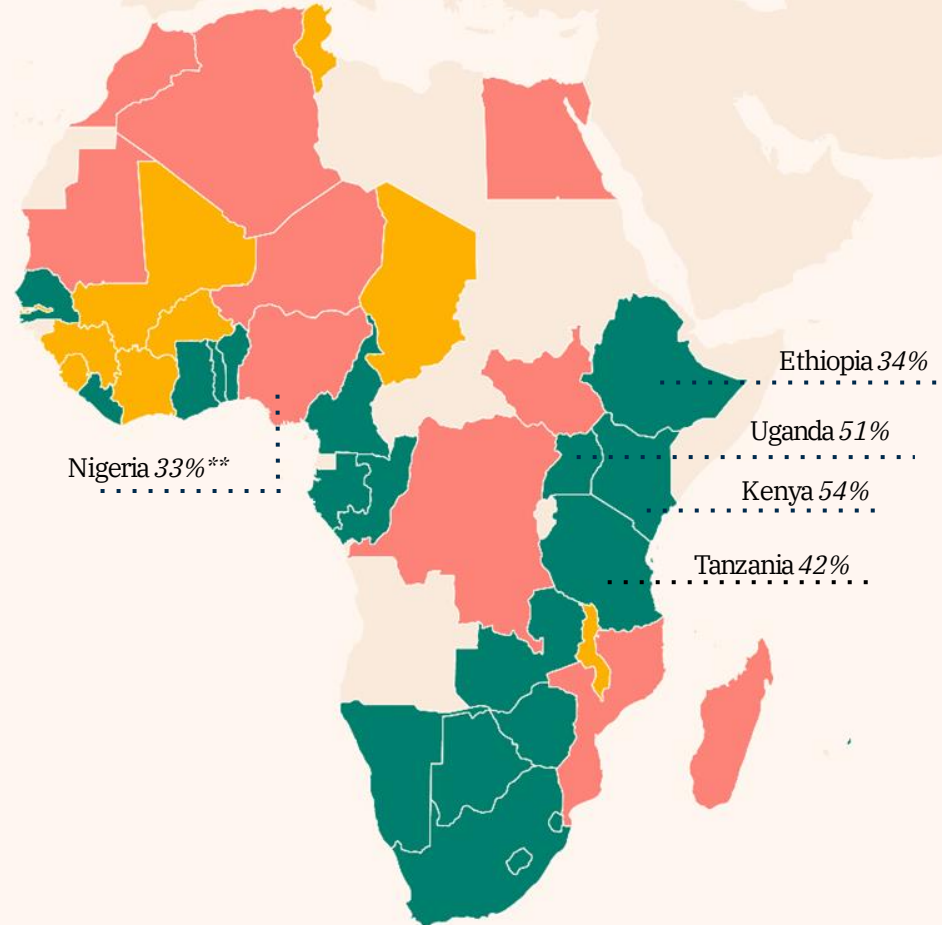
Excluded, high potential

Segment 3

Included, underserved

Segment 4

Included, not underserved



* Segmentation data is not available for countries excluded from the 2021 Findex.

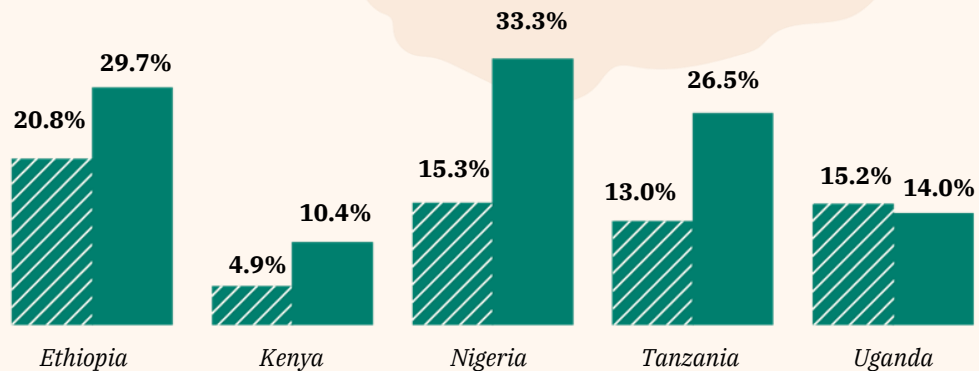
**While Segment 1 is the most represented segment for women in Nigeria, the spread between Segments 1, 2, and 3 is very narrow.

Segment 1 Distribution by Gender and Country

2021

The percentage of **excluded, marginalized** women in Ethiopia is closest to that in Nigeria and Tanzania. The percentage of women in Segment 1 in Uganda is about half of that in Ethiopia, while the percentage of women in Segment 1 in Kenya is even lower, at 10.4%.

▨ Men
■ Women

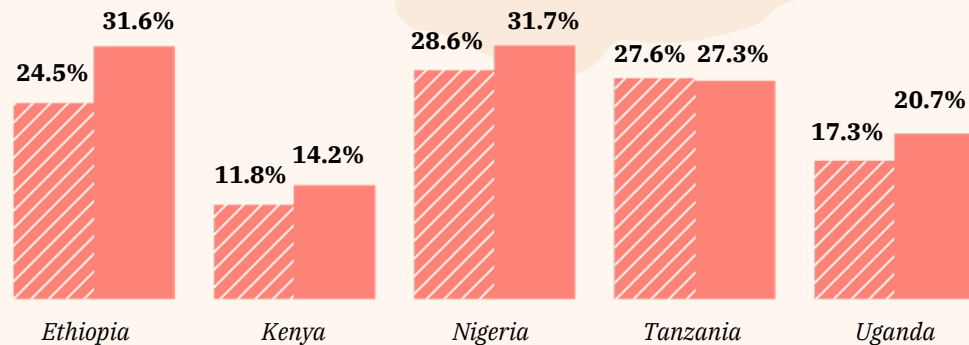
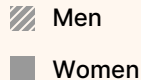


Sources: Mathematica analysis of 2021 Global Findex database data.

Segment 2 Distribution by Gender and Country

2021

The percentage of women in Segment 2 in Ethiopia is again closest to that in Nigeria and Tanzania. For all countries except Uganda, the difference in the percentage of **excluded, high potential** men and women is smaller than in Segment 1.



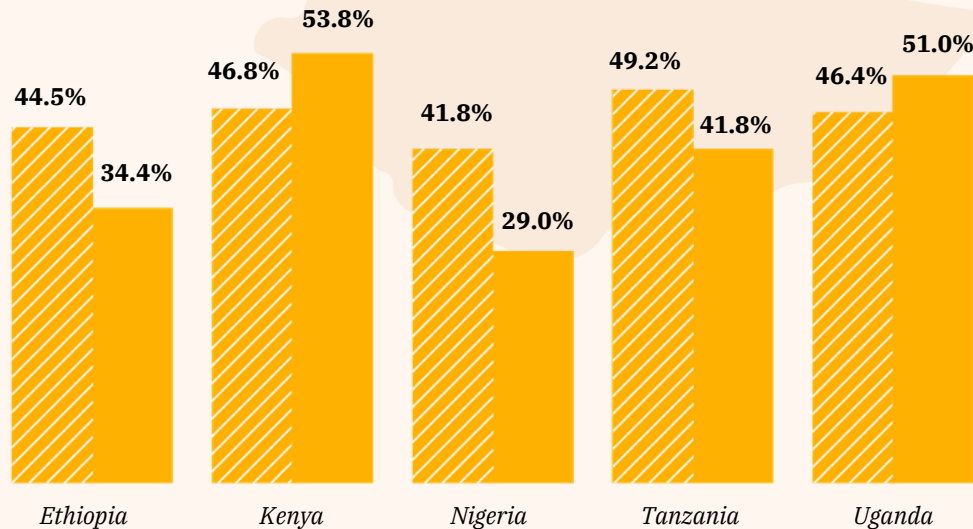
Sources: Mathematica analysis of 2021 Global Findex database data.

Segment 3 Distribution by Gender and Country

2021

The **included, underserved** segment is the most represented Segment in all of these markets except Nigeria. Segment 3 is the largest segment by the highest margin in Kenya and 19.4 percentage points higher than in Ethiopia.

- Men
- Women



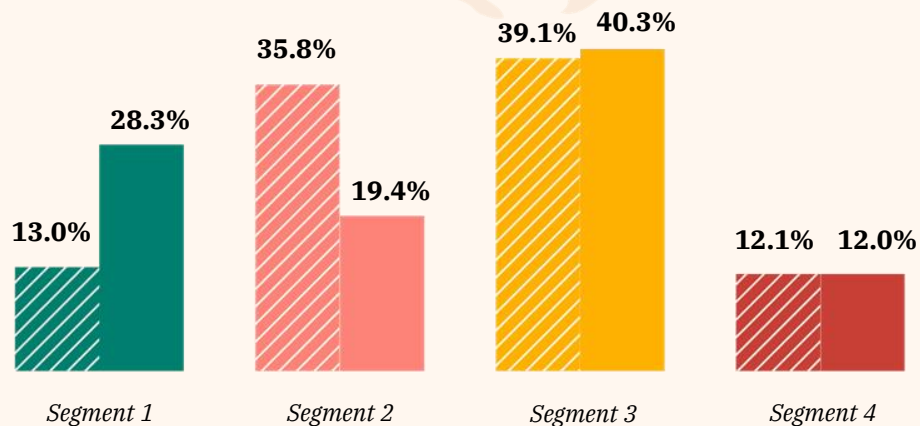
Sources: Mathematica analysis of 2021 Global Findex database data.

Indonesia: Segment Distribution by Gender

2021

In 2021, Segment 3 is the largest segment for both women and men in Indonesia. Notably, the percentage of women in Segment 3 is greater than that of men.

- Men
- Women



Sources: Mathematica analysis of 2021 Global Findex database data.

Women in Ethiopia: Barrier Prioritization for Segment 3

What we know:


- **74% of women in have primary levels of education or less.**
- **Digital savings and payments are low.**
 - **2.2% of women saved, 6.9% sent money, and 1.3% paid bills with a mobile money account.**
- **Ethiopia's mobile money market is nascent but expanding.**
- **The cost of mobile data is relatively low.**

Women in Kenya: Barrier Prioritization for Segment 3

What we know:

- **Digital savings, P2P transfers, and utility payments are common, but digital payments remain low.**
 - **75.4%** of women sent money, **39.5%** saved, and **15.1%** paid utility bills using a mobile money account.
 - **9.7%** of women made a purchase online and **9.7%** received wage payments through a mobile phone.
- **Third-party fraud** is relatively common. Consumers do not typically use formal complaints channels, but when they do they are **unlikely to receive a prompt and effective resolution.**
- **89%** of women in Kenya **have an ID.**
- **65.3%** of women have a **secondary education.**
- **There are over 67 million mobile money accounts.**

Women in Tanzania: Barrier Prioritization for Segment 3



What we know:

- **Digital savings, P2P transfers, and utility payments are common, but digital payments remain low.**
 - **45.5%** of women sent money, **20.6%** saved, and **23%** paid utility bills using a mobile phone.
 - **6.9%** of women made a purchase online and 3.2% received wage payments through a mobile phone.
- **Provider fees and taxes as a percentage of transaction amount are high** and complex.
- **Only 32% of agents are female.**
- **The cost of mobile data is relatively low.**
- **There are over 40 million mobile money accounts.**
- Tanzania ranks **low on the digital skills gap.**

Women in Uganda: Barrier Prioritization for Segment 3

What we know:

- **Digital savings, P2P transfers, and utility payments are common, but digital payments remain low.**
 - **61.4%** of women sent money, **36.5%** saved, and **19.3%** paid utility bills using a mobile phone.
 - **6%** of women made a purchase online and **4%** received wage payments through a mobile phone.
- **56%** of women have **secondary education**.
- **There are over 30 million mobile money accounts.**
- Uganda's **overcharging** rate is higher than in Tanzania and Bangladesh and **18%** of attempted **transactions result in failure with the agent present**.

Sources: Mathematica analysis of 2021 Global Findex database data, IPA

Women in Nigeria: Barrier Prioritization for Segment 3

What we know:

- Of the 47.1% of women who borrowed money from any source, only **0.8% borrowed from a formal financial institution.**
- **Informal mechanisms for savings, credit, and utility payments persist.**
 - 68.9% saved for any reason, but **only 23.7% did so using an account.**
 - While 42.7% of women paid utility bills, **39.9% did so with cash.**
- **15%** of registered financial service/mobile money agents are **women.**
- **72.9% of women have secondary level education.**
- Nigeria has the **second lowest average price of mobile data** on the African continent.

Sources: Mathematica analysis of 2021 Global Findex database data, IPA

Women in Indonesia: Barrier Prioritization for Segment 3

What we know:

- **Digital savings and payments are low.**
 - 3.6% saved money, 6.4% sent money, and 3.6% paid bills using a phone.
 - Less than 1% received wages into a phone and 4.3% received wages into a formal financial account.
- Approximately **50%** of women have **secondary education**.
- Only **2.3%** of the female population above the age of 15 is **unregistered** according to World Bank ID4D data.
- **The cost of mobile internet is relatively low.**

Sources: Mathematica analysis of 2021 Global Findex database data, IPA

Comparative Barrier Prioritization for Segment 3

	Ethiopia	Nigeria	Kenya	Tanzania	Uganda
More relevant	Lack of products that meet women's needs				
	Lack of products & services that create value		Unclear or unavailable information about products/uses		
	Digital literacy	Lack of credit history	Cost of using DFS (incl. transaction cost)		
		Lack of female agents	Frauds, scams, and/or fear of mistakes	Non-transparent fee structures / hidden costs Reliability of payments system and network	
			Difficulty resolving complaints	Lack of female agents	Over-charging
Kept in mind during program design	All barriers in the Social Norms category				
	Basic literacy & numeracy			Digital Literacy	
Less relevant	Cost of mobile/internet		Lack of peers/family/network who use DFS		
		Basic literacy & numeracy		Cost of mobile/internet	Basic literacy & numeracy
			Digital/Foundational ID		

Comparative Barrier Prioritization for Segment 3

	Ethiopia	Indonesia
<i>More relevant</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Lack of products that meet women's needsDigital literacyLack of products & services that create value	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Unclear or unavailable information about products/uses
<i>Kept in mind during program design</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">All barriers in the Social Norms categoryBasic literacy & numeracy	
<i>Less relevant</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Cost of mobile/internet	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Digital/Foundational IDBasic literacy & numeracy

Exemplars & Opportunities





With an understanding of the most relevant and closely connected barriers for a *specific segment in a specific market*, our exemplars can *motivate and inform opportunities* for adapting and designing *evidence-based programs*.

Farm to Market Alliance (FtMA)

FtMA is a **public-private consortium** seeking to **transform food value chains** by building **long-term linkages between suppliers (farmers), buyers and other key market players** through a **demand-led, holistic approach**.

FtMA delivers a **full set of services** including **capacity building and training**, access to **affordable finance**, access to **inputs and mechanization**, and access to **markets and post-harvest support** through a network of Farmer Service Centers that are led by influential local business leaders and groups.

Quick facts

Barriers addressed



Prerequisites

[Lack of credit history >](#)



Cost

[Perceived and/or lack of money >](#)



Social norms

[Ambivalence or antagonism towards women's financial independence >](#)



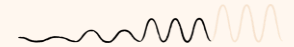
Product & Service Quality

[Lack of products that meet women's needs >](#)
[Lack of products and services that create value >](#)

Segment focus

1 2 3 4

Customer Journey Relevance



Geography

[Rwanda, Tanzania >](#), [Zambia and Kenya >](#)

Sources

[GSMA, 2022;](#)
[Mercy Corps, 2021.](#)
[FtMA.](#)

Key stakeholders involved

Mercy Corps AgriFin
 AGRA
 Bayer
 Rabobank Group
 Syngenta
 WFP
 Yara International ASA
 223,848 farmers

FtMA Key Outcomes

- Women farmers saw **improved yields and productivity**
- A **shift from subsistence to commercial farming** among FSC leads and farmers
- Women FSC leads reported **enhanced entrepreneurship and business skills**
- **Women experienced increased decision-making power** in the household

Key *Design Elements* that Led to Successful Outcomes

01

Providing a **holistic set of services** and bundling a product/service rollout with capacity-building

02

Targeting both **supply- and demand-side** actors under one program

03

Leveraging multiple communication channels for recruitment, and **trusted community members** for program implementation

04

Using **women-centered design models**

05

Making interventions affordable and creating **value for women**

The Role of Gender in Agent Banking

A rigorous **study on customer preferences for agent gender, transaction amounts, and agent gender preferences in markets with low female agent presence** among customers from FINCA DRC, a microfinance institution (MFI) in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Baobab, a large MFI in Senegal.

Though not an intervention, this report has **implications for organizations wishing to pursue gender intentional agent networks.**

Quick facts

Barriers addressed



Product & Service Quality

[Reliability and quality of in-person services >](#)
[Lack of products that meet women's needs >](#)
[Lack of products and services that create value >](#)



Human Resources

[Lack of female agents >](#)



Consumer Protection

[Potential \(or actual\) privacy violations >](#)

Segment focus

1 2 3 4

Customer Journey Relevance



Geography

Democratic Republic of the
Congo, Senegal

Key stakeholders involved

FINCA DRC, Baobab Senegal,
104,237 Customers (DRC), 98
customers (Senegal)

Sources

[Chamboko et al., 2020.](#)

Key Outcomes

- **Women are significantly more likely to transact with female agents** and this increases both with the value of transactions and the customer's balance.
- **Female clients have a stronger tendency to use female agents for larger transactions.**
- Women are still more likely to transact with female agents **even in locations where female agent presence is low.**
- **Both men and women transact higher average amounts at agents matching their gender.**

Key *Design Elements* to Consider

01

Providing a **holistic set of services** and bundling a product/service rollout with capacity-building

02

Targeting both **supply- and demand-side** actors under one program

03

Leveraging **trusted community members** for program implementation

04

Using **women-centered design models**

05

Making interventions affordable and creating **value for women**

Available Resources





The Barriers & Opportunities Analysis

compendium is a detailed exploration of 35 barriers that make it difficult for women to access and use services and products in ways that will allow them to *achieve economic empowerment.*



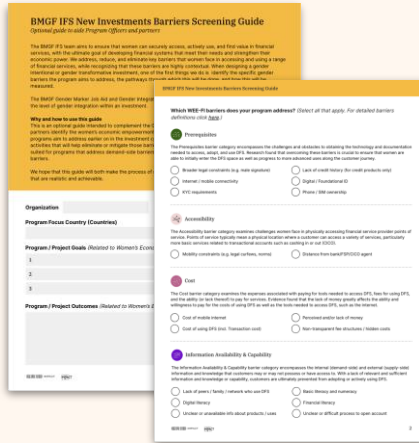
The *Enablers & Exemplars Reference Guide* shares explanations of interventions, programs, and policies that have *shown positive outcomes for women's economic empowerment.*



We are continuing to develop *new tools and resources* for *engaging with the research* to ensure it supports gender-intentional *program design*.



The Enablers & Exemplars Reference Guide



The Gender Integration Discussion Guide



Topical Resources: Payment Systems & more...

All of our reference materials live on the internet as a set of public goods. They are free to download and access.

www.wee-fi-barriers.org/

Women's Economic Empowerment & Financial Inclusion

Barriers, Opportunities & Exemplars

The goal of this work has been to examine a set of barriers inhibiting women's access to and usage of financial services – and to determine which barriers are most relevant to different segments of women in different markets.



About this project

We have explored 35 barriers to women's economic empowerment and financial inclusion (WEE-FI), which are grouped into eight categories and range from cost and accessibility to digital literacy and product & service quality.

The resources on this site distill our research findings from different perspectives and are intended to help people and organizations working on financial inclusion – whether at the country level or globally – engage with the evidence.

If, as an industry, we can align on an approach to addressing the key barriers to women's economic empowerment for specific customers in different markets, we may be more successful in steering resources effectively and coordinating more impactful interventions.

Resources

Foundational

Barriers

Countries

Dig Deeper

An evidence review of 35 barriers grouped into eight categories contributing to the gender gap in financial inclusion. Within each barrier-specific download you will find a summary of and key evidence on the barrier, analyses of connected

Discussion

Thank you!

For questions please contact:

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www.wee-fi-barriers.org

