

MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR A GENDER SMART ENTREPRENEURSHIP SUPPORT ORGANISATION

**GENDER LENS
INCUBATION AND
ACCELERATION
(GLIA) TOOLKIT**

Implemented by:





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GLIA: Minimum Standards for a Gender Smart Program

Introduction

There is a clear gender gap in entrepreneurship. Women entrepreneurs face significantly more barriers to launching and growing a business than men do.

These barriers include laws that restrict their freedoms, gender norms and stereotypes that discourage their participation in entrepreneurship, gender-based discrimination and violence, lack of access to education, lack of confidence, difficulty accessing capital and more.

Women are under-represented in Acceleration programs with only 13% of founding teams being entirely women-led¹. When women-led ventures do participate, they do not experience the same benefits. Male-led ventures raise on average 2.6 times more equity than women-led ventures and Acceleration actually exacerbates the gender gap in equity finance².

Accelerators that apply a '**gender lens**' to their own programs (considering how their activities may be experienced differently by different gendered groups) and influence other ecosystem players to do the same, can play a critical role in levelling the playing field for women entrepreneurs.

A '**gender smart**' accelerator or incubator goes a step further, explicitly aiming to advance gender equity through its design and implementation. It provides support that ensures entrepreneurs of all genders have equal opportunities to build successful, sustainable ventures and that those ventures consider their own impact on gender.

¹ GALI, 2020. [Accelerating Women-led Startups](#)

² IFC, We-Fi, Village Capital, 2020. [Venture Capital and the Gender Financing Gap: The Role of Accelerators](#).

Why minimum standards?

These standards were created with the aim of helping accelerators and incubators get started on the journey of applying a gender lens to their work, and in order to establish a clear set of practical guidelines that can be shared across the sector.

It is our hope that these standards help to build good practice, hold organisations accountable, and ensure our work does not contribute to or worsen gender inequality.

Background & Methodology

These standards were developed by a community of practice made up of 6 South East Asia based entrepreneurship support organisations (ESOs), with the support of ygap and the Sasakawa Peace Foundation.

These standards are intended to accompany the [Gender Lens Incubation and Acceleration toolkit](#) and reference many of the gender lens strategies included there while also building on them with new examples and case studies from the community of practice.

These standards have been built and refined through a collaborative process and tested by our Community of Practice members.

Scope

The GLIA minimum standards have been separated into two focuses: **organisations** and **programs**. We recognise that the criteria for applying a gender lens within your team can look very different to applying a gender lens to the services you provide to entrepreneurs.

This document suggests 7 minimum standards (3 for organisations, and 4 for programs) that entrepreneur support organisations should aim to meet before the programs that they run with entrepreneurs can be considered 'gender smart'.

How to apply these standards

Each standard includes guidance in the following areas:

- What it looks like to achieve the standard
- Why the standard is important
- Suggested metrics to track progress towards the standards
- Reflection questions to consider
- Example strategies you can consider applying to meet the standard
- Case studies from ESO's who have applied these strategies

Introduction

- Additional resources to support you as you work towards the standard

The suggested strategies and metrics included under each standard are a guide only.

Teams are encouraged to consider what will work best in the organisation context and to adapt the strategies and metrics where necessary to further contextualise.

We also suggest starting small and choosing 1-3 strategies to begin implementing and using the GLIA toolkit as further guidance as you track the impact of your efforts.

An evolving resource

We are eager to hear about how useful these standards are for you and your team and for this resource to continue to evolve, so we welcome any suggestions or feedback on how it could be improved.

Please send your feedback to:

Email: visakha@sheinvestments.com & lyta@sheinvestments.com

Gender Lens Incubation and Acceleration (GLIA) Toolkit

**Minimum standards for a gender smart
organisation**

These standards are being developed by a community of practice made up of 6 SouthEastAsia based entrepreneurship support organisations, with the support of ygap and the Sasakawa Peace Foundation.

What does it mean to be 'gender smart'?

The GLIA Community of Practice, a group of 6 intermediaries in Southeast Asia that is highly experienced in gender lens application, defines a gender smart ESO as the following:

A gender smart ESO is committed to advancing gender equality through their programs and internal operations. They work to level the entrepreneurship playing field through accessible and inclusive programs to ensure underrepresented genders are given the necessary support to scale their enterprises. They also look internally to challenge their own biases and ensure all genders have equal opportunities within their organisation.

What are the minimum standards?

The GLIA minimum standards have been separated into two focuses: **organisations** and **programs**. We recognise that the criteria for applying a gender lens within our teams can look very different to applying a gender lens to the services we provide to entrepreneurs.

The 3 standards in this document outline the criteria that an organisation must meet *internally* in order to be considered gender smart. They are as follows:

- Members will work towards equal representation and participation from all members of the team.
- Members will review and adapt their internal policies to enable a culture of equality in the workplace.
- Members will work towards creating a culture of belonging and inclusion.

STANDARD ONE – TEAM

Members will work towards equal representation and participation from all members of the team.

STANDARD

Members will work towards equal representation and participation from all members of the team.

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE TO ACHIEVE THIS STANDARD?

These are the specific outcomes involved in achieving this standard.

- The organisation has developed policies and procedures with the aim of reaching a gender balance in the team.
- Barriers to participation have been identified, including by asking team members what would enable their involvement, and putting strategies in place to improve participation.
- All team members have equal opportunities to participate in the decision making process of the organisation.
- All team members feel capable and are active in voicing their ideas, thoughts, and opinions when it comes to decision making in the organisation.

A note for women-led teams: If you are already a majority women-led organisation, you may want to consider aiming to balance your gender split to involve more diverse perspectives or consider 'intersectionality' to ensure that within your women-led team, there is equal opportunity. Intersectionality refers to the ways in which different forms of advantage or oppression like gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, religion, etc. combine, overlap, or intersect.

WHY IS THIS STANDARD IMPORTANT?

What impact will achieving this standard have for your organisation?

- To attract and retain a diverse team with a varied set of experiences and perspectives which has been proven to lead to:
 - increased creativity & innovation
 - faster problem solving
 - improved financial performance
 - increased ability to attract & retain talent,
 - improved team unity and employee satisfaction
- To ensure that all team members are given an equal seat at the table and are able to share their unique and diverse perspectives.
- To give value to the thoughts and opinions of team members and contribute to a culture of openness and inclusivity.

HOW DO YOU KNOW YOU'VE ACHIEVED IT?

These are suggested metrics you can track to assess your progress on this standard.

- Gender split of both applicants and successful candidates for new roles
- Gender split on management and leadership teams
- Experience/satisfaction rating (disaggregated by gender)
- % of team members participating in decision making processes (disaggregated by gender)
- Increased engagement and contribution of members through survey, polls or meetings on internal and external processes, goals and strategy.

Gender Split: means the split between the number of people who identify as different genders. For example, a gender split in your team could be 60% female; 35% male; 5% non-binary.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR ESOs CONSIDERING THIS STANDARD

These questions are great starting points to begin thinking about this standard and reflect on where you are on the journey to achieving it.

- What is the current gender split of your team?
- How representative is your team of those you are trying to serve? What voices, if any, are missing from the decision making?
- How does your organisational structure (e.g. flat vs hierarchical) enable or prohibit participation?
- How diverse is our team right now? Do we have people of different genders, cultural or religious backgrounds, abilities/disabilities?
- How can we attract and recruit a more diverse team?
- What does it mean for team members to be participative in the decision making process?
- What is preventing team members from participating?
- Do all team members know how they can participate in key organisational processes and decisions?
- How could we encourage more participation from all team members?
- Do team members need additional personal or professional development in order to feel capable of participating fully in the organisation? Do we have the resources to support this development for team members?

EXAMPLE STRATEGIES

Example strategies that you can consider applying to achieve this standard.

NOTE: If you are just starting out, we suggest beginning with the first 1-3 strategies. These starting points are not prescriptive but rather what we, as a community of practice, believe to be an easy first step for organisations who are new to applying a gender-lens. We encourage you to consider what will work best for your context and explore the toolkit for more strategies and to continue your journey of applying a gender lens.

1. **Analyse your team's composition**, including the distribution of gender

amongst key decision-makers, and take into account whose voices are being heard in the decision-making process.

2. **Conduct an anonymous survey or interview your team** to understand whether they feel capable and encouraged to voice their ideas, thoughts, opinions, and provide input on key organisational decisions, what barriers exist for them and how you could better support them to participate.
3. Develop a **Gender Equality Policy** that reflects your organisation's commitment to gender equality actions and standards within the workplace. Examples can include:
 - a. % of women-identifying / non-binary employees in senior management positions
 - b. Ensuring the organisation's key stakeholders are **represented in leadership** (for example, if your ESO targets Cambodian women, you may consider to have a policy about the % of Cambodian women represented in the ESO's leadership. If your organisation is focused on LGBTQ people, then ensuring adequate or majority LGBTQ representation in leadership and on your board is important to ensure that the people making decisions that directly affect key stakeholders, are adequately representing those stakeholders)
 - c. **Recruitment advertisements** should encourage women, non-binary people, and other diverse peoples (e.g. people with disabilities) to apply, but also consider whether the advertisements are *accessible* to those people or not. For example, if using images in job advertisements, consider the representation of women, non-binary, ethnicity, and people with disabilities in your communications.
4. **Adapt your recruitment process** to ensure people of all genders feel welcome to apply and to remove bias from your selection process. (See helpful GLIA frameworks in the resources section of this standard.)
5. **Put quotas or mandates in place** to achieve gender balance in your leadership team.
6. Create **pathways** for women's careers within your workplace to improve retention and gender equality at leadership level in the future. For example, **mentorship programs** for junior employees, supporting staff to develop **Development Plans** (12-month goals for their roles and careers), and having **regular check-ins** (not meetings; focusing on how the employee is feeling) can help to make staff feel supported not just in their current role, but also towards their future goals and careers. For women and marginalised staff, this can be extremely important, particularly in regards to their self-confidence.

CASE STUDIES

These are case studies from organisations who have put these strategies into practice.

SHE Investments has practiced applying the understanding of women's aspects in which every facilitator in the workshop is female to make the participants (women entrepreneurs) feel comfortable. Likewise internally, SHE Leadership Team and Staff Representative Committee (SRC) are majority female.

Sevea is founded by a female founder with 75% of women who are in the role of Leadership, Chair, and Senior Management, and half of the team members are female.

USEFUL RESOURCES

Here are additional tools we have used to refer to and implement this standard.

[GLIA Example Gender Policy](#)

[GLIA Checklist for Creating an Inclusive Culture](#)

[GLIA Example Writing Gender-neutral Inclusive Position Descriptions](#)

[GLIA Selection Criteria for Team Members](#)

STANDARD TWO – POLICY & COMPLIANCE

Members will review and adapt their internal policies to enable a culture of equality in the workplace.

STANDARD

Members will review and adapt their internal policies to enable a culture of equality in the workplace.

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE TO ACHIEVE THIS STANDARD?

These are the specific outcomes involved in achieving this standard.

- The organisation has a process of regular reflection and staff engagement into the development and updating of internal policies related to gender equality (e.g. annually)
- The organisation has an internal "[Gender Equality Policy](#)", engaging their team in the development process, in order to build gender equality into daily practice.
- The organisation has in place a number of internal policies that have been developed specifically to reduce gender inequalities i.e. parental leave, flexible working, equal pay, etc.

WHY IS THIS STANDARD IMPORTANT?

What impact will achieving this standard have for your organisation?

- To foster a gender diverse and inclusive organisation
- To create pathways for development for all staff members, regardless of gender identity
- To encourage regular reflection and improvement in regards to gender equality policies and practises within the workplace
- To build a culture of trust, security and inclusivity, enhancing staff engagement and ultimately retention

HOW DO YOU KNOW YOU'VE ACHIEVED IT?

These are suggested metrics you can track to assess your progress on this standard.

- Organisational 'Gender equality policy' co-developed by team
- # of policies enacted (implemented and in practice) to improve gender equality such as parental leave
- % of staff actively engaged in annual reviews and updates regarding internal gender equality policies
- Experience/satisfaction rating (disaggregated by gender)

REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR ESOs CONSIDERING THIS STANDARD

These questions are great starting points to begin thinking about this standard and reflect on where you are on the journey to achieving it.

- Do any of our policies privilege one gender over another?
- What gender inequalities are present in our team that could be addressed through an organisational policy?
- Are our internal policies reflective of actual practice?
- Are all of our staff aware of our internal policies, especially related to gender equality? How do we know?
- Do we have communication channels for staff (confidential or not) to provide feedback, ask questions, and raise concerns in relation to internal policies? Are staff able to do so without fear of repercussions?

EXAMPLE STRATEGIES

Example strategies that you can consider applying to achieve this standard.

NOTE: If you are just starting out, we suggest beginning with the first 1-3 strategies. These starting points are not prescriptive but rather what we, as a community of practice, believe to be an easy first step for organisations who are new to applying a gender-lens. We encourage you to consider what will work best for your context and explore the toolkit for more strategies and to continue your journey of applying a gender lens.

1. Set an **annual policy review process** that gives all members of your team a chance to suggest changes to current policies or development of additional policies that will enable a culture of equality. Even if team members are aware of the policies, conducting a regular review with the team using a workshop or feedback format can provide valuable reflection and insights into how your organisation is effectively implementing and upholding the policies. This can also make your team feel more involved in the process, and increase confidence in leadership that topics such as policies related to gender equality are valued.
2. Have a clear **process for staff to ask questions and provide feedback** on organisational policies at any time outside of the annual review process.
3. Develop a **Gender Equality Policy** that reflects your organisation's commitment to gender equality actions and standards within the workplace.
4. Develop an equitable **Parental Leave Policy** that ensures regardless of sex, gender, biological or non-biological children, all new parents have access to the same parental leave benefits. Although in most cases longer parental leave is reserved for women (maternity leave), every family is different and it is important for all new parents to have time to bond with new children. This policy should also reflect that both parents may need **additional leave benefits** in case of the loss of a pregnancy or child, and regardless of the outcome of pregnancy should be entitled to complete their scheduled parental leave.
5. Consider a policy around **Menstrual Leave**. Women, non-binary and trans women often experience significant discomfort during menstruation, some experiencing pain, loss of focus, fatigue, and a range of other symptoms. Implementing "menstrual leave" or, depending on the local culture and context you are working within, another name (e.g. "Special Leave" or "Personal Leave" which can be applicable to multiple situations, from menstruation to mental health, grief, carer requirements, etc.) makes situations such as requesting leave

when needed for menstruation 'normalised' within the workplace. Even if your staff do not actively access this leave, knowing they have the option to do so can lead to employees feeling understood, valued, and ultimately influence retention.

6. Consider how your **Office Management Policies** have an impact on gender equality within the workplace. Do your female staff have additional expenses as a direct result of their sex or gender? Consider whether you may be able to provide additional support to help them have more equal access to their income to their male counterparts.
7. Include a policy to **disaggregate all data by gender** to ensure you are aware of how different genders are impacted by various policies, processes and activities across the organisation.

CASE STUDIES

These are case studies from organisations who have put these strategies into practice.

SHE Investments has developed a **Gender Equality Policy** that included:

- a. % of women-identifying / non-binary employees in senior management positions
- b. A metric to ensure the organisation's key stakeholders were represented in leadership (% of Cambodian women represented in the leadership team).
- c. A requirement for recruitment advertisements to encourage women, non-binary people, and other diversity (e.g. people with disabilities) to apply, also considering whether the advertisements are *accessible* to those people or not.
- d. Introduced annual whole-team reviews of all internal policies, including the new Gender Equality Policy, to ensure all staff fully understood policies and had the opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback.

Also, SHE Investments has developed an office management policy to **provide free sanitary napkins** in office bathrooms - this is inexpensive for the company, but can make a big difference to a junior female staff member on a lower salary who struggles to afford this kind of product regularly. Providing these products also encourages health and hygiene practices and a non-judgemental environment and is as simple as adding sanitary napkins to your office supplies monthly purchase list, alongside other essentials like toilet paper and hand soap.

SOGE (Solar Green Energy Cambodia) has clearly outlined aspects focused on women, particularly promoting female technical staffs/engineers with three-month maternity leave with 100% salary.

Insitor believes in the value of Gender Balance for their business and they will strive for the continued Gender Balance across their teams by promoting equality and diversity as well as a culture that actively values difference. In particular, they commit to adopting gender-smart practices in recruitment, progression, promotion, and succession planning (including for senior equity partners and investment committee constitution) across Insitor.

This includes:

- a. requiring a 50-50 gender-balanced slate of candidates for all new hires
- b. ensuring all interview panels are gender balanced
- c. providing robust unconscious bias training across the business
- d. instituting gender smart HR management processes such as a specific internal diversity & inclusion policy
- e. publishing a clear competency framework for progression and promotions
- f. conducting annual gender pay gap analysis and reporting results to the LP Advisory Committee.

Insitor commits to ensuring that its internal team maintains 2X challenge criteria thresholds (30% of senior equity partners and IC members; and 40% of all staff (excluding senior management) being women). The Insitor team comprises 11 investment professionals and two E&S associates/analysts. Insitor's Partner and CEO are female and the team comprises 50% women in senior management, 33% women in IC, and 50% women in the overall workforce.

USEFUL RESOURCES

Here are additional tools we have used to refer to and implement this standard.

[Women's Empowerment Principles](#)

[GLIA Toolkit](#)

[Marie Stopes International Country Offices](#) (for resources & training)

[ILO: Empowering Women at Work](#)

STANDARD THREE – CULTURE

Members will work towards creating a culture of belonging and inclusion.

STANDARD

Members will work towards creating a culture of belonging and inclusion.

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE TO ACHIEVE THIS STANDARD?

These are the specific outcomes involved in achieving this standard.

- The organisation has an understanding of what inclusion and belonging look like in their organisational and cultural context.
- The organisation takes action to understand how inclusive their culture is and where there are opportunities to improve.
- The organisation creates opportunities to discuss and learn about gender, diversity and inclusion.
- The organisation creates equal opportunities for all members of the team to participate in and contribute to company culture.
- The organisation has created a sense of trust and belonging where all team members feel valued, comfortable and safe expressing their opinions, thoughts, needs and authentic selves.
- Team members embrace the organisational culture and become advocates of the culture themselves.

WHY IS THIS STANDARD IMPORTANT?

What impact will achieving this standard have for your organisation?

- To create a sense of belonging among members regardless of background or status.
- To establish a working environment which values each individual equally and empowers them to bring their best self to their work.
- To benefit fully from a diverse and varied set of experiences and perspectives.
- To encourage all staff to become champions for positive and inclusive workplace culture, building these values into the company's DNA (and not reliant on being driven by only the leadership)

HOW DO YOU KNOW YOU'VE ACHIEVED IT?

These are suggested metrics you can track to assess your progress on this standard.

- Increased engagement and contribution of team members through survey,

polls or meetings.

- % of staff members self-reporting improved knowledge and confidence in talking about gender equality, diversity and inclusion with peers
- Increase in employee retention rates
- % staff members reporting that they feel included, valued, a sense of belonging in the team.
- Number of facilitated spaces/gatherings to explore and gender diversity and inclusion within the organisation.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR ESOs CONSIDERING THIS STANDARD

These questions are great starting points to begin thinking about this standard and reflect on where you are on the journey to achieving it.

- Do we have space or channels for members to reflect their thoughts and needs?
- Does the organisation have a culture of listening that creates trust among team members?
- Are there clear channels for team members to safely voice any complaints or concerns?
- What values does the organisation stand for and how do our team members align with these values? Were they involved in the development of them?
- How much priority / time / budget do we put into driving an inclusive culture?
- What are we currently doing that can be considered inclusive? not inclusive? I.e. Are there any unwritten rules about how people should dress / act in the office? Is our workplace conducive to different (gendered) lifestyles? Is any of the language we use gendered? (i.e. fireman/firefighter) Are we empowered to speak out when we see or hear something is not acceptable?
- Do our leaders understand the importance of Diversity & Inclusion for business?
- How often do we talk about gender in the workplace?
- What organisational behaviours are we rewarding? Do we incentivise or give feedback on commitment to gender inclusivity in meetings/activities/etc?
- Is every team member equipped to challenge biases in a productive manner during discussions, programs?

EXAMPLE STRATEGIES

Example strategies that you can consider applying to achieve this standard.

NOTE: If you are just starting out, we suggest beginning with the first 1-3 strategies. These starting points are not prescriptive but rather what we, as a community of practice, believe to be an easy first step for organisations who are new to applying a gender-lens. We encourage you to consider what will work best for your context and explore the toolkit for more strategies and to continue your journey of applying a gender lens.

1. Run a session with your team to **collaboratively define what having an inclusive culture means to you** as an organisation, and how it will allow you to achieve your vision, goals, and objectives.
2. Establish **informal channels for team members to discuss, learn and share** about gender, diversity and inclusion.

3. **Establish a 'culture-maker' of the week** who leads the team meetings and any other cultural activities for the week, giving every team member a chance to drive the culture.
4. **Conduct an internal Diversity, Equity & Inclusion assessment** to understand where the organisation stands and how valued, safe and included team members feel. Consider conducting an assessment like this regularly to monitor this on an ongoing basis. This can be anonymous if the size of the organisation permits. If you have capacity, this can also be a good starting point in order to help you identify where to focus your efforts.
5. **Provide gender equality and inclusivity training and support** for employees such as optional information sessions and lunchtime workshops on sexual and reproductive health (for all sexes and genders), LGBTQ rights and issues, gender-diversity, etc. It can make staff feel more seen and included in their workplace, as well as provide crucial access to information which may be taboo or not easily accessed in some countries and cultures.
6. If your local language allows / if appropriate, have a discussion with your team around identifying their **preferred pronouns** (she/her, he/him, they/them) and/or include it in their email signature. This can be a valuable conversation starter for exploring inclusion.
7. **Add a first screening step to your recruitment process:** if it is common in your country or local context for people to submit job applications and resumes that include their sex, gender, age, marital status, or their picture, then consider having a junior HR or administrative staff member remove all such identifying descriptions to mitigate any ingrained biases for recruitment team members.
8. **Consider how approachable your Human Resources team / staff are.** Are they male? Female? Other? Are they country nationals? Do they speak the local language? Are they approachable? Do staff regularly come to them with problems? When complaints are submitted, are they mostly submitted directly to HR, or anonymously? Are Managers empowered to have honest conversations with their team members, so they can approach HR directly on their team members' behalf if needed?

CASE STUDIES

These are case studies from organisations who have put these strategies into practice.

SHE Investments has used many channels to communicate across teams in decision-making. In particular, they have practiced regular check-in/conversation, impact evaluation, and training opportunities for everyone through various employee engagement surveys. They also include an annual training allowance for the team members and occasionally provide capacity-building programs with external speakers and mentors.

Insitor has agreed in the MOU signed with British International Investment (BII) to use reasonable efforts to affect the aims below:

- a. promote and maintain Gender Balance at the fund manager level
- b. invest with an explicit and intentional gender lens strategy in order to build a minimum of 30% 2X qualifying deals at the portfolio level
- c. support portfolio companies to implement gender smart practices
- d. capture and report performance outcomes
- e. ensure accountability at the partner level and appoint an internal lead for

operationalization.

Insitor aims to fully integrate gender considerations into all stages of the investment process to identify and pursue gender-smart interventions in their investments, increasing the number of women represented and empowered at all levels of the portfolio companies, and supporting their portfolio companies to provide products and services that significantly improve the livelihoods of women across Cambodia, India, and Pakistan.

USEFUL RESOURCES

Here are additional tools we have used to refer to and implement this standard.

[Intentional Inclusion - A roadmap](#)

[GLIA Checklist for Creating an Inclusive Culture](#)

Gender Lens Incubation and Acceleration (GLIA) Toolkit

**Minimum standards for a gender smart
program**

These standards are being developed by a community of practice made up of 6 South East Asia based entrepreneurship support organisations, with the support of ygap and the Sasakawa Peace Foundation.

What does it mean to be 'gender smart'?

The GLIA Community of Practice, a group of 6 intermediaries in Southeast Asia that is highly experienced in gender lens application, defines a gender smart entrepreneurship support program as the following:

A gender smart incubation or acceleration program is one that explicitly aims to advance gender equity through its design and implementation. It provides support that ensures entrepreneurs of all genders have equal opportunities to build successful, sustainable ventures and that those ventures consider their own impact on gender.

What are the minimum standards?

The GLIA minimum standards have been separated into two focuses: **organisations** and **programs**. We recognise that the criteria for applying a gender lens within our teams can look very different from applying a gender lens to the services we provide to entrepreneurs.

This document suggests 4 minimum standards that entrepreneur support organisations (ESOs) should aim to meet before the programs that they run with entrepreneurs can be considered 'gender smart'. The standards are as follows:

- Members will ensure that there is equal representation of all genders across participants, facilitators, mentors and any other individuals involved.
- Members will ensure that their program design and curriculum is accessible to and meets the needs of all genders.
- Members will support entrepreneurs to understand how they can apply a gender lens to their venture operations as well as their product/service development.
- Members will consider gender in their impact measurement processes, including data collection, analysis and presentation, and use insights to improve their operations and programs.

STANDARD ONE – EQUAL REPRESENTATION

Members will work to ensure that there is equal representation of all genders across participants, facilitators, mentors and any other individuals involved

STANDARD

Members will ensure that there is equal representation of all genders across participants, facilitators, mentors and any other individuals involved.

If running a women-only program, members will ensure there is diversity amongst the cohort of entrepreneurs, as well as mentors and facilitators (e.g. urban versus rural, ability levels, etc.).

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE TO ACHIEVE THIS STANDARD?

These are the specific outcomes involved in achieving this standard.

- Your cohort of entrepreneurs as well as mentors and facilitators are representative of the gender makeup of your local context. For women-only programs, it is representative of the diversity of your local context.

WHY IS THIS STANDARD IMPORTANT?

What impact will achieving this standard have for your organisation?

- In order for us to support the development of solutions to systemic problems, we need the diversity of the world's population represented in the entrepreneurs building the businesses and solutions of tomorrow, as well as the stakeholders who support them. That diversity decreases bias, increases innovation and has positive social and economic impacts.

HOW DO YOU KNOW YOU'VE ACHIEVED IT?

These are suggested metrics you can track to assess your progress on this standard.

- Number (#) of female role models highlighted in communication materials
- Number (#) of promotion events for women entrepreneurs
- Application form tested for gender bias
- Application process & communication reviewed for gender inclusion
- Types of outreach partners engaged

- Gender split of attendees at pre-application events
- Gender split of shortlisted applicants
- Gender split of selection panel
- Selection profile and criteria tested and adapted for gender equity
- Gender bias training for jury members conducted (Impact Hub)
- Gender split of successful applicants
- To what extent do you feel the recruitment process was accessible and inclusive? (Break down to different stages: program advertisement, application, shortlist, interview, selection) Why?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR ESOs CONSIDERING THIS STANDARD

These questions are great starting points to begin thinking about this standard and reflect on where you are on the journey to achieving it.

- What have the gender splits been for previous programs?
- How representative are your facilitators and mentors of those you are trying to serve? What voices, if any, are missing from the program design and delivery?
- How can we attract and recruit a more diverse group of participants?
- How can we attract and recruit a more diverse group of mentors and facilitators?

EXAMPLE STRATEGIES

Example strategies that you can consider applying to achieve this standard.

- If you are struggling to get diversity in your cohorts, **review your entrepreneur recruitment processes** including the channels you use to reach entrepreneurs, the language and collateral used as part of your marketing materials, and your application form in order to make it more accessible.
- If you are getting diversity in your applicant pool, but not in your cohorts, **review your selection processes** including your selection criteria to ensure it does not favour one gender over another ([GLIA Toolkit Framework 6: selection criteria for entrepreneurs](#)), and your interview questions and processes (e.g. diversity in the interviewers) to ensure it provides an equal opportunity for all genders to access and perform ([GLIA Toolkit Framework 8: Reviewing interview questions and processes](#))
- Have a **gender diverse pool of mentors and facilitators**
 - Ensure there is diversity in the people who are delivering your program content. E.g. if you have women entrepreneurs, ensure there are strong women facilitators who can not only deliver technical content, but also understand where the entrepreneur is coming from. This creates role models for the participants but also levels out power dynamics and provides a more comfortable environment e.g. a facilitator who is a mother advising a participant who is also a mother may be more effective than a single male facilitator advising a young mother.
 - Have support facilitators to help with language or other areas where additional technical support may be needed. Language plays a really

critical role in not only privileging some genders but in creating negative power dynamics if not properly adapted to the context. Ensure language used is not sexist or biased.

- If you're finding it challenging to recruit women mentors in male-dominated fields, you could try partnering with other incubators and accelerators in other regions, and perform a mentor exchange.

CASE STUDIES

These are case studies from organisations who have put these strategies into practice.

SHE Investments offers opportunities for diverse and inclusive participants including women from all religions, minority group, disabled people) to join every program. They promote the information through the tool of application posters and article design.

Insitor prioritizes investees who are women entrepreneurs or who comply with at least one of the 2X Challenge criteria. Insitor includes this topic in the early discussions with the investees to explore potential improvements or the creation of a gender lens company management and continue the improvements with our current and future investees.

STANDARD TWO – PROGRAM DESIGN

Members will ensure that their program design and curriculum is accessible to and meets the needs of all genders

STANDARD

Members will ensure that their program design and curriculum is accessible to and meets the needs of all genders.

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE TO ACHIEVE THIS STANDARD?

- Your program location and logistics are accessible by all genders, allowing all entrepreneurs to fully engage and participate in your program.
- Your curriculum content is powerful and enabling for all participants regardless of gender.
- Your programs are delivered in a safe and accepting environment where all genders feel comfortable to participate, learn and share.

WHY IS THIS STANDARD IMPORTANT?

- To ensure that all entrepreneurs are gaining as much value as possible from your program.
- To ensure that the design and delivery of your program does not contribute to or worsen gender inequality, [which accelerator programs have been found to do](#).

HOW DO YOU KNOW YOU'VE ACHIEVED IT?

These are suggested metrics you can track to assess your progress on this standard.

Short term:

- Ratio of women-led vs male-led ventures participating in, and completing the program
- Number (#) of support interventions delivered for women entrepreneurs
- NPS rating of program by gender
- Percentage (%) entrepreneurs who have reported an increase in skills/knowledge by gender

Long Term:

- Venture survival rate, by gender
- Percentage (%) of entrepreneurs reporting increased revenues, by gender

- Average annual revenue post-acceleration, by gender
- Average number of full-time positions created by women vs men entrepreneurs post-acceleration
- Percentage (%) of entrepreneurs raising capital (equity, debt, philanthropic capital) by gender
- Dollar value (4) of investment raised (equity, debt, philanthropic capital) by gender

REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR ESOs CONSIDERING THIS STANDARD

- Does our program location or timing make it easier for entrepreneurs of certain genders to participate? How could we adapt this to be more accessible?
- How do the needs of women and men entrepreneurs differ in our context? Have they had access to the same education, training and mentorship opportunities to date? What gaps are there in knowledge and skills that our program could address? Should we be delivering any additional modules to cater for these gaps?
- Are there gendered barriers which might stop women from attending regular workshops, coaching sessions or other support? (Such as family or cultural expectations or limitations?)
- Does our curriculum use examples, case studies and modules that are **relevant** for the target entrepreneurs?

EXAMPLE STRATEGIES

- Be deliberate about **understanding the competing demands on your entrepreneurs' time in your region that may affect their ability to engage with your program**. You can do this by asking current and future entrepreneurs (e.g. hold events and ask attendees, use surveys, partner with relevant/pipeline organisations and collaborate with them to define needs). Re-design your program, or create alternative programs and structured support, to cater to these needs. For example, if on average, women entrepreneurs are less likely to be able to attend a night time workshop you can try and find a time that works better for everyone.
- **Consider the location of your program, and what could make it more accessible to all entrepreneurs**, regardless of gender. This could involve subsidising transport costs for entrepreneurs if you find that, for example, women entrepreneurs need to travel further to attend your program in person.
- Work with your entrepreneurs to **understand their level of technical ability so you can cater your program content accordingly**. Test different examples to explain concepts, and see what are the ones that resonate with different entrepreneurs, allowing them to apply the content to their enterprises. For example, women entrepreneurs may not have had the same access to opportunities to develop their financial literacy so you may need to adapt your financial modules accordingly.
- Ensure that robust templates and frameworks are available for entrepreneurs to work through at their own pace, and test them with the entrepreneurs to understand whether they are having the desired outcomes. Also, **ensure program content and supporting materials are able to be used by all entrepreneurs** (language and format).

- Have relevant **training for mentors, facilitators and all other content deliverers**, so they understand how they can create a safe environment that is conducive to learning for all entrepreneurs ([GLIA Toolkit Example 6: Awareness training](#))
- Be deliberate about **creating a safe learning environment** where everyone feels comfortable to contribute, and all voices are heard. This may involve asking for permission to call on people during sessions to ensure everyone has a chance to contribute, explicitly calling out power dynamics that exist and/or hosting events at the start of the program so that entrepreneurs can get to know one another and feel more comfortable sharing with each other.
- **If you have women-only cohorts**, consider if or when it might be appropriate to invite men and/or influencing family members to join activities. For example, engaging male relatives or parents from the start of a program, or during workshops that directly affect family-run businesses (such as household and business financial management) may help to improve communication and support for women entrepreneurs navigating gendered constraints to running their business. When engaging male or other relatives in women-only cohorts, make sure to do so only when appropriate, whilst still maintaining a safe space for women to openly discuss gender-related barriers they might face as a closed group.

CASE STUDIES

SHE Investments applies a gender lens to their program design and curriculum by focussing on having women-only entrepreneur cohorts, which are facilitated by local female facilitators (local to the country, region and as much as possible, local to the province and township), in local language and tailored to local customs and culture.

After identifying that a key barrier facing women entrepreneurs in Cambodia face is a lack of support from family members in running their business, SHE designed their incubator programs to include participants' relatives (particularly influencing family members such as husbands or parents) to join workshops at specific points throughout the program (such as the first workshop, and workshops focused on family and household financial management). This aspect of the program is designed to improve communication within families and support for the female family member running the business, whilst also maintaining a participant-only safe space for the women throughout all other workshops and sessions.

USEFUL RESOURCES

Here are additional tools we have used to refer to and implement this standard.

[Accelerating Women Entrepreneurs: A Handbook for Practitioners](#) (GIZ)
[Strategies to Apply a Gender Lens to Curriculum Content](#) (GLIA Toolkit)
[Example content: Negotiation for Women Founders](#) (ygap)
[Example content: Imposter Syndrome](#) (ygap)

STANDARD THREE – APPLICATION OF GENDER LENS

Members will support entrepreneurs to understand how they can apply a gender lens to their organisational management and product/service development.

STANDARD

Members will support entrepreneurs to understand how they can apply a gender lens to their venture operations as well as their product/service development.

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE TO ACHIEVE THIS STANDARD?

- Entrepreneurs that go through your program understand the positive social and business impacts of advancing gender equality through their products and services, and are equipped with tools to do so.
- Your curriculum content encourages entrepreneurs to consider how their work is experienced by all genders and how they can adapt their business model and operations to be more gender inclusive.

WHY IS THIS STANDARD IMPORTANT?

The entrepreneurs you support are in the early stages of building the businesses of tomorrow. As they grow their teams and operations, as well as research and develop their products, they have an opportunity to integrate practices that advance gender equality from day 1. These can enable them to have a large social impact as they scale, as well as generate positive business outcomes.

HOW DO YOU KNOW YOU'VE ACHIEVED IT?

- *Percentage (%) of entrepreneurs who report having an increased understanding of how they can advance gender equality through their operations, products and/or services.*
- *Percentage (%) of ventures tracking objectives and KPIs that promote workplace equity (staff, management, board, supply chain)*
- *Percentage (%) of ventures with gender diverse staff and leadership teams*
- *Percentage (%) of ventures that have done a gender-lens assessment of their business*
- *Percentage (%) of ventures offering products or services that improve the lives of women and girls*
- *Percentage (%) of ventures who have adapted their products/services to embed a gender lens*

- *Percentage (%) of ventures with a gender equality policy*

REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR ESOs CONSIDERING THIS STANDARD

- What are small and tangible ways you could support your entrepreneurs to reflect on how they can advance gender equality through their operations and products?
- Are there specific curriculum modules you could build on, specific mentors or gender lens investors you can engage, educational events you can hold, tools you can develop?

EXAMPLE STRATEGIES

- Run a session with your entrepreneurs to **share with them real life examples of how systems, products and services are often unconsciously designed to benefit one gender over another**. Share with them strategies for how they can adapt their research and product development to understand, empathise with and meet the differing needs of all genders. This can help them increase their reach and improve how they serve their customers. Here is an example of a [“Gender in Products & Services” session](#).
- Review your curriculum content and identify opportunities for you to **add to your existing modules to get your entrepreneurs to reflect on how they can take small tangible steps to advance gender equality through their work**. For example, if you have a module around human capital and building their team, you could add a section around the business case for diversity in recruitment and how to build an inclusive culture from day 1. If you have a session on go to market strategy, you could get the entrepreneurs to reflect on whether their current or future marketing strategies are experienced by different gendered groups. Then work with them to adapt their marketing and promotional material to appeal to a more diverse audience.
- When hosting speaker events and workshops, as well as engaging mentors, **consider how you can engage individuals who champion gender equality through their expert field**. For example, if you are hosting a workshop with investors, you could have a gender lens investor who works with your entrepreneurs to understand how their team, supply chains and products and services could improve the lives of women and girls.
- If more advanced and working on creating and implementing organisational policies, **encourage your entrepreneurs to implement a gender equality policy, and to make sure all other policies take into the needs of all genders**.

CASE STUDIES

Insitor provides training and ongoing support while monitoring the team and investees in terms of gender aspects once their policies are updated.

SHE Investments has run sessions with Solar Green Energy Cambodia, a women-owned business that focuses on renewable energy sources. This has included 1:1 mentoring and group workshops on their internal policies. First, they started by asking everyone “what does gender equality mean to SOGE?”. Then they reviewed

their internal policies to ensure that their commitment to gender equality was consistent, with inputs from the entire team.

USEFUL RESOURCES

Here are additional tools we have used to refer to and implement this standard.

[Example Content: Gender in Products & Services](#) (ygap)

[Report: The Role of Entrepreneurship in Closing Gender Gaps in Myanmar](#) (EME, SPF, SHE)

STANDARD FOUR – IMPACT MEASUREMENT

Members will consider gender in their impact measurement processes, including data collection, analysis and presentation.

STANDARD

Members will consider gender in their impact measurement processes, including data collection, analysis and presentation, and use insights to improve their operations and programs.

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE TO ACHIEVE THIS STANDARD?

- You have an accurate understanding of how different genders experience your program.
- Your impact measurement framework meaningfully measures the impacts your work has on all genders, and you're able to share those insights with other organisations.
- You have a regular annual review of your impact measurement framework to ensure it remains optimised.

WHY IS THIS STANDARD IMPORTANT?

- To identify gender differences in Acceleration and new opportunities to close the gender gap in entrepreneurship.
- To strengthen the business case for applying a gender lens to Acceleration by gathering additional data points and evidence of the positive impact gender lens strategies have on closing the gender gap.
- To advocate for more organisations to take a gender lens approach to acceleration or to make the case for policy-makers to adopt new policies that improve the business environment for entrepreneurs of all genders.

HOW DO YOU KNOW YOU'VE ACHIEVED IT?

- # of gender indicators
- # of indicators disaggregated by gender
- % of data collected, analysed and synthesised used to improve program recruitment, design and delivery
- # of communication pieces shared internally and externally with insights on advancing gender equality

REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR ESOs CONSIDERING THIS STANDARD

- How do we currently evaluate whether our program is equally valuable to all genders?
- When we put strategies in place to increase access to or inclusion of our program for women entrepreneurs, how do we know whether they're working or not?
- How often do we review our impact measurement framework, and when we do, do we consider gender?
- Are our data collection methods accessible for diverse entrepreneurs?

EXAMPLE STRATEGIES

- **Disaggregate all relevant data by gender.** To do this, you will need to ask people what gender they identify with. Sometimes, depending on the sensitivity of the data requested, you can share an anonymous survey that still asks for gender (if group size is large enough and allows for this). Do note that in some local languages, there may not be language for specific genders, so you may need to consult a local expert organisation on the best way to proceed.
- When conducting interviews and focus groups, **consider the gender of the facilitator or interviewer.** Participants may feel more inclined to be honest and open when engaging with someone of the same gender as them.
- When conducting interviews and focus groups, **consider the timing and location and how these might impact people of different genders.** For example, provide time slots outside of childcare hours, and be considerate that this will likely need to be scheduled well in advance in case childcare or other responsibilities will need to be rescheduled to accommodate for this.

CASE STUDIES

Insitor makes sure to collect all the relevant data in terms of gender aspect to analyse the evolution of the situation since our initiatives and include the 2X challenge criteria because it is a part of the company monitoring policy.

USEFUL RESOURCES

Here are additional tools we have used to refer to and implement this standard.

[Impact Measurement Principles for Entrepreneurship Support \(IMPES\): Practice data collection methods that are accessible for diverse entrepreneurs](#)

[More than Numbers: A guide to DEI in data collection](#)

[The Washington Group: Disability & Data Collection Tools](#)

[ACUMEN: Understanding Gender Impact](#)

[Value for Women: Gender Inclusion Self Assessment Tool](#)