

# GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACHES IN AGRICULTURE

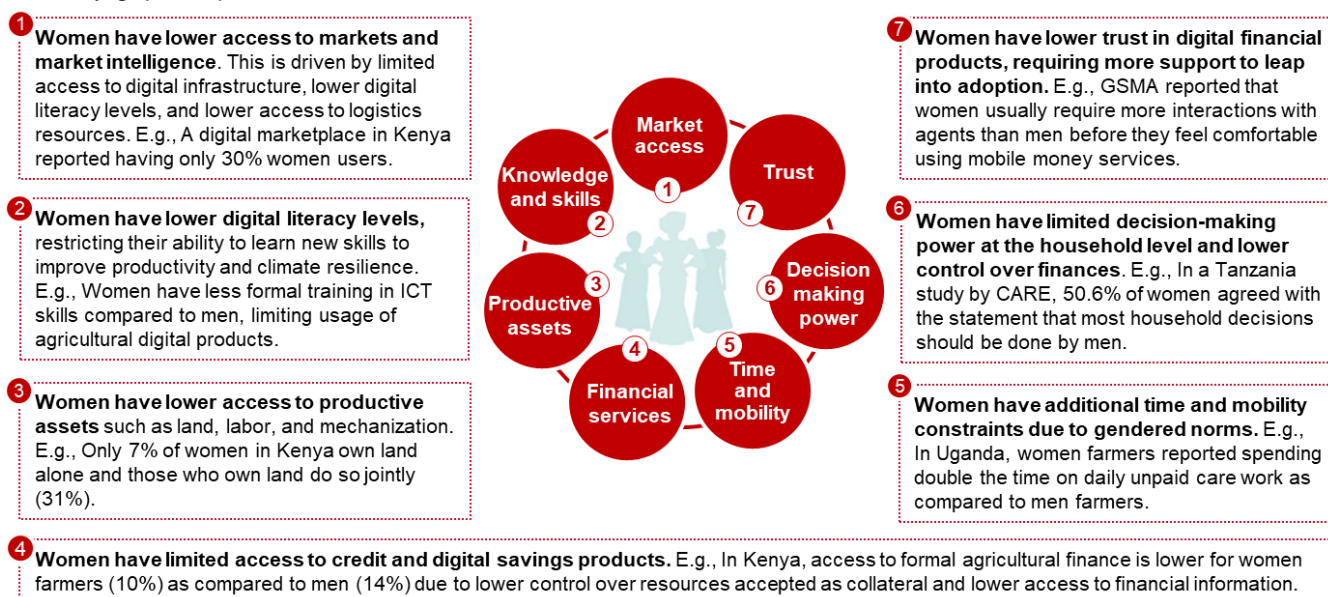
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This case study was created by Mercy Corps AgriFin and Dalberg to highlight the key barriers driving the gender gap in agriculture and aims to provide best practice recommendations organizations with interventions to support women farmers.<sup>1</sup>

## WHAT ARE THE DRIVERS OF THE GENDER GAP IN AGRICULTURE?

**Agriculture is an opportunity to create employment and improve incomes in Sub-Saharan Africa.** Agriculture is estimated to be worth USD 1 trillion by 2030, showing over 200% growth from 2010. The growth provides an opportunity to increase jobs for farmers and entrepreneurs across agricultural value chains.<sup>2</sup>

**However, the sector faces several challenges that disproportionately affect women resulting in a gender gap in agriculture.** While women make up over 50% of the agricultural labor force in Sub-Saharan Africa, they face a 20-30% productivity gap compared to men.<sup>3</sup>



Each of these barriers manifest in agricultural and AgTech in different ways and although not exhaustive, the points below highlight examples of the types of impact of these barriers:

- 1. Market Access:** Women are unable to use digital and conventional markets to sell their products, resulting in gender disparity in income levels within the agriculture sector
- 2. Knowledge and Skills:** Women have lower levels of digital literacy which precluded them from the use of digital agricultural solutions that can improve their farming practices and yields
- 3. Productive assets:** Women have less access to productive assets, e.g. land and equipment due to social norms or lower incomes that prohibit access to finance for equipment limiting productivity
- 4. Financial services:** Women are less likely to access formal financial services and digital saving products, that can enable purchase of inputs, expanding production and transport to markets
- 5. Time and mobility:** Women have less time for using digital services, including e-learning as well limitations to get to market or agrovet
- 6. Decision making power:** Low participation rates of women in decision making determines their agency and control of agricultural and financial decisions including use of digital agricultural products
- 7. Trust in digital:** Women farmers tend to have lower trust in digital financial products which, without attentive onboarding approaches, limits their uptake of agriculture digital products, limiting increases in production

**The climate crisis will exacerbate the barriers. For instance, climate variability affects the availability of surface water.** Women end up covering greater distances to fetch water, which amplifies restrictive norms for

<sup>1</sup> The information in the infographics come from the study conducted by AgriFin and BMGF

<sup>2</sup> Growing Africa – Unlocking the Potential of Agribusiness, World Bank, 2013

<sup>3</sup> Dalberg Analysis, 2020

women farmers. This increases their engagement in unpaid household duties, in which women farmers already spend double the time daily compared to men farmers.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, many agriculture practices to combat the effects of climate change require relatively high time and labor investment. Both are resources that most women farmers do not have.

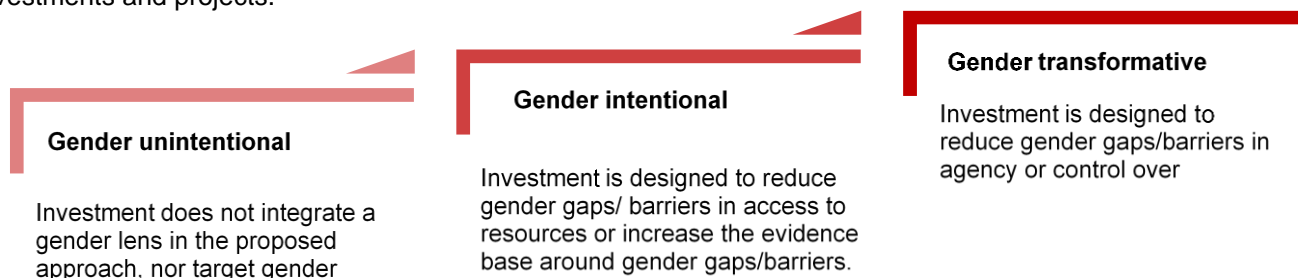
**Closing the gender gap could increase yields and food security and have broader socioeconomic benefits.** Evidence shows that women’s empowerment has the potential to close yield gaps between men and women. As a result, total agricultural output in developing countries could rise by 2.5%-4%, to feed an additional 100-150 million people.<sup>5</sup>

**To close the gender gap in agriculture, transformative approaches are needed.** Digital solutions have the potential to be part of the transformative approaches that improve the incomes of women farmers. However, if the implementation is unintentional, their potential to address the gender gap in agriculture is limited.

## HOW CAN ORGANIZATIONS BECOME GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE?

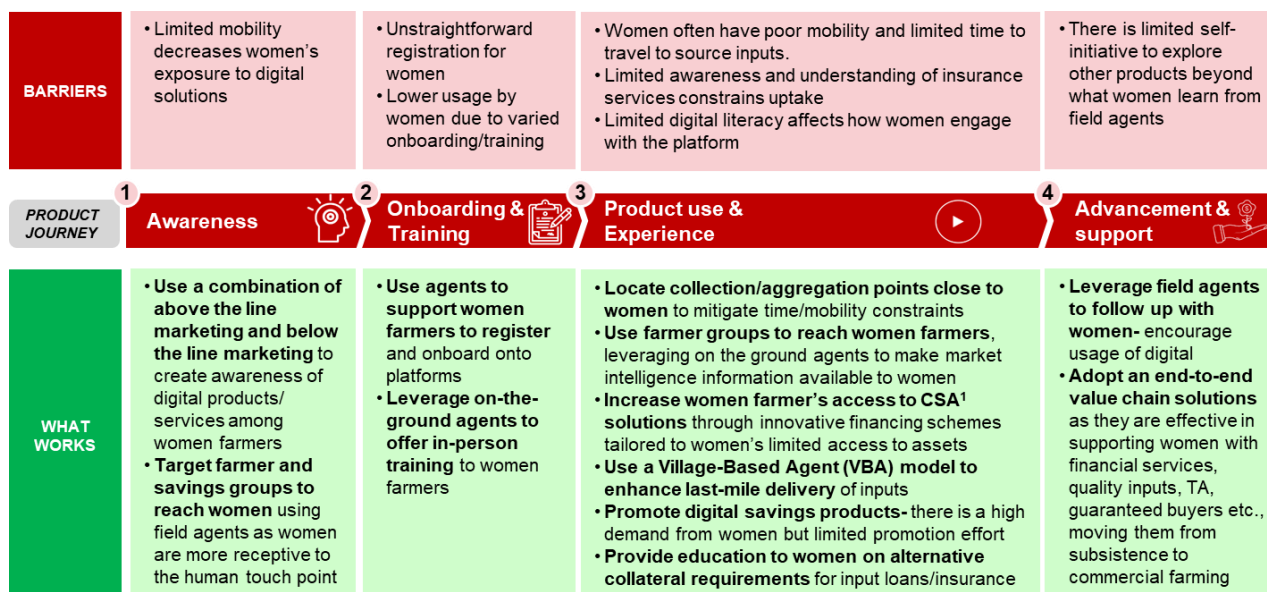
**Gender transformative approaches are interventions that create opportunities to challenge gender norms, promote the influence of women in communities, and address unequal power relations between men and women.** By incorporating transformative approaches in agriculture programs, organizations tackle root causes of gender inequality and create sustainable impact which helps close the gender gap.

Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation’s gender toolbox highlights three stages of transformation. The stages are determined by the extent an organization pays particular attention to how gender differences and relations are relevant for its investments and projects.



## WHAT ARE THE BEST PRACTICES FOR SUPPORT FOR WOMEN FARMERS?

**Emerging digital innovations are offering solutions to challenges facing women.** However, gender-specific barriers constrain meaningful use of digital innovations for women farmers. To effectively support women farmers, the customer journey needs to be tailored. The graphic below captures some of the high-level barriers across the customer journey and some of the solutions organizations have implemented that will support women to overcome the barriers.

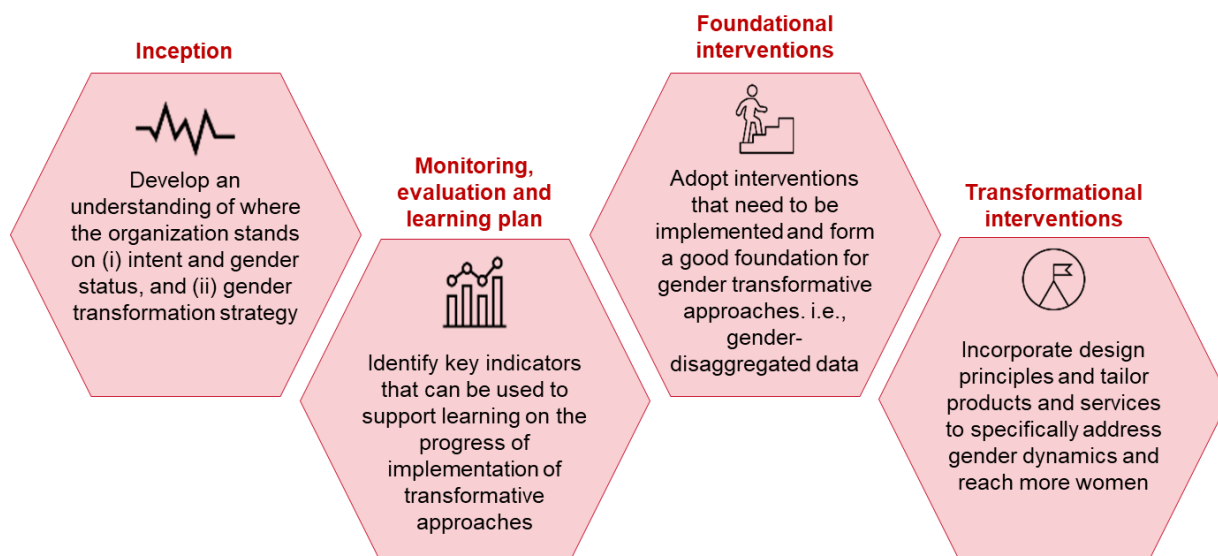


<sup>4</sup> Employment, work and time use in agricultural contexts: what data do we need for gender analysis?, FAO, 2018

<sup>5</sup> Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture: Evidence from Rural Farmer Households in Western Kenya, Diiro et al., 2018

# WHAT CAN ORGANIZATIONS DO TO BE GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE?

In the process of developing gender transformative approaches, organizations should consider the four steps linked to best practices.



The first three steps are interventions that require relatively low resource investment and apply across organizations in different innovation areas. They are adaptations that can be taken by organizations to move from unintentional and intentional to transformative. They build the foundation for organizations to introduce long-term interventions with the potential to address identified constraints affecting women farmers.

## 1. Inception

An organization should develop an awareness of its gender lens status through an analysis of its programs and organizational culture. This step enables the organization to then realign its processes to its gender strategy aspirations.

## 2. Monitoring, evaluation and learning plan

This step involves either developing a customized gender strategy or adapting an existing one to fit organizational needs and aspirations. It entails deliberately introducing gender lens mainstreaming (including setting measurable relevant gender KPIs) to an organization's activities, programs, and internal culture.

Indicators can be developed in consultation with gender experts and relevant stakeholders including women farmers. Examples of relevant gender KPIs include the number of women who note they control personal decisions related to finances/income, the yield of women farmers, and female membership in agricultural cooperatives and farmer associations.

## 3. Foundation interventions

The quick wins can easily be implemented to kickstart the process of reaching gender targets. Quick wins include:

- Identifying a gender focal point to act as a point of contact on implementing the gender strategy
- Including women in product design
- Adopting channels for product/service awareness and onboarding that account for women's challenges
- Reviewing requirements to enable access for women
- Collecting, analyzing, and applying gender-disaggregated data to inform decision making across the product use journey

## 4. Transformational interventions

These are specific to products, services, and channels across areas of innovation, and draw from the specific best practices identified.

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To find out more, visit our website at [mercycorpsagrifin.org](http://mercycorpsagrifin.org) to download the full case study.