

Toolkit for GENDER LENS INVESTING

A Case Study on
SAMRIDH Blended Finance Facility

Developed by IPE Global Limited

In partnership
with

D&A
Desai & Associates

NA



Table of Contents

Foreword by the Mission Director, USAID/India	4
Message from the Managing Director, IPE Global	5
Acknowledgements	6
List of Contributors	7
About SAMRIDH	8
Preface	10
List of Acronyms	11
Executive Summary	12
Introduction	20
Section 1: Overview of Gender Lens Investing and Application to the SAMRIDH Facility	22
Section 2: Challenges Faced by Women Entrepreneurs	28
Section 3: SAMRIDH’s GLI Strategy	32
Section 3.1. Devise Differential Considerations GLI- Qualifying Enterprises	34
Section 3.2. The Gender Lens Investing Scoring Framework	35
Section 3.3. Four Stage Life-cycle Framework	41
Section 4: GLI Toolkit	42
Step 1 – Pre-Application: Sourcing and Deal Origination	44
Step 2 – Application Stage	46
Step 3 – Selection Process	48
Step 4 – Post Investment and Monitoring and Assessment	50
Way Forward	54
Appendix A: List of Figures, Tables & Boxes	56
Appendix B: Consultations	57
Appendix C: List of Survey Respondents	58
Appendix D: GLI Toolkit Resources	59
About Desai & Associates and Nikore Associates	60
Endnotes	61

Foreword by the Mission Director, USAID/India

In 2020, at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), along with its partners, harnessed the expertise of the private sector to improve healthcare services in India. Collaborating with IPE Global and key government, academia, and private sector stakeholders, USAID initiated the Sustainable Access to Markets and Resources for Innovative Delivery of Healthcare (SAMRIDH), a blended finance facility. This facility combined public, philanthropic, and commercial resources to drive more significant investments towards market-driven solutions aimed at enhancing healthcare services for vulnerable communities.

In our commitment to advancing scalable and high-impact healthcare solutions, USAID recognizes the pivotal significance of gender sensitivity and inclusion across all facets of building sustainable health systems. The distinct capabilities of women, combined with their influential roles in families and communities, have the potential to drive transformative change rooted in equity.

A powerful means to unleash the potential of women involves fortifying opportunities for them to expand their businesses and encouraging increased engagement in entrepreneurship. This is especially critical in developing nations, where women own one-third of small businesses. This strategy has the potential to initiate a positive cycle, fostering greater participation and empowerment among the female workforce. Supporting women in business not only contributes to their individual growth but also creates a virtuous cycle. Women-led enterprises are more likely to hire and mentor other women, giving them equal opportunities to shape their lives and make meaningful contributions to society. Further, organizations with gender-diverse boards and senior management not only embody this change but also witness higher returns on equity, superior share performance, and double the revenue per dollar invested compared to their male-led counterparts.

Developed by the SAMRIDH facility, this toolkit sets forth an ambitious goal: to establish a gold standard for Gender Lens Investing (GLI) across India, especially within the healthcare domain.

Designed to cater to a broad audience, this toolkit aims to educate not only the team at the SAMRIDH facility, its current partners, and health enterprises but also seeks to inspire other socially driven investment bodies across India within the social investing ecosystem to establish their individual GLI frameworks. The comprehensive guide, equipped with actionable tools, provides insights into challenges confronted by women-led enterprises and offers pragmatic recommendations. It enables investors to apply a gender lens to their processes and ensures that their investments comprehensively cater to women entrepreneurs and women-led organizations.

In partnership with the spirited team at SAMRIDH and the insights provided in this toolkit, USAID remains steadfast in its mission to work in collaboration with the Government of India, the private sector, and the larger civil society. Together, we envision a future where gender inclusivity becomes a cornerstone, strengthening the accessibility and quality of healthcare services in India.

I extend my gratitude to all stakeholders who have been instrumental in conceptualizing this toolkit, and I look forward to witnessing the transformative impact it promises to bring.

Veena Reddy,
Mission Director,
USAID, India

Message from the Managing Director, IPE Global

I am delighted to announce the launch of the Gender Lens Investing (GLI) Toolkit, a pivotal outcome developed under the USAID-supported SAMRIDH Blended Finance Facility. This toolkit is a testament to our commitment to fostering inclusive economic growth and empowering women entrepreneurs within India's burgeoning health sector. IPE Global has consistently demonstrated an inclusive organizational culture that extends beyond its workforce to the diverse development projects it manages. This commitment contributes to a more profound and impactful societal transformation. As we navigate the complexities of sustainable development, it is imperative to recognize women's pivotal role, particularly in entrepreneurship and healthcare. Recent data from India show that women constitute approximately 14% of the total entrepreneurial base in the country, significantly contributing to economic progress. However, women entrepreneurs face multifaceted challenges despite their remarkable contributions, including limited access to finance, markets, and opportunities. Moreover, in India, over 60% of women encounter challenges in accessing basic healthcare services. We can significantly address this gap by prioritizing investments in enterprises catering to women's health needs.

The GLI Toolkit has been designed to address these disparities head-on. By leveraging a gender-sensitive approach, the toolkit offers a comprehensive framework that aligns investment strategies with the specific needs and potentials of women-led health enterprises. Through targeted interventions and informed decision-making, we aim to foster an ecosystem that amplifies the impact of women entrepreneurs in the healthcare sector, benefiting their businesses and the communities they serve.

The toolkit includes tailored strategies based on the experience of the SAMRIDH Blended Finance Facility, emphasizing the importance of women-led/founded enterprises and enterprises with women-focused solutions.

By embracing a gender lens in our investment approach, we not only foster economic resilience but also promote social equity and inclusivity. Empowering women entrepreneurs in the health sector is not merely a strategic imperative but a moral responsibility that aligns with our vision for a more prosperous and equitable society.

IPE Global is proud to launch this toolkit, which will have a far-reaching impact on the investment ecosystem. I urge all stakeholders, investors, and partners to utilize this toolkit as a guiding compass in our collective journey towards a more inclusive and thriving health ecosystem in India.

Ashwajit Singh
Founder & Managing Director
IPE Global

Acknowledgements

In recent years, the financial landscape has witnessed a growing acknowledgment of the significance of gender diversity in investments. The broader ecosystem is now increasingly understanding the role of gender inclusion as a catalyst for boosting the country’s economic growth. Addressing this imperative, the Gender Lens Investment (GLI) Toolkit serves as a pragmatic guide for financial institutions and investors. It aims to empower them to proactively enhance gender diversity in their investments, ensuring that they positively impact women consumers, entrepreneurs, and healthcare innovators.

The genesis of this toolkit originated from the collaboration between the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and IPE Global during their work on the USAID-supported SAMRIDH Blended Finance Facility. The concept emerged from the analysis of funded entities, recognizing the imperative to deliberately include women-led/founded entities and those with women-focused solutions within the scope of the blended finance facility.

IPE Global partnered with Nikore Associates and Desai & Associates to leverage their combined in-depth knowledge of the investor ecosystem as well as gender dynamics. We sincerely thank the teams of both organizations in developing this toolkit.

We would like to thank our advisors Dr. Neeta Rao, Senior Health Lead, USAID/India; Mr. Ashwajit Singh, Founder & Managing Director, IPE Global & Mr. Himanshu Sikka, Project Director-PAHAL & Chief Strategy and Diversification Officer for their valuable insights and guidance.

We acknowledge the rich contribution of Mr. Achin Biyani, Associate Vice President & Lead Fund Mobilization and Ms. Ritika Pandey, Associate Vice President & Lead – Project Implementation & Program Management. Their guidance and feedback have been indispensable in shaping this toolkit.

The toolkit was enriched by insights from the social enterprises funded under the SAMRIDH Healthcare Blended Finance Facility, industry leaders, and experts. Their dedication to amplify gender diversity within high-impact health solutions and fostering the growth of women entrepreneurs and healthcare innovators is commendable.

Lastly, our deepest gratitude goes to the entrepreneurs, investors, ecosystem contributors, and representatives from incubators and accelerators. Their willingness to share their expertise, challenges, and insights has been instrumental in developing the four-stage recommended strategy and the comprehensive gender lens investment framework presented in this toolkit.

We would like to acknowledge the contributions from SAMRIDH’s Technical Support Unit at IPE Global. We want to extend special thanks to Mr. Aniket Chaudhary, Sr. Manager; Ms. Deepti Tripathi, Sr. Manager & Ms. Ishita Dhar, Analyst for their support.

Lastly, to every individual and organization mentioned and those behind the scenes, we thank you for your commitment to a more inclusive investment ecosystem.

List of Contributors

List of Authors

Name	Designation	Organization
Ritika Pandey	Associate VP, Lead Implementation	IPE Global Limited
Achin BN Biyani	Associate VP	IPE Global Limited
Kartikeya Desai	Founder & CEO	Desai & Associates
Mitali Nikore	Founder	Nikore Associates
Aayushi Chaurasia	Manager – Social Finance	Desai & Associates
Mehak Bhargava	Senior Associate	Desai & Associates
Geetika Malhotra	Research Manager	Nikore Associates

Research Assistants

Name	Designation	Organization
Mannat Sharma	Research Manager	Nikore Associates
Sukriti Anand	Research Assistant	Nikore Associates

List of Advisors

Name	Designation	Organization
Dr. Neeta Rao	Senior Health Lead	USAID
Himanshu Sikka	Project Director, SAMRIDH	IPE Global Limited
Ashwajit Singh	Founder & Managing Director	IPE Global Limited

About SAMRIDH

SAMRIDH (**Sustainable Access to Markets and Resources for Innovative Delivery of Healthcare**), supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and implemented by IPE Global, works in technical collaboration with Atal Innovation Mission (AIM), Women Entrepreneurship Platform, NITI Aayog, Principal Scientific Advisor to the Government of India, National Health Authority, Indian Institute of Technology Delhi, The Rockefeller Foundation, Axis Bank, IndusInd Bank, HDFC Bank, Caspian Debt, and NATHEALTH.

SAMRIDH combines commercial capital with public and philanthropic funds to mitigate barriers to private investment in market-based health solutions that can improve access to affordable and quality health services for the vulnerable population. This initiative has mobilized a capital pool of USD 300 million to offer grant and debt financing provisions to healthcare enterprises and innovators, to augment the production and supply of high impact health solutions with a focus towards healthcare system strengthening. SAMRIDH, under the newly launched Recoverable Grants, has created a reserve of funds to lend/ grant to the recipients to build sustainability of interventions and help create credit history to support social enterprises, making them more investment-ready for the future. Over a given period, the funded entity is expected to repay the original sum that restocks the fund. This approach results in a fund that is used repeatedly and replenished with repayments, allowing it to continue providing financial support to a specific set of activities or projects until it gets depleted while achieving the intended social outcomes. This is complemented by a strong technical assistance and business advisory component to enable enterprises to make process and product improvements, navigate policy regimes and build sustainability strategies for a long-term impact.

SAMRIDH has been recognized among ‘India’s top 50 COVID-19 last mile responders’ by the World Economic Forum. SAMRIDH was awarded the P3 Impact Award 2022, led by the Office of Global Partnerships in the U.S. Department of State, Concordia, and the University of Virginia Darden School of Business Institute for Business in Society. SAMRIDH became one of the founding members of the G7’s Triple I (Impact Investing Initiative) for Global Health, which aims to promote global health investment. The initiative is led by the Government of Japan and was launched at an event held on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly in September 2023.

100+

Partnerships with Public, Private and Philanthropic partners

82+

Health Solutions Supported and Counting

10-12x

Leverage Achieved on Philanthropic Funding

27,000+

Medical Staff, Nurses, Community Health Workers Trained

4200+

Health Facilities Reached

43 Million+

People Reached



Preface

In an era that beckons for inclusivity and equality, gender lens investing stands at the forefront of transformational change in the financial landscape. It is with immense pleasure and pride that we present this **‘Toolkit for Gender Lens Investing – A Case Study on the SAMRIDH Blended Finance Facility’**, a comprehensive and practical guide designed to empower investors on their journey towards enhancing gender diversity in the enterprises that they support.

The genesis of this toolkit emerged from a collective commitment of SAMRIDH, Desai & Associates, and Nikore Associates, aimed at promoting gender inclusivity in investments, particularly in women-led and focused enterprises. It offers guidance on implementing and measuring gender lens investing across the investment lifecycle.

In this toolkit, investors will find concrete recommendations and actionable strategies for enhancing gender inclusivity in enterprises supported by them. Furthermore, the toolkit also presents the case study of the SAMRIDH Blended Finance Facility, an inspiring example of implementing gender lens investing strategies in the Indian context. Through their journey, we witness the transformational power of embracing gender-inclusive investment strategies, laying the groundwork for others to follow suit.

We express our deep gratitude to all those who have contributed their expertise, insights, and support in the creation of this toolkit. Their unwavering dedication and passion have truly made a difference in shaping this resource.

In presenting this Gender Lens Investing Toolkit, we aspire for its influence to extend beyond traditional financial spheres, impacting investment strategies and significantly enhancing the lives of women globally. We trust that this resource will inspire a transformative and unified approach in the investment community.

We invite you to delve into the pages of this toolkit and embark on a journey that holds the potential to contribute to a more inclusive and equitable investment landscape.

List of Acronyms

C-CAMP	Centre for Cellular and Molecular Platforms
DEI	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
DFI	Development Finance Institution
FLFPR	Female Labor Force Participation Rate
FSG	Foundation Strategy Group
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GLI	Gender Lens Investing
GLI-QEs	Gender Lens Investing Qualifying Enterprises
IFC	International Finance Corporation
IIT	Indian Institute of Technology
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MSME	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
NITI Aayog	National Institution for Transforming India, Government of India
NSDC	National Skill Development Corporation
PAHAL	Partnerships for Affordable Healthcare Access and Longevity
PLFS	Periodic Labor Force Survey
SAMRIDH	Sustainable Access to Markets and Resources for Innovative Delivery of Healthcare
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WEF	World Economic Forum

Executive Summary



"Early-stage women led startups tend to be less funded than early-stage men led startups. In 2021, only 0.3% of India's venture capital funding went to women-led startups. There is a lower availability of capital for women entrepreneurs."

– Richie Chourasia & Neha Sundaran, Co-Founders, Just Be Mama
(A start-up focusing on maternal health)

Defining Gender Lens Investing

Gender Lens Investing (GLI) refers to an investment strategy or method that incorporates gender-related considerations throughout the investment process, with the aim of promoting gender equality and enhancing the quality of investment decisions.

In this toolkit we have considered a broad definition of women-led/focused enterprises. **Enterprises that meet one or more of the following criteria should be identified as women-led/focused enterprises:**

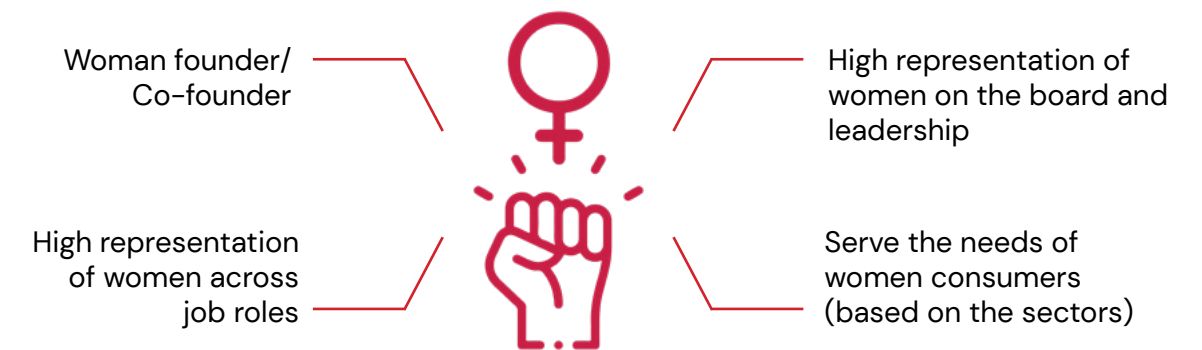


Image 1: Definition of women-led/focused enterprise

The Business Case for Gender Lens Investing

“

"A more diverse workforce, as represented by women across all levels of the organization, is correlated with higher average returns and companies that have taken a holistic approach toward equal representation have outperformed their less diverse peers by 1.2% per year between 2011 and 2022."

– Morgan Stanley

Several global studies¹ have highlighted that a women-led enterprise contributes more than one percentage point to its net margin compared to an otherwise similar firm with no female leaders. According to a study by Veris Wealth Partners, venture backed companies led by women had 12% higher annual revenues, and Fortune 500 companies with 3 or more women directors outperformed those with no women directors by giving a higher return on invested capital (close to 60%).

1. Peterson Institute for International Economics. "Study: Firms with More Women in the C-Suite Are More Profitable." Peterson Institute for International Economics, 2023, www.piie.com.

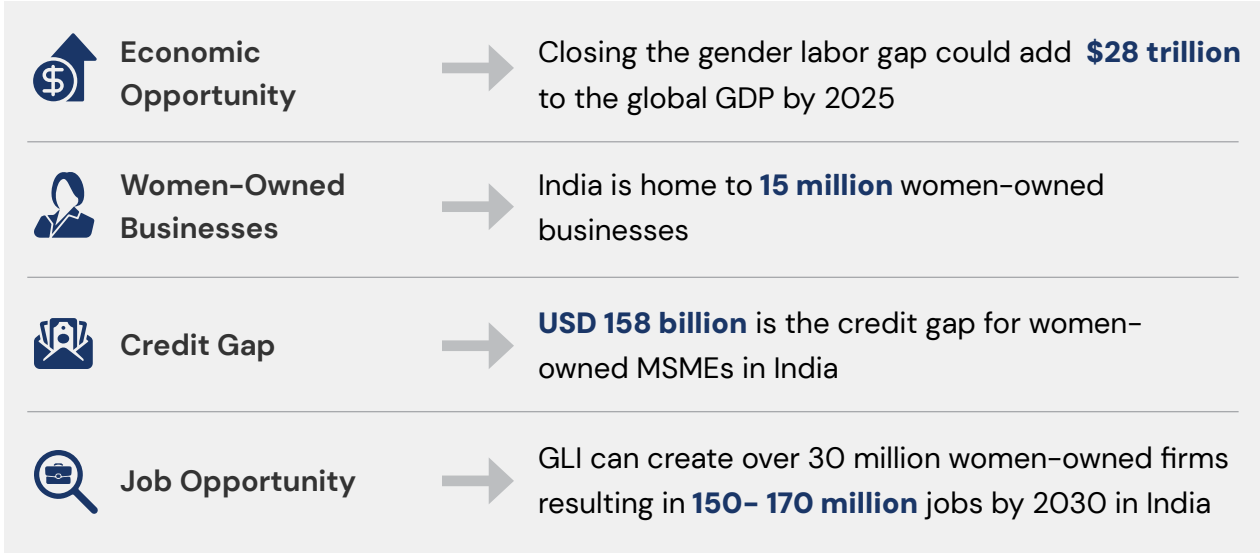


Image 2: The Business Case and Opportunity for GLI (Source: Bain & Company 2019)

The impact case for investing in women entrepreneurs is even more significant. Research shows that women entrepreneurs typically use their increased power and incomes to invest in their families including children’s education, and healthcare.

Despite such positive gains, over 90% of women entrepreneurs are forced to rely on informal sources of financing. The image below outlines the challenges women entrepreneurs encounter during the investment life cycle, including limited funding awareness, complex application processes, gender bias during selection, and insufficient post-investment implementation support and resources.

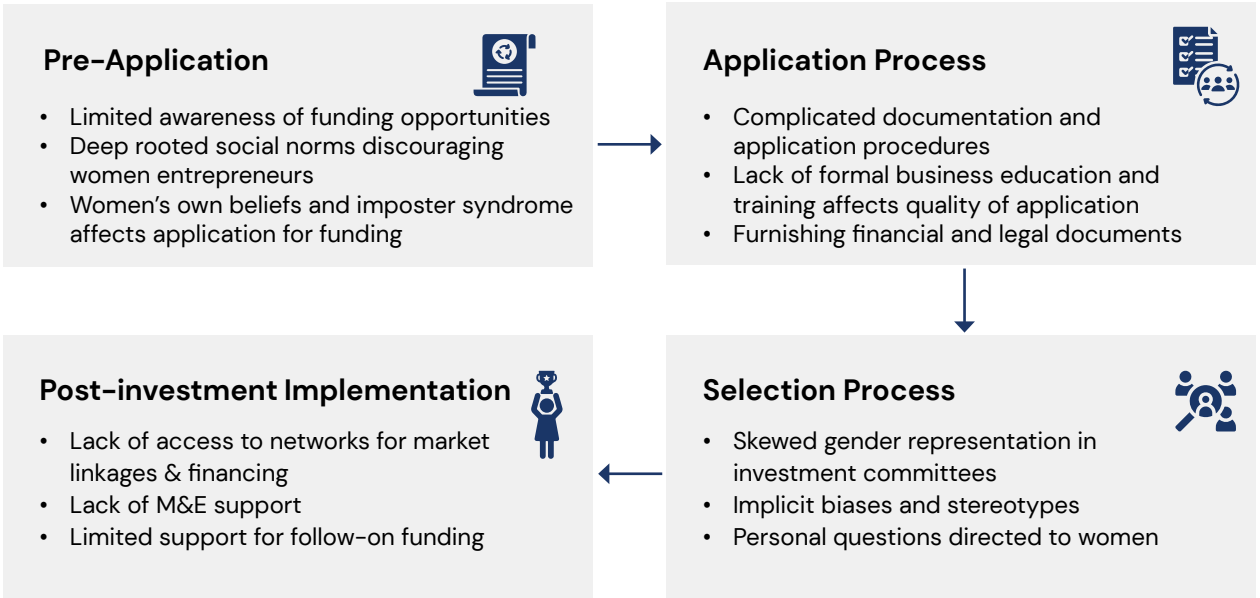


Image 3: Challenges faced by women entrepreneurs at each stage of investment life-cycle

GLI Study Methodology

SAMRIDH conducted an analysis of the entities it supports and based on the gender lens assessment, recognized the need to develop a toolkit that would be applicable to this facility and also to other institutions in the investment ecosystem. Consequently, the study aimed to develop a set of practical tools that facilitate gender lens investing throughout the investment lifecycle. Additionally, the study devised a mechanism to quantify the GLI performance of social enterprises for decision-making. The findings of this study are being shared with the goal of helping any similar institutional investors interested in adopting a GLI-based approach to measure and drive gender inclusivity in the enterprises that they support and invest in.



Image 4: Methodology for GLI Study on SAMRIDH

The GLI Toolkit – Key Recommendations

The GLI Toolkit contains three major sets of recommendations related to (1) actions that investors can take at each stage of the investment lifecycle, (2) scoring the ‘GLI Performance’ of an enterprise to track the performance of an enterprise, and the other enterprises supported by the investment fund (3) gender composition of the funder to ensure that the teams making investment decisions and supporting enterprises are also inclusive.

The toolkit is crafted to empower investors with a dynamic and practical framework for integrating a gender lens into their investment strategy and life-cycle – from origination to post-investment implementation support. By leveraging both qualitative and quantitative tools, this toolkit is geared towards enabling investors to take measures that foster gender inclusion within their investments. Additionally, it ensures that investments are not only financially sound but also align with and cater to the specific needs of women consumers. The GLI Toolkit provides the following recommendations to increase gender inclusivity among the social enterprises supported by investment fund.

1. Investment Life Cycle

The first set of recommendations in the GLI Toolkit focus on improving gender inclusivity across the four stages of the investment life cycle. The following is the summary of the recommendations to implement a gender inclusive investment life-cycle.

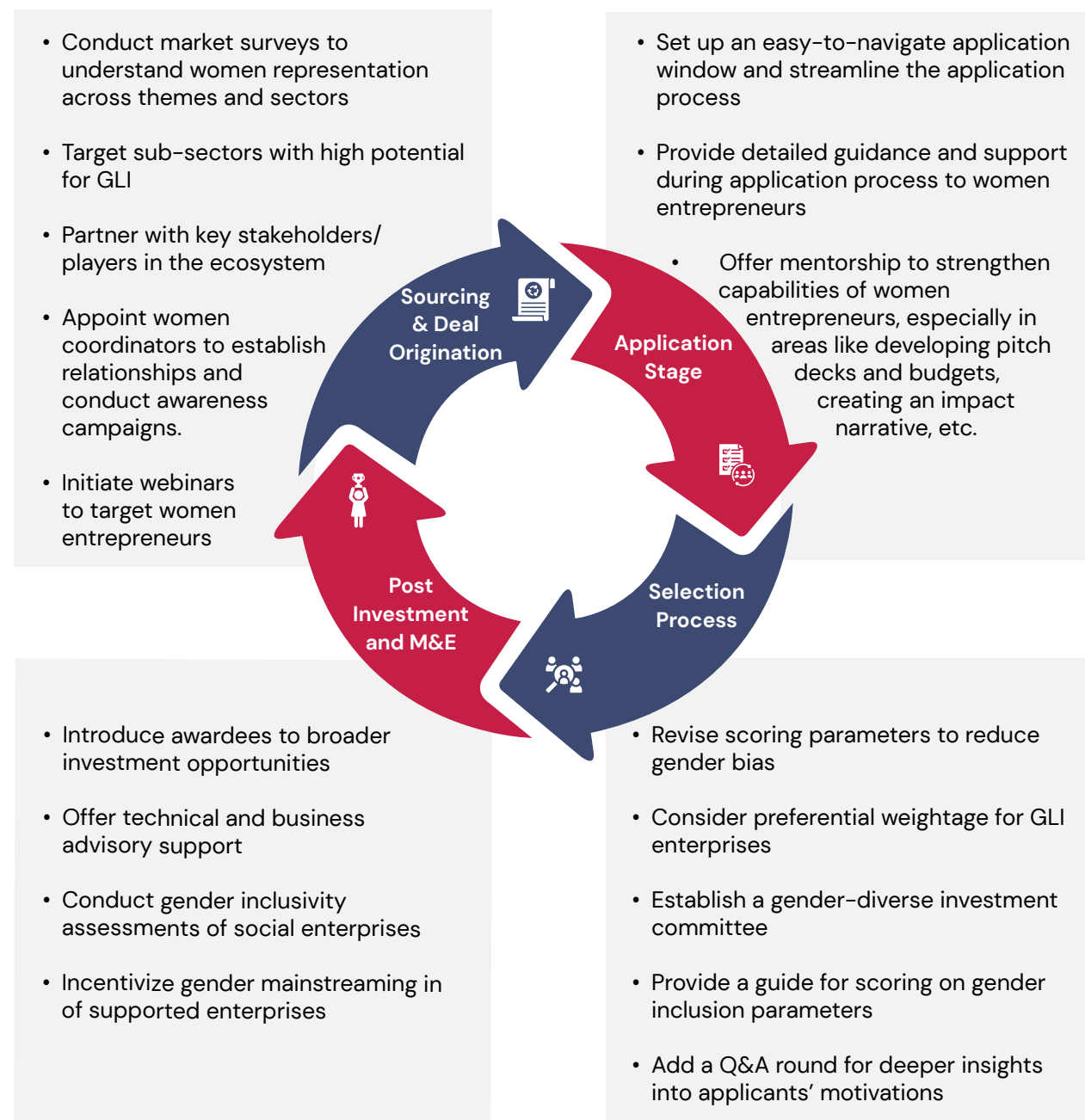


Image 5: Recommendations to enhance gender inclusivity across all stages of the investment life-cycle

2. GLI Scoring Framework

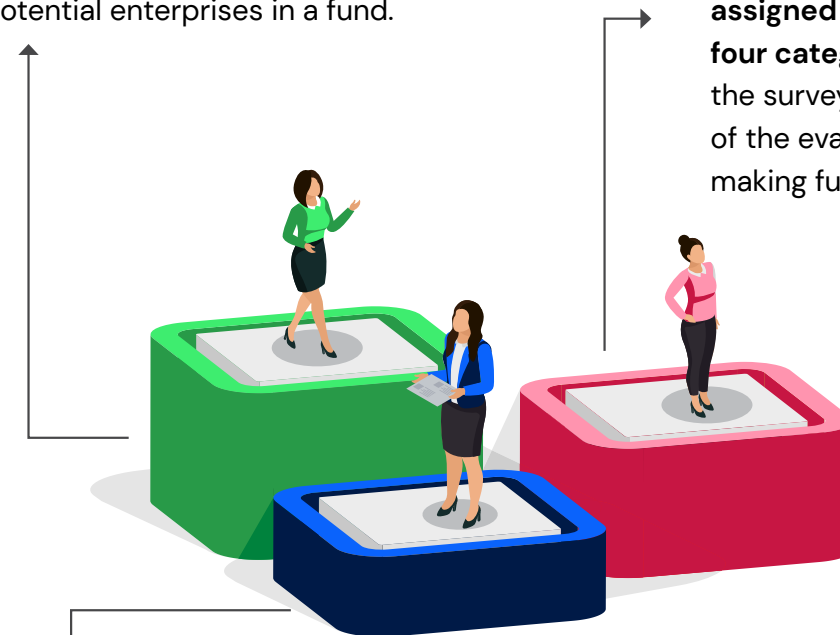
The GLI Scoring Framework is the second major recommendation in the GLI Toolkit. It includes a set of tools developed as a part of the study that can help investors assess the gender inclusivity of an individual enterprise and across all their investments in other enterprises:

Gender Inclusivity Survey

Assess the gender inclusivity performance of an enterprise with a series of simple questions across the four key categories: **ownership and board, team composition, DEI initiatives, and women consumers**. The survey can be administered to both existing and potential enterprises in a fund.

GLI Enterprise Scoring Matrix

Assess an enterprise's performance through **GLI score based on points and weights assigned to each of the four categories** and questions in the survey. This score can be part of the evaluation criteria when making funding decisions.



Gender Inclusivity Index

Understand the overall gender inclusion performance of the supported enterprises and to compare relative performance (i.e., Ideal, Good, Average & Poor performers on GLI) of different enterprises. Moreover, craft improvements across the four categories by devising focused action plans and follow-ups through robust implementation. These scores can be included as a part of performance matrix to devise results-based financing or other innovative financing solutions.

Below is a summary of the GLI Scoring Framework as developed for SAMRIDH. An investor can customize the weights given to the 4 categories based on their preferences and accordingly develop the gender inclusivity index of their investments that would enable them to assess the relative performance of their social enterprises.

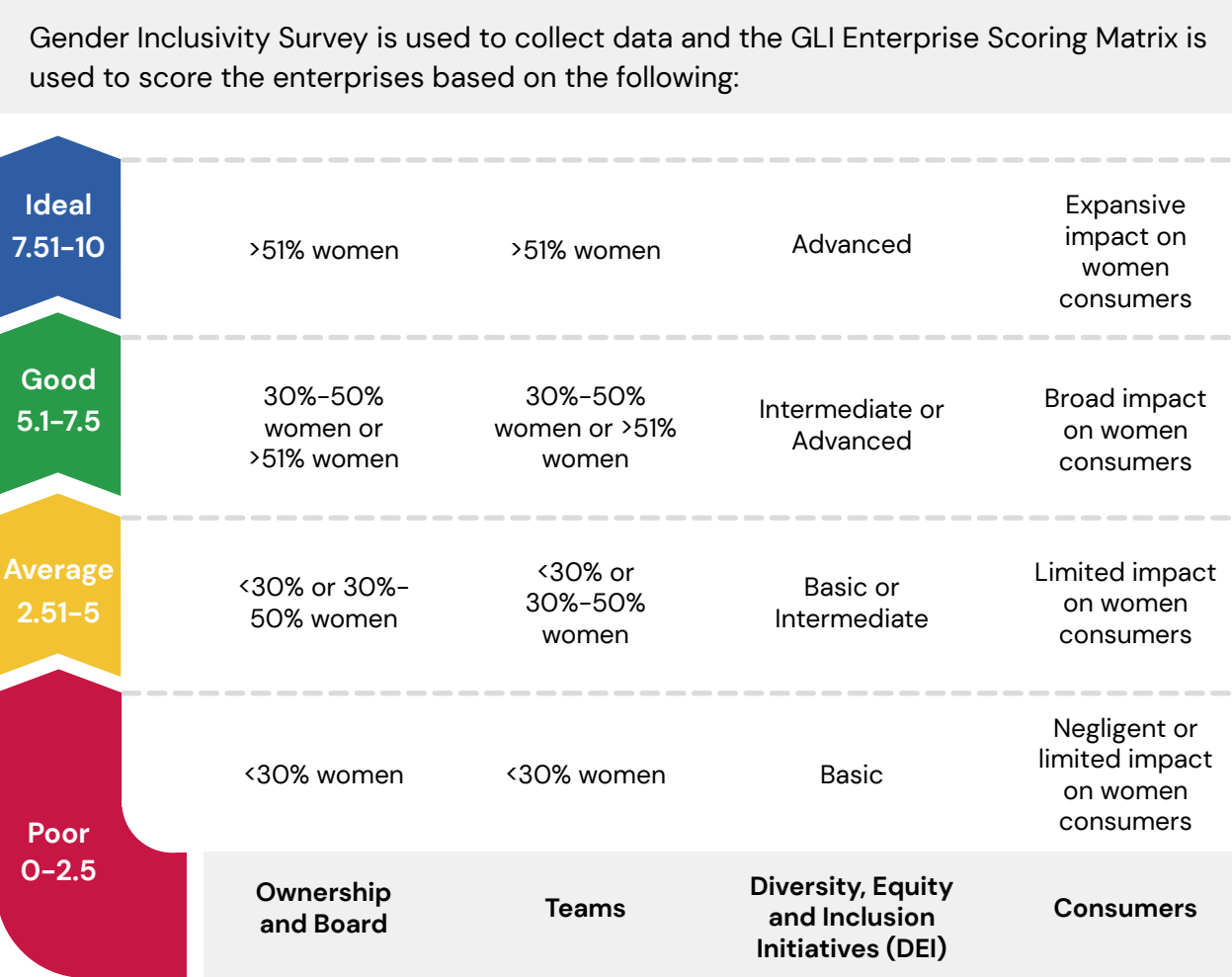


Image 6: Gender Lens Investing scoring framework

Once the GLI scores have been assigned, the relative performance of social enterprises can be measured by creating the Gender Inclusivity Index. The Index reflects the gender inclusion performance of social enterprises across 4 categories – Poor, Average, Good and Ideal.



3. Gender Composition of Funder

The third and equally critical aspect of instituting an effective gender lens strategy for an institutional investor and enabling better decision-making is ensuring gender balance across its own team at all fund levels. Fostering a diverse and inclusive team not only enhances the effectiveness of a gender lens strategy but also brings a range of perspectives

and insights crucial for navigating the complexities of diverse markets and industries. This contributes to the fund’s long-term success and impact. GLI should be considered to involve all stakeholders, both internal to the firm/fund, and external partners.

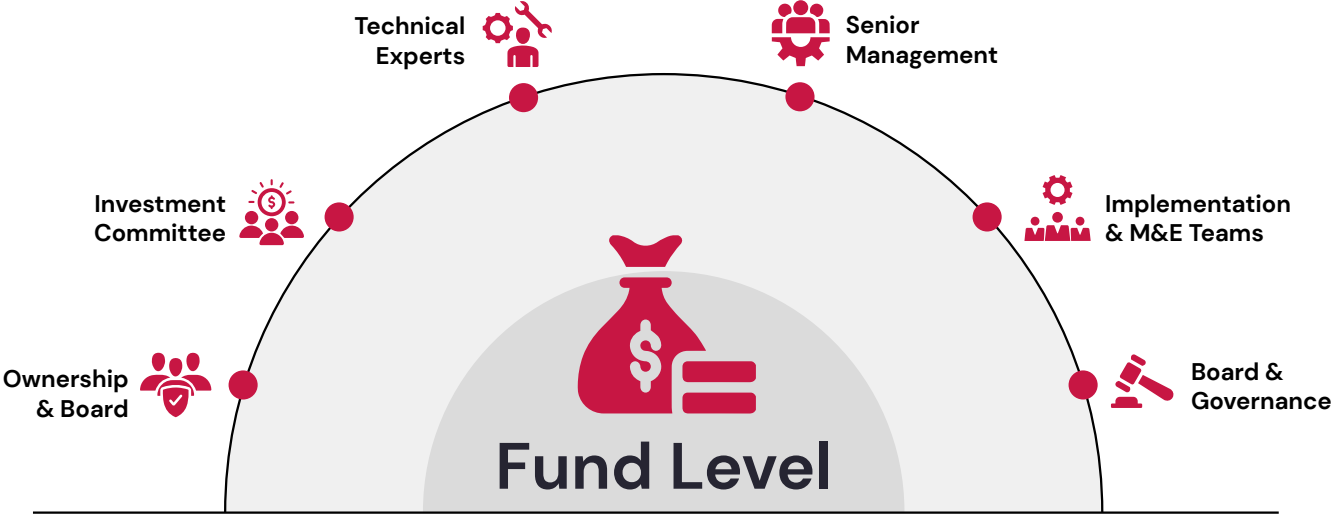


Image 7: Gender composition at the fund level

The SAMRIDH Case Study

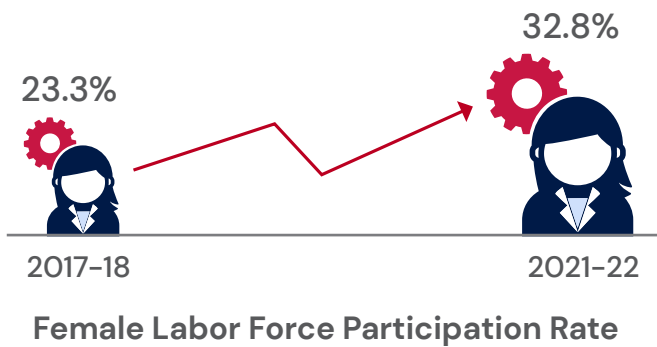
SAMRIDH’s established GLI strategy is comprehensive, spanning the full investment life-cycle, and is backed by a robust gender composition in its management, governance and stakeholder teams. SAMRIDH has a healthy gender composition (with 50% representation of women) across its senior management and implementation team and has ensured that gender inclusive practices and initiatives are being implemented across all its teams. Further, SAMRIDH has made efforts to ensure engagement with external partners that exhibit a healthy representation of women.

Partnerships have been established with women’s networks such as **NITI Aayog’s Women’s Entrepreneurship Program (WEP), We Hub – Government of Telangana, and IndusWE platform (initiative by IndusInd bank)** to support more women-led social enterprises. So far, SAMRIDH has supported 70+ social enterprises and has made conscious efforts to score all the enterprises on GLI to identify and provide relevant support. Moreover, SAMRIDH’s advisory team also provides customized solutions at different stages to its cohort of women-led social enterprises.

This has also resulted in positive gender-inclusive outcomes in the social enterprises that they support, several of which have performed well on the GLI Scoring Matrix based on their practices across Ownership and Board, Team, DEI Initiatives, and Consumer segments.

Introduction

India is a global bright spot of economic growth, political stability, and innovation. Post COVID-19, India's growth has rebounded to 7.2% in 2022-23, the second highest among G20 countries and close to two times the average for emerging market economies. Despite these advancements, India's female labor force participation rate (FLFPR) lags among emerging economies.



After reaching its peak in 2017-18 at 23.3%, the FLFPR has increased to 32.8% in 2021-22. However, most working women continue to be in low-productivity, low-wage professions. Only about 20% of India's micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) are owned by women and face a credit gap of about USD 158 billion. Addressing these structural gender equality challenges in labor markets requires systemic action.

“There are a number of stereotypes against women and couple-entrepreneurs, such as ‘she’s probably working under her husband and ‘he’s just trying to make her feel good by including her’.”

– Shivli Shrivastava, Co-founder, Better Space (a startup focusing on mental health)

Currently the **5th largest economy in the world, India** is home to **15 million** women-owned businesses

representing **20% of all enterprises**



which directly employ **22–27 million people²**.

Against this backdrop, it becomes important for financial institutions to provide access to finance to women-led/focused enterprises and spur the growth of such enterprises & the economy. The SAMRIDH Blended Finance Facility set up during the COVID-19

pandemic, undertook this as one of its objectives in addition to pandemic preparedness. Further, SAMRIDH in its effort to finance such enterprises, also focused on ensuring gender sensitivity in its operations – both in terms of investing in women-led businesses and for women to be equal recipients of healthcare services. Driven by this commitment to gender equity, SAMRIDH has developed the “Gender Lens Investing Toolkit” to embed gender-focused practices within its operations and established a benchmark for Gender Lens Investing in India’s healthcare industry for fund managers, investors, donors, etc.

This toolkit is organized as follows

01 An Overview of the Concept of Gender Lens Investment and its Application to the SAMRIDH Facility

02 Challenges Faced by Women Entrepreneurs in India, with Illustrations from the Healthcare Sector

03 Guidance on Formulating a GII Strategy

04 Recommendations to adopt GII using 4 cycle framework

² Bain & Company. “Powering the Economy with Her: Women Entrepreneurship in India.”

01

Overview of Gender Lens Investing and its Application to the SAMRIDH Facility

“Women need to constantly prove their worth.”

– Shivli Shrivastava, Co-founder, Better Space
(A startup focusing on mental health)

Gender Lens Investing – Introduction

Gender Lens Investing (GLI) is a vital value-creation strategy that considers gender an essential factor in the investment decision-making process to create positive social and environmental impact, along with the expected financial return for any business. **The International Finance Corporation (IFC) advocates for “Gender-Smart Investing”, which includes strengthening diversity at the fund level, creating gender-sensitive deal origination and due diligence frameworks, and collecting sex-disaggregated data at every stage.** IFC also emphasizes the importance of gender-smart exits to assess how an exit from an investee company may impact the gender diversity of the investment fund. This involves a thoughtful analysis of potential consequences on the workforce, leadership roles, and overall gender-related dynamics within the investee companies once the exit has been made. Additionally, mainstream commercial banks, such as HSBC and Bank of America, have noted that investing in women-led companies, supporting equal pay, and offering products and services that benefit women is key to supporting women’s equality.

Business Case for Gender Lens Investing

Globally, GLI strategies have proven to deliver significant financial and social returns to investment funds. Companies with gender-diverse boards and senior management deliver higher returns on equity, better shareholder performance, and twice the revenue per dollar invested as male founders, and excess returns running at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of around 3.5 percent. Yet, women still only have 77 percent of the access men do to financial services. Closing this gap is estimated to unlock \$330 billion in global annual revenues. Women contribute to enhance social, economic, and financial outcomes by promoting gender-related services and representations, fostering equity, and creating more inclusive and tailored solutions that address diverse market needs.

The gender credit gap is especially significant in the Indian context. The IFC estimates show a USD 158 billion financing gap for India’s 15 million MSMEs. Women entrepreneurs in India face a plethora of socio-economic barriers, such as low digital literacy, lack of funding opportunities, and gender bias in the

3.5%
CAGR

\$330 billion
Global annual
revenues

\$158 billion
Financing gap
in India

15 Million
MSMEs in India

evaluation process, etc. Therefore, there is a strong business case for gender lens investing strategies and the need to accelerate women’s entrepreneurship. Investors in India can capitalize on this opportunity and generate superior returns for their funds by improving women’s economic inclusion in India through gender-lens investing.

According to the Foundation Strategy Group (FSG) study, impact investors in India believe gender-related outcomes are incidental rather than actively pursued. This leads to a missed opportunity for the impact investors to increase their returns and amplify the positive social impact they can achieve for women.

Many institutions such as impact investors, philanthropies, incubators have launched projects to encourage impact investing in women entrepreneurs. Examples include Wharton’s Project Sage 3.0, which tracks the quantum of equity and debt investments through a gender lens, and the 2x Challenge launched at G7 by Development Finance Institutions (DFIs) to improve women’s access to economic participation.

Defining GLI for the SAMRIDH facility

Defining a GLI-qualifying enterprise is integral to developing a targeted gender lens approach to enhance gender diversity in the enterprises they fund.

Initially, SAMRIDH had a broad view of GLI and considered only women-led/founded enterprises. While implementing a comprehensive GLI strategy, SAMRIDH developed an understanding to expand the definition of GLI-qualifying enterprises (GLI-QE).

Specifically, the approach advocates that enterprises which are led by women, have high representation at decision-making levels and overall team level, have safe and conducive work environments and those primarily benefiting women’s health, can be termed eligible for financing under a comprehensive GLI framework and are termed as “GLI Qualifying Enterprises” (refer to box on the next page).



Box 1:

How do we define an enterprise qualifying the GLI lens under our approach?

Women-Led Organizations

- Woman founder
- Woman co-founder

Women-Managed Organizations

- High representation of women in the company board
- High representation of women in senior leadership (at CEO, CXO levels)



Women-Focused Firms

- Focused 100% on women consumers
- Not focused only on women, but benefitting high proportion of women consumers (>50%)

Women Friendly Organizations

- High representation of women in management (above industry average)
- High representation of women across technical job roles (above industry average)

SAMRIDH’s GLI Journey

SAMRIDH has actively and strategically promoted gender equity through Gender Lens Investing (GLI), both in its healthcare enterprise investments and internally within the SAMRIDH team. To further this aim, SAMRIDH established a GLI strategy, which included examining gender gaps, refining application procedures, and implementing a survey to gauge gender inclusiveness. The result was the development of a GLI Scoring Matrix to assess enterprises, monitor progress and set standards.

With a gender-balanced leadership and ensuring that gender-inclusive practices are a mainstay across all levels of operation, SAMRIDH has built strong alliances with women’s

networks such as NITI Aayog’s Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP), WE Hub – Government of Telangana, and IndusWE platform (an initiative by IndusInd Bank), and Atal Innovation Mission, and other market players to bolster women-led social entrepreneurship.

First, the SAMRIDH team undertook a gender gap analysis of its existing investee organizations and application sourcing, understanding that a key challenge is deal origination from women-led and women-focused enterprises. Based on this analysis, a targeted partnership strategy was developed, focusing on enhancing partnerships with incubators with a high presence of GLI-qualifying enterprises, as well as organizations such as Xynteo and C-CAMP to scout for women-led/focused social enterprises.

Second, the SAMRIDH team undertook a gender audit of its application process and eligibility criteria, with a key finding that the sub-sectors on which they were focused during COVID-19 had a very low representation of women-led enterprises. Hence, the SAMRIDH team prioritized solutions that uniquely cater to women’s needs in addition to satisfying the existing criteria and supporting women entrepreneurs with submitting concrete proposals.

Third, to gauge the present state of women’s representation and the diversity and inclusion practices within their social enterprises, the SAMRIDH team executed a baseline Gender Inclusivity Survey. This initiative also encouraged their health enterprises to embed these practices in their operational activities. Based on this survey, the team prepared a GLI Scoring Matrix to continue to track the progress of social enterprises and benchmark new applicants. This has resulted in more awareness among entrepreneurs and has encouraged them to implement more DEI policies to achieve better scores in future gender inclusivity assessments. SAMRIDH, in addition to providing business-growth related post investment support, also provides assistance in implementing gender-inclusive strategies to the social enterprises supported by them.

Finally, the SAMRIDH team produced this comprehensive GLI toolkit to integrate these principles into their operations and to help set industry standards on GLI in India, both in its healthcare enterprise investments and internally within the team.

Methodology of developing this GLI toolkit

The development of this GLI toolkit entailed a mixed-methods approach involving literature reviews, primary consultations with key stakeholders, and analysis of primary survey data received from social enterprises supported by SAMRIDH.

Extensive primary and secondary research was conducted on the landscape of women entrepreneurship in India, focusing on the healthcare sector. Further, analysis was conducted to discover geographies with high presence of women led healthcare enterprises in India

and the sub sectors they operate in. More than 20 stakeholders were consulted, including women entrepreneurs, investors, ecosystem players, incubators/accelerators, and SAMRIDH social enterprises, to identify the barriers women entrepreneurs face in accessing capital.

This followed the development of a framework including the scoring of enterprises on GLI and a four-stage lifecycle process to equip investment funds to apply an active gender lens. The critical aspects of the methodology are summarized in the figure below.

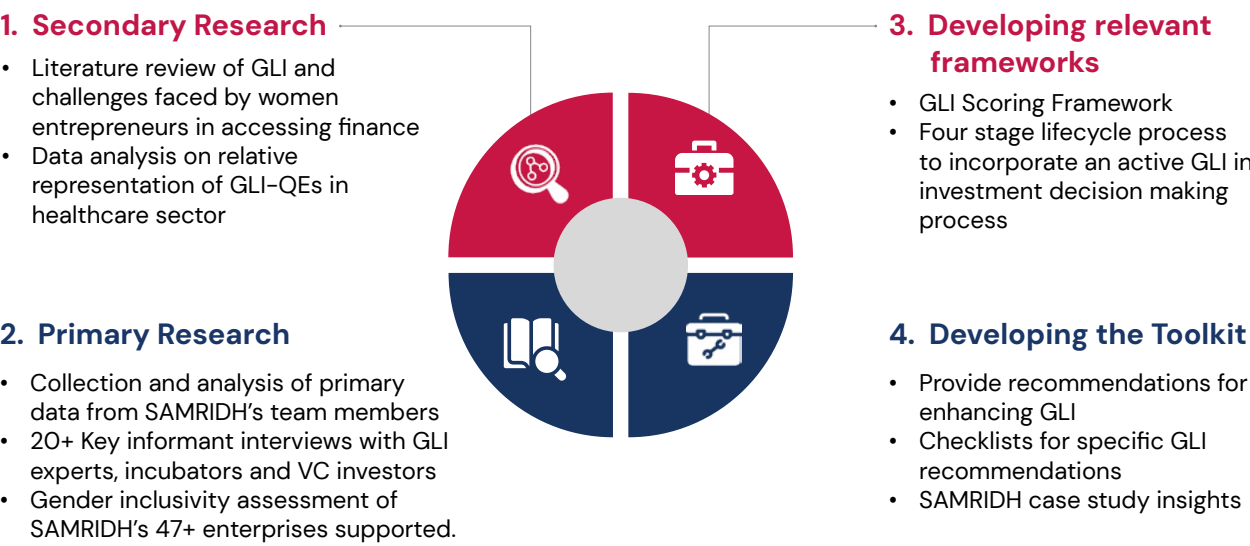


Figure 1: Toolkit Development Methodology

Application of the GLI Toolkit

SAMRIDH has been at the forefront of accelerating Gender Lens Investing (GLI) practices throughout its operations. The SAMRIDH team is keen on crafting a practical roadmap for investors and donors committed to fostering gender sensitivity and supporting the advancement of women entrepreneurs, ensuring that the investments serve the needs of the women consumers.

The GLI toolkit is a practical resource for investors seeking to integrate gender considerations into their investment processes. It draws on SAMRIDH’s experience, specifically a quantitative Gender Inclusivity Survey conducted with 40+ social enterprises. The survey results provide a GLI score, assessing gender inclusivity on parameters such as ownership/management, team structure, policies, and focus on women consumers. The toolkit is designed to be flexible and adaptable, catering to the specific needs of any investment fund. Additionally, it addresses qualitative aspects, including the analysis of challenges faced by women-led enterprises, and provides recommendations throughout the investment lifecycle, from deal origination to post-investment implementation.

02

Challenges Faced by Women Entrepreneurs



“There are many invisible barriers, there is a lot of implicit bias. There is a bias amongst investors that if you are primarily working on women’s health, you are reducing your market to half.”

– Swarnima Bhattacharya, Founder, Thea Care
(A startup focusing on women’s health platform)

Throughout the investment lifecycle, women entrepreneurs face a series of multifaceted challenges. In the pre-application stage, they often grapple with limited access to networks and mentors, leading to a lack of confidence and knowledge of investment processes. During the application phase, they are subjected to more rigorous scrutiny of their business models, understanding of financial aspects and face difficulties aligning with investors’ expectations. The selection stage brings additional hurdles, including implicit gender biases and a lack of representation of women on decision-making panels, resulting in their ventures being undervalued or overlooked. Finally, in the post-investment implementation stage, these entrepreneurs often deal with heightened scrutiny and performance expectations, along with limited ongoing support or mentorship, making it challenging to effectively leverage their investments for business growth and expansion. Each stage presents unique obstacles, leading to a cumulative impact that can significantly impede the success and development of women-led enterprises in the competitive investment landscape.

Addressing these challenges is crucial for fostering a more inclusive and equitable business environment. Investors can help mitigate the hurdles encountered across the investment life cycle by facilitating access to finance and targeted support to women entrepreneurs. While enhancing inclusivity, this endeavor also contributes to the broader goal of harnessing diverse perspectives and talents in the business world, ultimately leading to a richer and more balanced economic landscape.

To better understand challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in accessing finance, the team interviewed key stakeholders such as entrepreneurs, incubators, Venture Capitalists, financiers, and other ecosystem players trying to finance GLI-Qualifying Enterprises (GLI-QEs).

The summary of the challenges women entrepreneurs face across the four-stage life cycle is described it on the next page.



Challenges faced by women entrepreneurs across the four-stage life cycle:



Pre-Application Stage

In this stage, the entrepreneur is involved in activities such as network building, strengthening/ refining the business idea, pitch presentation, go-to-market strategy, financial planning and laying the foundation for obtaining external funding.

Limited awareness of funding opportunities:

Gender gaps in digital and financial literacy make women less likely to discover relevant funding opportunities.

Financing of startups:

Women entrepreneurs have limited resources to back additional capital raised from the financial market. Additionally, women face unique challenges in negotiating favorable investment terms.



I was not aware of outreach to funders, particularly about who was investing in industries targeted towards women.

Aruna Chawla, Founder, The Salad (a startup focusing on sexual wellness)

Women’s own beliefs:

Women’s socialization in an unequal society can lead to imposter syndrome. Men apply to jobs when they only meet about 60% of the qualifications, while women tend to apply only if they meet 100%.

Deep-rooted social norms:

Investors often lack confidence in women’s ability to run businesses without male assistance. The perception that women may not have the same level of business acumen as their male counterparts.



Application Stage

Entrepreneurs reach out to potential investors and navigate the application process, which often involves developing collaterals such as legal paperwork, financial documents, and business plans.

Technical Management Support:

Women entrepreneurs lack adequate technical support on critical skills like writing business plans, developing investment materials, practicing investment pitches, and similar tasks.

Lack of Resources:

Resources such as case studies of successful women entrepreneurs, FAQs, well-structured templates for business plans, revenue models, and legal documents are not readily available when applying for funding.



The language used in the application content was too complex, filled with financial and legal jargon, and there was no assistance or space to seek clarification.

~ A woman entrepreneur in the healthcare products and services space

Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Challenges:

Women-focused entrepreneurial support programs and forums are limited. Also, women are inadequately represented in business incubators and accelerators.

Limited Credit History:

Women’s limited access to financial services often leads to inadequate credit history due to limited ownership of assets. This a significant barrier when applications require proof of financial ownership or a robust credit background.



Selection Stage

In this stage, the investment committee evaluates applications from potential investees. Investors conduct detailed due diligence before the committee makes the decision.

Gender disparity in investment committees:

Disproportionate/no representation of women in investment committees may lead to a potential oversight of the actual business potential of women-led ventures.

Implicit biases and stereotypes:

Investors perceive women-led ventures as less profitable or viable. Despite identical content and presentation, they prefer pitches given by men to those by women.



Women are asked different questions such as about marital status and family, while questions about business model and finance are directed to male co-founders.

Ragini Bajaj Choudhary, Director – Investments, Caspian Debt

Increased number of personal questions:

Women entrepreneurs are often asked personal questions about their plans for marriage and childbearing, which can lead to a biased evaluation of the business venture.

Stringent due diligence:

Rigid selection criteria, such as high revenue or profitability thresholds, age and education levels, and a male co-applicant requirement (in some cases), disproportionately affect women entrepreneurs.



Post-Investment Implementation Stage

After the application is selected for investment, investors provide advisory and support on fund utilization, business, and operations, conduct monitoring and evaluation, and prepare for follow-on investments.

Market access:

Accessing newer markets, building a customer base and supplier relationships can be challenging for women in sectors dominated by men.

Lack of networks:

Women face challenges in accessing the same networks that their male counterparts effortlessly navigate, limiting opportunities for market entry.



There seems to be a pattern in the investments made and a set thesis followed by the investors which makes it difficult for women entrepreneurs to navigate the funding process.

– Swarnima Bhattacharya, Founder, Thea Care (a startup focusing on women’s health platform)

Lack of monitoring and feedback:

Lack of support in devising robust monitoring and lack of adequate market feedback can lead to misaligned business strategies.

Lack of support for follow-on funding:

Women entrepreneurs may still face challenges in securing additional capital for market expansion due to funding biases, limiting their scale.



Gender Inclusive Investment Strategy - A SAMRIDH Case Study

“Women founders are considered to hold passion projects. Their businesses are dismissed by investors and male entrepreneurs for being disingenuous and frivolous”
– Richie Chourasia & Neha Sundaran, Co-Founders, Just Be Mama (A start-up focusing on maternal health)

SAMRIDH has been diligently tracking gender diversity of its supported social enterprises, ensuring that inclusivity and equity are at the forefront of its investment approach. The decision to feature SAMRIDH as a case study within the toolkit underscores the practical application of GLI as a strategic, integral component throughout the investment lifecycle. SAMRIDH has integrated gender across the investment process, serving as a tangible link between theoretical frameworks and real-world execution. This approach offers valuable insights that can be disseminated among investors. By showcasing SAMRIDH’s experience, the toolkit highlights the effectiveness of GLI in achieving social impact, encouraging comprehensive adoption of such practices to drive equitable growth and gender parity in the social entrepreneurship ecosystem.

This toolkit advocates for a comprehensive GLI strategy throughout the investment cycle, focusing on two key interlinked levels: social enterprise and fund/facility. The social enterprise level targets entities supported by the investment fund, those nearing application completion, or in post-investment stages. The fund/facility level addresses the overarching investment fund or facility. This method embeds gender-inclusive practices at specific enterprise and broader fund management levels, fostering an inclusive, equitable ecosystem.

This GLI strategy summarized below hinges on three pillars, which have been explained in greater detail in the sections that follow:

- 1. Devise differential strategies for different types of GLI-qualifying enterprises at both social enterprise and fund/facility levels;
- 2. Conduct baseline assessments for current and potential social enterprises using the Gender Inclusivity Survey Tool (Appendix D) and GLI Scoring Matrix;
- 3. Adopt a lifecycle approach and apply gender mainstreaming actions across the four stages of the investment journey.

	Differential strategies for different types of GLI- QEs	Assessment of gender inclusivity	GLI life-cycle approach across four stages of the investment journey
 Social Enterprise Level	Support existing enterprises in improving gender-diversity and fund women-focused enterprises.	Use the Gender Inclusivity Survey to assess social enterprises to further provide guidance and access new investments.	Establish key partnerships that increase pipeline of women applicants, provide co-creation support to strengthen the application
 Fund/ Facility Level	Establish and track ambitious diversity goals and targets. Ensure leaders are responsible and resources are allocated to drive these efforts.	Utilize the Gender Inclusivity Survey tool for internal monitoring and improving DEI policies based on survey results.	Ensure a gender diverse investment committee and conduct gender sensitisation training to reduce bias against women entrepreneurs.

Figure 2: SAMRIDH’s GLI Strategy

Section 3.1. Devise Differential Considerations for Different Types of GLI-Qualifying Enterprises

Table 1 outlines various social enterprise and fund/facility factors. For the investment fund, it proposes specific points to uncover fresh investment prospects and manage the existing supported social enterprises using a gender-smart approach. The table offers strategies for enhancing social enterprises’ practices across diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI).

Types of GLI-QEs	Gender-smart Origination (for new investment opportunities)	Gender-smart Management (of existing investments)	Gender lens and actions to enhance DEI (for existing social enterprises and prospective applicants)
	Fund/Facility level considerations		Social Enterprise level considerations
Invest in companies	Identify and consider..	Support social enterprises to..	Lead DEI actions
Women- led organisations	Enterprises where women are founders, co-founders, or the majority is owned by women	On-board women co-founders/founders. Train existing women staff to take on leadership roles	Consider why women team members are not elevated to co-founder status Examine implicit and structural biases
Women-managed organisations	Enterprises where women have a high representation in the company board/ senior leadership/ management levels	Increase the gender diversity of women in decision-making/ senior leadership/ management levels through external hiring and/or establishing processes for internal elevation	Examine the talent pipeline and review the pool of women candidates (internal & external) for senior leadership Undertake senior leadership trainings for promising women candidates Consider fast track paths for women’s elevation
Women-friendly organisations	Enterprises that have a high representation of women in their workforce or through the supply chain	Increase the gender diversity in the workforce and improve the workplace environment by implementing gender inclusive DEI practices	Establish mechanisms to increase women’s representation in technical / skilled job roles
Women-focussed organisations	Enterprises that provide products and services that are tailored to the needs of women	Expand to women’s market by providing tailored products and services for women Develop strategic partnerships to reach women consumers	Undertake market surveys and brainstorm pivots in current products / services lines Involve women consumers in product development process and establish feedback mechanisms

Table 1: Differential considerations for different types of GLI-QEs

Section 3.2. The Gender Lens Investing Scoring Framework

The project team developed a **Gender Lens Investing Scoring Framework**, offering investors and other stakeholders a method to assess the gender inclusivity of social enterprises accurately. This framework is based on the Gender Inclusivity Survey (a data collection tool), which can be used to create a GLI Enterprise Scoring Matrix and a Gender Inclusivity Index.



Assumption: All the 4 categories have been given equal weightages.*

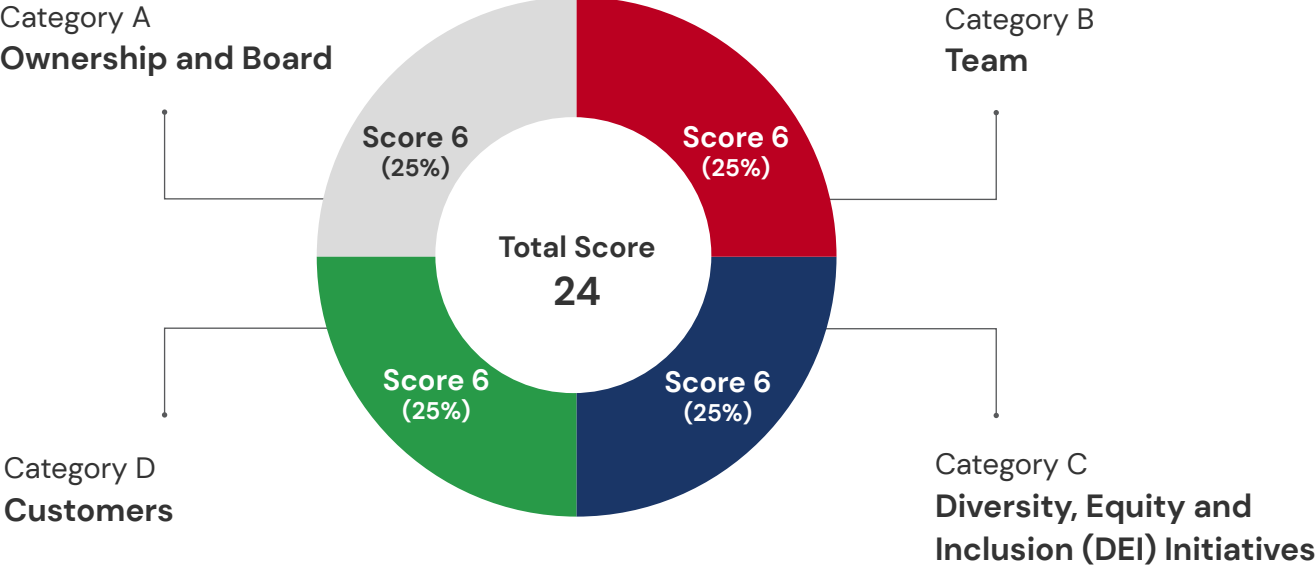


Figure 3: GLI Enterprise Scoring Matrix

The score of 24 represents the combined total of points from all 4 categories. To conduct simpler analysis, the score of 24 was adjusted to bring to score of 10. This was achieved by dividing $24/2.4 = 10$.

**If an investment fund puts more weightage on any particular category (Team, DEI Initiatives) based on its priorities, then the enterprises with high scores in that category will achieve an overall high score.*

Box 2:

SAMRIDH's Application of the GLI Scoring Matrix

The Gender Inclusivity Survey was tailored to SAMRIDH's priorities and then used to conduct a baseline assessment of gender inclusivity among its 47 health enterprises. Based on the data collected from the survey, a tailored GLI Scoring Matrix was used by SAMRIDH to assess the performance of its health enterprises on the four parameters shown in the figure above.

Section 3.2.2 Gender Inclusivity Index

The Gender Inclusivity index is used to synthesize the data collected to understand the overall gender inclusivity performance of the enterprises supported by the investment fund. The scores of these enterprises can be converted into an index to compare their relative performance (i.e., Good, Medium, and Poor performers on GLI) and track the improvement in their scores over time (refer to Table 2). This improvement can be achieved by undertaking specific measures in the four categories articulated in the survey.

Ideal	Enterprise GLI Score 7.51–10
The enterprise is an ideal example of a gender inclusive enterprise. They should continue to improve their gender inclusivity efforts across all categories.	
Scoring Criteria	
>51% women	High impact on women consumers
>51% women	Advanced
Good	Enterprise GLI Score 5.1–7.5
The enterprise with a good score needs improvement in at least 2 areas to reach the 'Ideal' score.	
Scoring Criteria	
30%–50% women or >51% women	Targeted impact on women consumers
0%–50% women or >51% women	Intermediate or Advanced
Average	Enterprise GLI Score 2.51–5
The enterprise with an 'Average' performance needs to improve their gender inclusivity efforts in at least 3 areas.	
Scoring Criteria	
<30% or 30%–50% women	Limited impact on women consumers
<30% women or 30%–50% women	Basic or Intermediate
Poor	Enterprise GLI Score 0–2.5
The enterprise performed poorly on Gender Inclusivity and requires considerable improvement in all 4 areas.	
Scoring Criteria	
<30% women	Negligent or limited impact on women consumers
<30% women	Basic

Table 2: Gender Inclusivity Index of Enterprises Supported

depending on resource availability, the following suggestions can be considered to improve the GLI score

Ownership & Board

- Offer leadership training to existing women employees through leadership development programs
- Leverage external networks to create a pipeline for potential women candidates

Team

- Gender sensitisation training for hiring managers
- Implement a hiring strategy to achieve a more balanced gender representation

Consumers

- Conduct market research to develop products/ services focused on meeting the need of women consumers
- Initiate programs that caters to women consumer

DEI Initiatives

- Implement beyond basic DEI policies (set up ICC, diversity training, maternity leaves, access to separate washrooms etc)
- Actively monitor and improve existing DEI initiatives

Based on the data collected from the survey, a tailored GLI Scoring Matrix was used to assess the performance of SAMRIDH's social enterprises on the four gender inclusivity parameters. Figure 4 shows the index for SAMRIDH's social enterprises based on their gender inclusivity performance, and Box 4 highlights the key analysis from the gender inclusivity survey results of SAMRIDH's 47 social enterprises.

Enterprise GLI Score

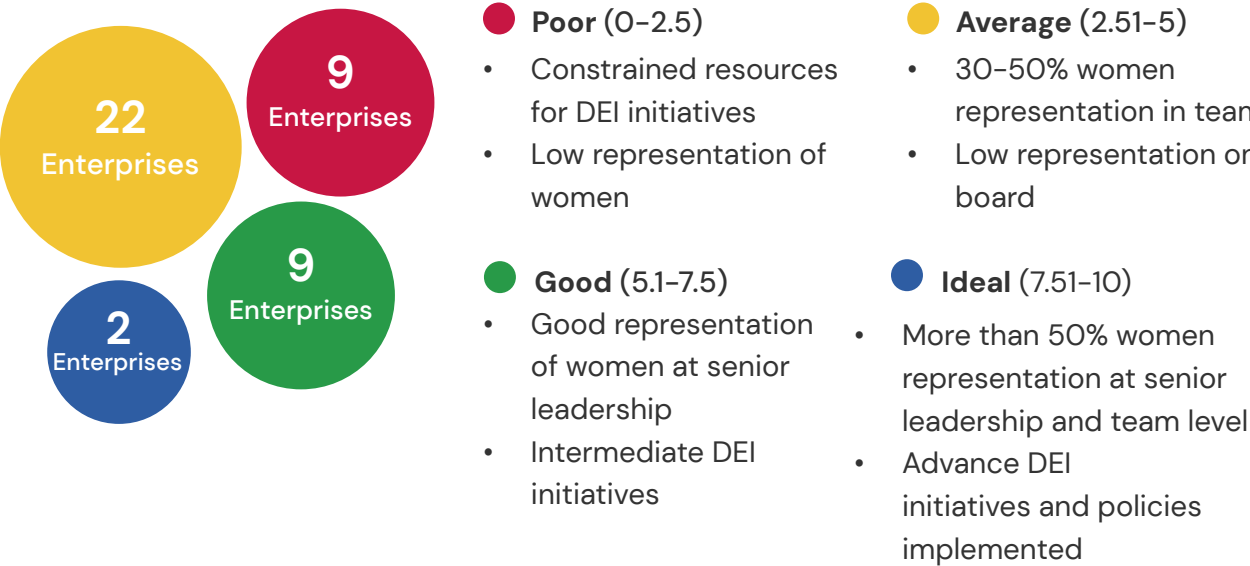


Figure 4: Gender Inclusivity Index of SAMRIDH Social Enterprises

Within this index, two enterprises achieved Ideal GLI scores, signifying women ownership, women representation exceeding 50% across the board, senior leadership, and workforce, along with the enforcement of at least seven DEI policies.

Social enterprises that received 'Good' GLI Scores demonstrated a minimum of 30% female representation within their Board and Senior Leadership Team and were co-founded by women. These enterprises had instituted at least six DEI policies, including those for Gender Pay Equality and Diversity Hiring, and offered products and services with a focus on women as consumers.

Majority of the social enterprises received 'Average' GLI scores. Women did not lead these enterprises and they typically had 30-50% women representation in their workforce. Although the products and services were designed for female consumers, there was a lack of female representation in ownership, board positions, and senior management roles, which was a key factor contributing to the moderate inclusivity ratings.

A few social enterprises were assigned 'Poor' scores, commonly attributed to their early stage or limited team size, resulting in low representation of women in their workforce and

constrained resources for initiating gender inclusivity policies. There was a positive intent among these social enterprises to improve their Gender Lens scores going forward, and SAMRIDH is actively addressing these gaps by offering targeted support and guidance to strengthen these enterprises to enhance their GLI scores.

Box 4:

SAMRIDH's Analysis of the Gender Inclusivity Index

Given below are the key insights of the analysis from the Gender Inclusivity Survey taken by 47 social enterprises supported by SAMRIDH. These insights are based on the 4 GLI Categories – Ownership and Board, Team, Women Consumers, and DEI Initiatives –

30%

of the social enterprises are led by women (women founders/ co-founders).

40%

of the social enterprises have 30% or more board positions held by women

14%

of the social enterprises have more than 50% of women in the senior leadership

70%

of the social enterprises had at least 30% or more women in the team.

64%

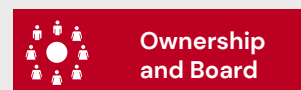
of all social enterprises provide healthcare products and services benefiting women consumers.

42%

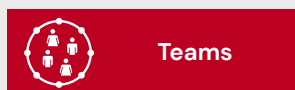
of social enterprises implemented 6 or more gender-inclusive DEI policies.

Commonly implemented DEI policies include maternity leave, setting up an Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) under the Prevention of Sexual Harassment (POSH) Act 2013, and access to clean and separate washrooms. These DEI policies are most prevalent among social enterprises as Indian regulations often mandate them. In some cases, while some enterprises offer period leaves, they often do not extend to gender pay parity and maternity leave. This can be attributed to the limited resources and smaller team sizes of these enterprises. They often prioritize reaching a certain scale before implementing comprehensive DEI policies.

SAMRIDH plans to conduct the survey annually to measure the progress of its social enterprises on gender inclusivity. Figure 5 shows some outstanding social enterprises leading the way for gender inclusivity in different areas of gender perspective.



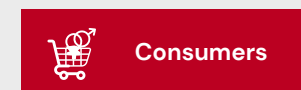
Saral Designs is led by Suhani Mohan, a women entrepreneur, and Kartik Mehta, who wanted to change the menstrual hygiene industry. Their board of directors represents 30% of women, and they serve the needs of women consumers. They provide hygiene products made from automatic pad-making machines called "Swachh."



CDOT Bihar is an inclusive growth organization with a high representation of women in its workforce. It aims to help low-income communities through meaningful health interventions. Their multi purpose e-clinics are managed by 450 women employees in their respective villages.



Stratmed is one of India's largest data-driven healthcare performance improvement companies. It has implemented gender-forward DEI policies, conducting leadership training for women leaders through 'learning circles' and providing them with resources.



Sevamob provides an AI-assisted disease management platform that reduces costs. They are developing an AI technology that provides value specific to women's health interventions to cater to women consumers.

Figure 5: Outstanding Enterprises supported by SAMRIDH

Section 3.2.3 Enhance Gender Composition of the Investor

For any investment fund to implement an effective gender lens strategy, it is imperative that equal representation of women is established across the fund at all levels. According to a BCG report, firms with female partners are twice as likely to invest in companies with a woman on the management team and more than three times as likely to invest in women CEOs. Figure 6 highlights the gender composition of stakeholders at both the fund and enterprise level. Investment funds must ensure that gender inclusivity considerations are also applied to the fund's teams and policies to ensure that gender-inclusive practices are being implemented across all the functions of the investment fund. Investment funds across sectors and industries should be encouraged to enhance their gender composition and implement gender-inclusive practices.

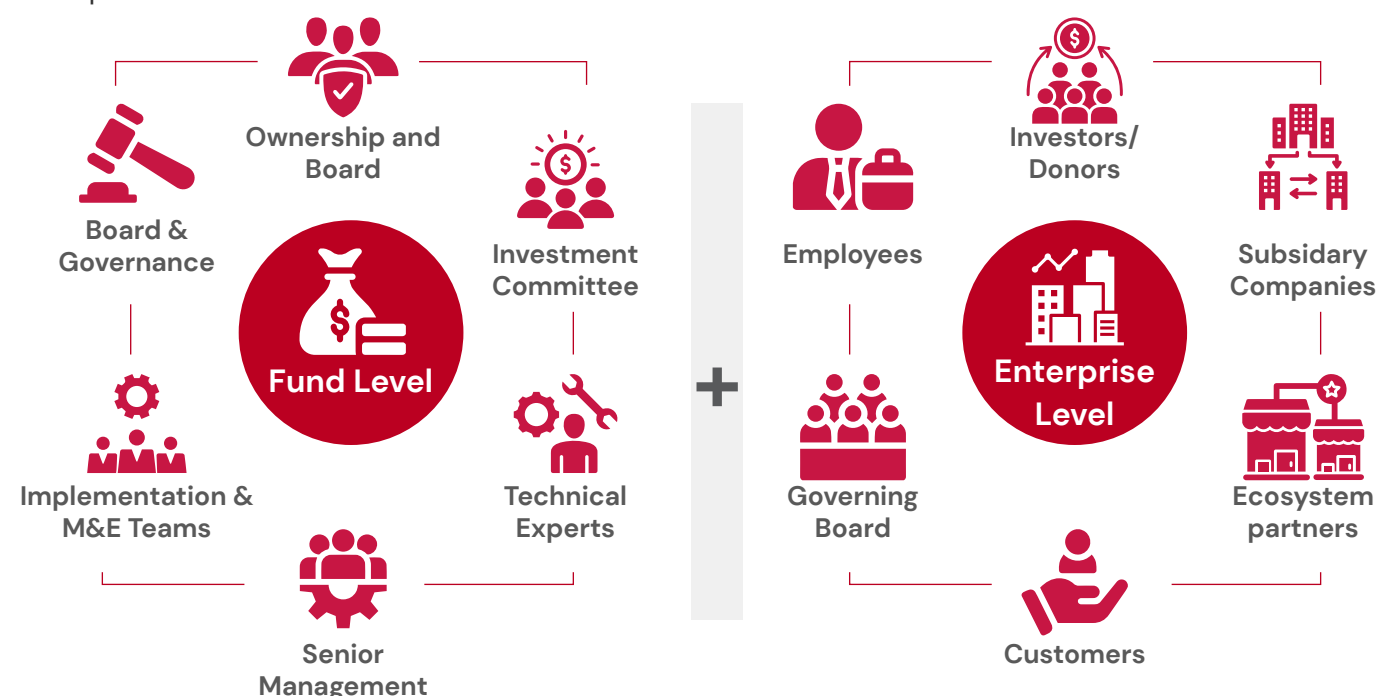


Figure 6: Gender composition of stakeholders at the fund and enterprise level

Section 3.3. Four-Stage Life Cycle Framework

The GLI Toolkit details a four-stage life cycle framework (refer to Figure 7) which provides specific measures that investors can take at each stage of the investment life cycle (actionable steps are given in the next chapter) to enhance gender diversity within high impact solutions and ensure that investments serve the needs of women consumers. Since the investment process, nomenclature, and elements of each stage may differ for each investment fund, this framework is created based on the perspective of the entrepreneur. This framework is followed by SAMRIDH, however it can be applied by other investment funds/facilities as well.

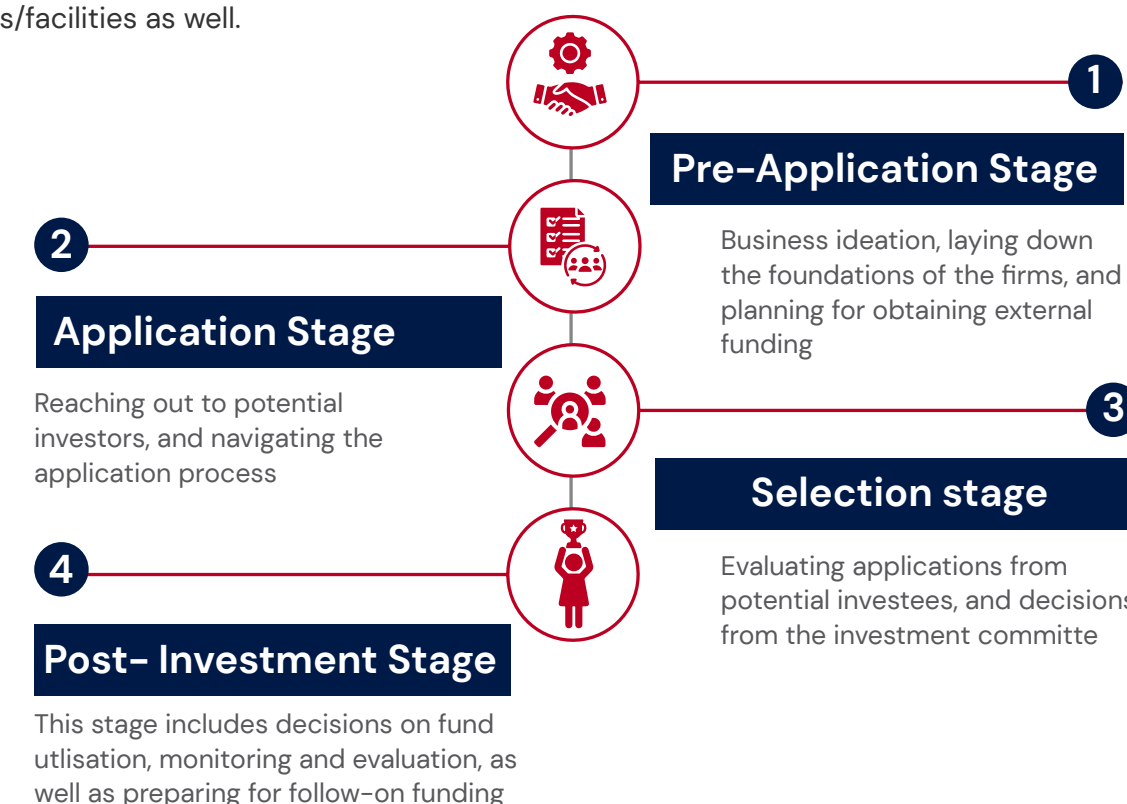


Figure 7: Four-stage life cycle framework

04

GLI Toolkit



“I have to create a case myself, then the market and then for the business idea”

–Swarnima Bhattacharya, Founder, Thea Care
(A startup focusing on women’s health platform)

As discussed in Section 3 above, this Toolkit advocates for a four stage, investment life-cycle based GLI framework that investors and investment funds/facilities can use to apply a gender lens to their existing investment decision-making frameworks. Implementing GLI practices strengthens investment funds, fostering a fund/facility that embraces GLI-qualifying enterprises and caters to the needs of women consumers. Such measures enhance diversity and inclusion and tap into unexplored market potential, driving financial success through a more comprehensive understanding of, and improved responsiveness to diverse consumer markets.

This section provides specific measures that ecosystem investors can take at each stage of the investment life cycle to enhance the representation of GLI-qualifying enterprises. Recommendations in this section are more focused on the actions that can be taken by the investment fund/facility, as opposed to firm-level actions by health enterprises. These measures are summarized in Figure 8.

Recommendations for each stage of the investment life cycle are broken down into actionable steps. This is followed by highlighting best practices and key insights from the initiatives undertaken by SAMRIDH to make its investment process gender inclusive. This comprehensive guide equips investors with practical measures to ensure gender inclusivity throughout their investment process, fostering an environment where diversity is acknowledged and actively integrated into best practices.

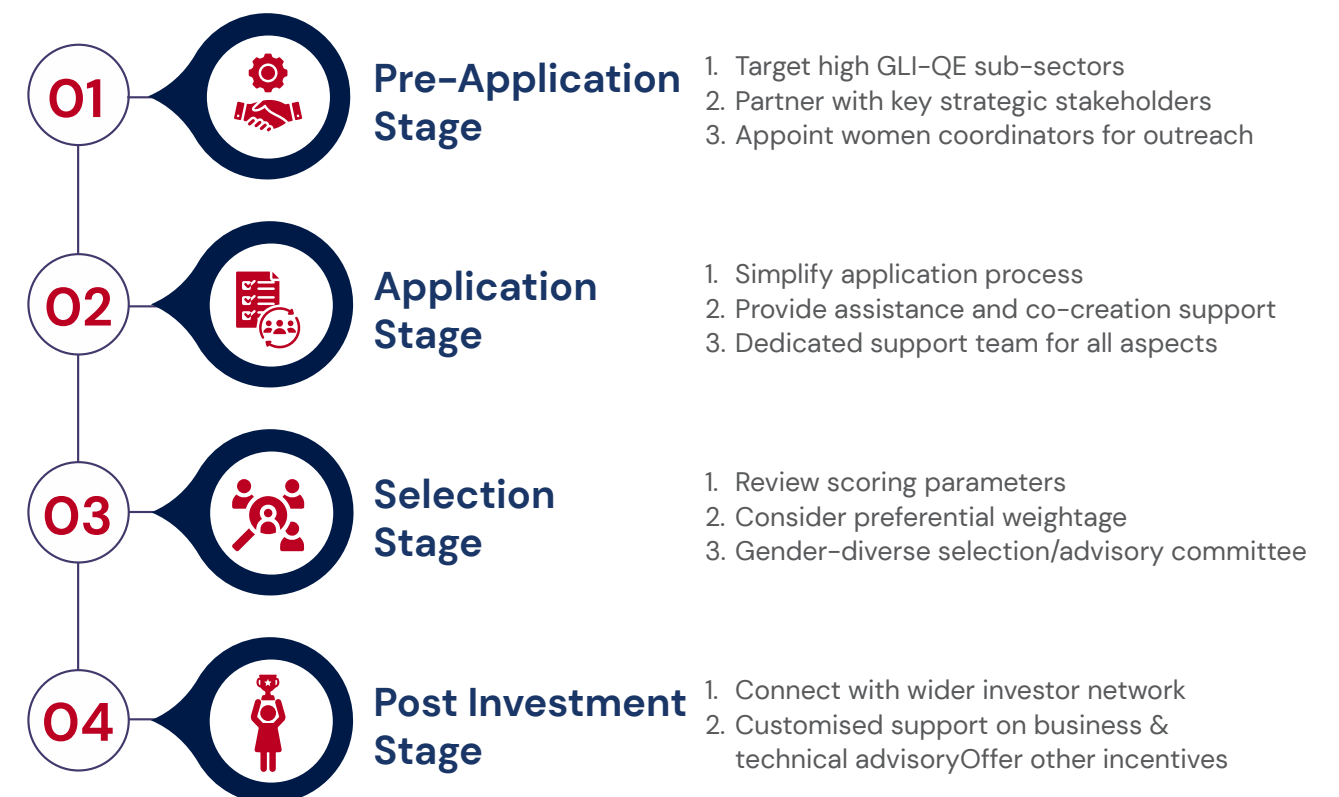


Figure 8: GLI Strategies across the investment life-cycle

Step

01

Pre-Application:
Sourcing and Deal Origination

The investment life-cycle begins with the Pre-Application (Sourcing and Deal Origination) stage, which involves understanding women’s representation in the sector and spreading awareness of the application form and process through relevant channels. The following measures can be undertaken to understand the landscape of women’s representation in the sector and disseminate information regarding the application cycle:

Recommendations for Pre-Application
(Sourcing and Deal Origination) stage

- 01

Conduct a market survey to understand women’s representation in the workforce and across different market segments to identify emerging trends. The survey will inform about segments with a high representation of GLI qualifying enterprises.
- 02

Target the sub-sectors with the highest number of GLI qualifying enterprises in the focus area of the investment fund/facility. This will increase the pool of GLI qualifying applicants.
- 03

Identify and partner with relevant stakeholders (incubators, accelerators, women’s networks, business schools, universities, government-run entrepreneurship programs, grassroots organizations) to increase the pipeline of applicants.
- 04

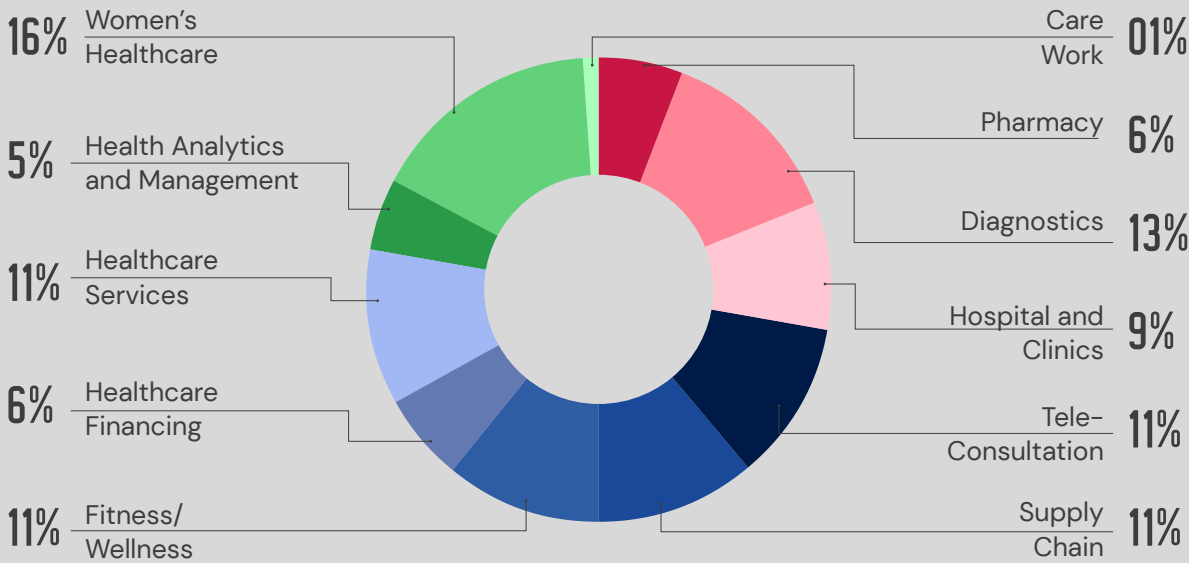
Appoint women coordinators with cultural connections across diverse geographical clusters to foster relationships with women’s networks, and communities and undertake campaigns. These coordinators can lead customized campaigns to reach more women entrepreneurs and help overcome any region specific or cultural gaps that might restrict women entrepreneurs from applying for investments.

SAMRIDH, in devising its GLI strategy, undertook a market survey of the healthcare sector to identify the sub-sectors with the highest representation of GLI qualifying enterprises. The key findings are shared in Box 4 on the next page.

Box 4:

SAMRIDH’s strategy to improve GLI-QEs based on industry trends

Initiative by SAMRIDH	SAMRIDH undertook a market survey of the healthcare sector in India to discover the sub-sectors where GLI qualifying enterprises were the most active using secondary data from the Tracxn Enterprise Database for financial years 2019–2021.
Key findings	Women entrepreneurs led around one-third of all social enterprises in the healthcare sector. Women-led enterprises were the most active in women’s healthcare subsector (over 17%). Geographically, most social enterprises in the healthcare sector are operating in Karnataka, followed by Maharashtra and Delhi. Around 38% of the total healthcare social enterprises in Karnataka are women-led. The situation is similar in Maharashtra (33%) and Delhi (35%).
Implications for SAMRIDH’s operations	This has allowed SAMRIDH to identify key target clusters of focus on building a pipeline of GLI qualifying enterprises.



SAMRIDH implemented many of the recommendations mentioned above to increase its pool of applicants. Box 5 highlights their partnership strategy devised to attract more women entrepreneurs and women-led enterprises.

Box 5:
SAMRIDH's Partnership Strategy

Initiative by SAMRIDH

To increase the pool of women entrepreneurs applying for funding, SAMRIDH has expanded its partnerships to include institutions such as NITI Aayog's Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP), WE Hub – Government of Telangana, and IndusWE platform (an initiative by IndusInd Bank), Atal Innovation Mission, and other ecosystem players.

Key findings

✓

Increase in avenues of follow-on funding

✓

Increase in number of women applicants

Implications for SAMRIDH's operations

Establishing partnerships with the selected institutions has enabled SAMRIDH to diversify the pipeline of its applicants. It can now leverage the large number of start-ups and women entrepreneurs in these networks.

Step

02

Application Stage

The application process begins with the release of the application form and concludes with the submission of applications. Below are the recommended measures for the application stage. Investors can take the following steps to streamline the application process in order to reduce barriers and encourage more GLI qualifying enterprises to submit applications:

Recommendations for Application Stage

- 01

Set up an easy-to-navigate application window and streamline the application process and requirements to reduce barriers. Additional support or application form queries through webinars could be conducted to help applicants clarify any step

of the application process. Time-consuming and complex application forms act as deterrents for women entrepreneurs given the time poverty they face.

- 02

Provide detailed guidance for entrepreneurs to accurately fill out the application form. Application forms can also be made available in all major regional languages, along with guidebooks and frequent information sessions to resolve FAQs.
- 03

Set up a dedicated team to provide targeted support to GLI qualifying enterprises. Some enterprises may face challenges in completing the application adequately. Tailored guidance through dedicated email addresses or helpline numbers can help overcome them.
- 04

Provide mentorship and training sessions and tailored support to women entrepreneurs to strengthen their application, especially in areas of demonstrating impact, budget, pitch decks and relevant financial documents.

Box 6 highlights the efforts taken by the SAMRIDH team to reduce the barriers faced by women entrepreneurs and ensure a smooth application process.

Box 6:
Removing Barriers from the Application Process

Initiative by SAMRIDH

SAMRIDH has created a framework to provide tailored support to women entrepreneurs through the application process. These initiatives include Q&A sessions to clarify application requirements and information sessions to provide advice on the best way to present applications. The team works closely with women entrepreneurs to provide support on technical and implementation details, financial and contractual requirements and legal compliances to co-create robust applications.

Key findings

✓

High engagement level with women entrepreneurs

✓

Positive feedback loops

✓

Enhanced quality of applications

Implications for SAMRIDH's operations

These efforts have helped increase the number of women applicants that approach SAMRIDH, as well as the number of women who progress to the final stages of the selection process to receive funding.

Step

03

Selection Process

The third stage of the investment life cycle relates to the evaluation and shortlisting of the applications received. Numerous measures can be taken to ensure that the selection process is gender-inclusive and free from any implicit biases. Some of them are provided below:

Recommendations for the Selection Stage

- 01

Evaluate if existing scoring parameters are a disadvantage to GLI qualifying enterprises in order to alleviate gender biases.
- 02

Evaluate if preferential weightage is required to accelerate the selection of GLI qualifying enterprises. Further, applicants can take the Gender Inclusivity Survey and the investment fund can score the enterprise relative to existing high impact health solutions, and give selection preferences to enterprises performing well on the survey.
- 03

Ensure a gender-diverse investment committee (50% or more women) for the selection process to ensure objective evaluation. Further, gender sensitization training can help alleviate gender biases.
- 04

Provide a guidebook to the investment committee members to ensure consistent and gender-inclusive scoring.
- 05

Introduce a Q&A round to better understand the entrepreneur’s motivations and rationale behind the documents submitted. By engaging directly with applicants, evaluators gain insights into the context of each business proposal, which might otherwise be lost in translation within formal documentation.

Box 7 showcases SAMRIDH’s efforts to ensure a fair and robust selection process. Such efforts are crucial to alleviate gender biases that are often faced by women entrepreneurs during the investment selection process. During the study, many women entrepreneurs emphasized the importance of gender-neutral investment committees owing to the gender biases they faced from investors.

Box 7:

Ensuring a fair and robust selection process

Initiative by SAMRIDH

SAMRIDH’s investment committee has equal representation of men and women, all of whom undergo gender sensitization training to ensure an unbiased selection process. SAMRIDH also uses the Gender Inclusivity Survey to evaluate new applicants.

- Key findings
- ✓

Balanced decision making

✓

Inclusive growth for the supported social enterprises

✓

Reduction in gender biases

Implications for SAMRIDH’s operations

SAMRIDH has created an inclusive and supportive environment for its applicants, ensuring that biases in the selection and evaluation process are minimal.



Step

O4

Post-investment Implementation,
Monitoring and Assessment

Even after deployment of funds, the GII qualifying enterprises require technical assistance support to first help in stabilizing revenue streams, then in sustaining profitability, & finally expanding their initiatives. Below are some recommendations that may be implemented to support social enterprises in the Post-investment implementation stage.

Recommendations for Post Investment Monitoring and Assessment

- 01

Introduce investees to other investors and financing opportunities to enable follow-on funding and support in expanding to new markets and geographies. This not only secures their financial stability but also accelerates their growth potential and geographical reach.
- 02

Connect with women entrepreneurs to understand their challenges and provide support if required. By understanding their specific challenges, targeted assistance may be customized to their needs, ensuring they have the resources and guidance to overcome barriers and succeed.
- 03

Provide tailored support (refer to Table 3) and technical advisory to GII qualifying enterprises to enable them to leverage the invested funds. This helps in aligning their business strategies with market demands and operational efficiencies, thereby enhancing their ability to scale and sustain operations.
- 04

Conduct Gender Inclusivity assessment and provide technical support to social enterprises for intentional gender mainstreaming (refer Table 4). To measure the progress of social enterprises, annual gender inclusivity assessments can be undertaken.
- 05

Financial incentives or concessional benefits may be provided to motivate enterprises to embed gender mainstreaming within their business model. These incentives serve as a tangible reward for their commitment to gender inclusivity, reinforcing the value of such practices both ethically and economically.

The post investment stage presents investors with the opportunity to accelerate the growth of their enterprises. In Box 8, some initiatives taken by SAMRIDH for supporting its social enterprises in the post investment stage are highlighted.

Box 8:

Post-investment implementation and
Monitoring Strategy

Initiative by
SAMRIDH

SAMRIDH has invested in the post investment growth of its social enterprises in three key ways:

- Onboarding a team of healthcare experts to mentor investees with business related concerns
- Enabling environment where investees can build strong relationships with other ecosystem players
- Support in drafting Theory of Change and MEL frameworks
- Conducting training and webinars on gender lens aspect and promote best gender inclusive practices
- Providing targeted 1-on-1 support to organisations who scored low on the gender inclusivity index

Key findings

✓

Enhanced business acumen

✓

Network strengthening

✓

Cross learning and knowledge sharing opportunities

✓

Sustainable growth trajectories

Implications
for SAMRIDH's
operations

SAMRIDH is setting up investee companies for success by ensuring that a wide range of support services are available to them post investment.

Providing tailored support to social enterprises in the post-investment implementation stage enables them to overcome strategic gaps and scale their solutions. Table 3 mentions some of the skills where tailored support can be provided for enterprise development and capacity building.

Table 3: Skills advisory checklist for gli qualifying enterprises

 Hard skills advisory checklist for GLI Qualifying Enterprises	
 Operational and strategic support as the business scales, including development of access to new markets and customers and delivering cost efficiencies in supply, production and distribution	 Support on governance and board decision-making, and managing external stakeholders
	 Accessing non-traditional sources of finance
 Soft skills advisory checklist for GLI Qualifying Enterprises	
 How to e-mail an investor	 Effective impact measurement methods
 Strengthening communication skills	 Networking and negotiation
 How to prepare pitch decks	 Increasing financial capacity and skills



Based on the results of the Gender Inclusivity Survey, social enterprises that have poor or average scores may be supported to increase their gender inclusivity by implementing recommendations suited to them, as given below in Table 4.

Table 4: Recommendations to improve gender inclusivity among supported health enterprises

 Ownership and Board	- Onboard a women co-founder/founders - Increase the representation and participation of women on board and governing councils
 Teams	- Onboard more women in senior management positions - Onboard more women in client-facing roles - Onboard more women employees in the organization
 DEI Initiatives	- Improve workplace environment by installing clean and separate washrooms with menstrual hygiene products - Conduct senior leadership training programs for women - Institute gender neutral parental leaves - Institute menstrual leaves/flexibility to work from home - Institute return to work programs post career break for women - Initiate provisions for diversity hiring - Promote uptake of non traditional jobs amongst women - Conduct gender sensitisation trainings - Improve gender pay parity
 Customers	- Collect gender disaggregated data on usage of products and service by women customers - Improve products or develop new products and services that target women customers

05 | Way Forward



“Women need to constantly prove their worth.”

– Shivli Shrivastava, Co-founder, Better Space
(A startup focusing on mental health)

The consistently low labor force participation rate in India, coupled with **occupational segregation, mechanization, social norms, gender gaps in higher education and skill training, and the gender digital divide, has been restraining the Indian economy from harnessing the full potential of its 662 million women.** Although women entrepreneurship has the potential to contribute significantly to economic growth, innovation, and job creation, only 14% of Indian women own or run businesses¹¹. This is a huge missed opportunity that India must capitalize on. Despite several government schemes and initiatives for the promotion of women’s entrepreneurship, women entrepreneurs in the country face multiple challenges at every step of their entrepreneurial journey.

The most prominent impediment to the success of women-owned enterprises is access to finance. Women entrepreneurs are unable to access formal sources of financing and avail institutional credit, severely impeding their growth. Some important factors include:

- **Socio-cultural norms and gender-stereotypes**
- **Inability to provide collateral**
- **Low literacy levels and lack of awareness**
- **Limited access to mobile devices and the internet**

Collaborative and conscious efforts from the government, public, and private sector organizations to enhance access to finance for women entrepreneurs can significantly contribute towards achieving gender equality.

The four-stage framework provided in the toolkit outlines different measures investors in India can undertake to enhance gender diversity in the healthcare sector. However, the framework can be tailored for adoption by other sectors as well. Several steps can be taken towards applying the gender lens in investments, some of which include:

- **Partnering with women networks and communities to spread awareness and source relevant applications**
- **Simplifying the application form**
- **Having a gender-inclusive selection committee**
- **Giving higher weightage for the gender component among others parameters of evaluating applications**

Rather than just providing theoretical recommendations, the toolkit illustrates the practical implementation of several recommendations from SAMRIDH. This toolkit hopes to serve as a practical guide for enhancing gender inclusion for supported social enterprises, and that the adoption of the four-stage process will yield positive results for investment funds in India towards their gender mainstreaming efforts.

Appendix A

List of Figures

- Figure 1: Toolkit Development Methodology
- Figure 2: SAMRIDH's GLI Strategy
- Figure 3: GLI Enterprise Scoring Matrix
- Figure 4: Gender Inclusivity Index of SAMRIDH social enterprises
- Figure 5: Outstanding enterprises in SAMRIDH's supported social enterprises
- Figure 6: Gender composition of stakeholders at the fund and enterprise level
- Figure 7: Four-stage life cycle framework
- Figure 8: GLI Strategies across the investment life cycle

List of Tables

- Table 1: Differential considerations for different types of GLI-QEs
- Table 2: Gender Inclusivity Index of enterprises supported
- Table 3: Skills Advisory Checklist for GLI-QEs
- Table 4: Recommendations to improve gender inclusivity among supported enterprises

List of Boxes

- Box 1: How do we define an enterprise qualifying the GLI lens under our approach?
- Box 2: SAMRIDH's application of the GLI scoring matrix
- Box 3: SAMRIDH's analysis of the gender inclusivity index
- Box 4: SAMRIDH's strategy to improve GLI-QEs based on industry trends
- Box 5: SAMRIDH's partnership strategy
- Box 6: Removing barriers from the application process
- Box 7: Ensuring a fair and robust selection process
- Box 8: Post-investment implementation and monitoring strategy

Appendix B

Consultations

More than 20 organizations, including women entrepreneurs, investors, incubators, ecosystem intermediaries and social enterprises supported by SAMRIDH were consulted while developing the GLI toolkit.

Women Entrepreneurs



Investors



Incubators



Ecosystem Intermediaries



Social Enterprises



Appendix C

List of Survey Respondents

Appendix D

GLI Toolkit Resources

Gender Inclusivity Survey & Scoring Criteria

Gender Inclusivity Survey was designed by the Nikore Associates team, with support from USAID, to collect data pertaining to Ownership and Board, Gender Representation in Teams, Customers, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion initiatives, and Success stories of enterprises.

Scan the QR code to find the Gender Inclusivity Survey, and the Scoring Criteria



Interview Questionnaire for Stakeholder Consultations

To create a Gender Lens Investment Toolkit, information about strategy, practices and experiences was requested from stakeholders including women entrepreneurs, investors, incubators, ecosystem intermediaries, SAMRIDH supported social enterprises and SAMRIDH team.

Scan the QR code to find the interview questionnaire.



About Desai & Associates



Desai and Associates (D&A) is a mission-based innovative finance advisory firm focused on designing and structuring blended and outcome-based financing solutions for public, philanthropic and private sector capital providers. We also provide research, advocacy and market building services to drive improved capital allocation for sustainable development.

The firm has deep expertise across the spectrum of capital (blended finance, impact investing, climate finance, venture philanthropy and ESG) and experience advising leading foundations, funds, not-profits, social enterprises, government agencies and international organizations on structuring and deploying innovative finance solutions across major development themes of climate, inclusion and livelihoods.

Mr. Kartikeya Desai, founder & CEO of D&A, is considered a pioneer of social finance, having led Asha Impact and KOIS and worked at Aavishkaar and Lok, some of the most prominent institutions in the Indian impact investing and blended finance landscape. He is a faculty at Ashoka University and other universities, has written several white papers and op-eds, has been selected as the PM's Champion of Change, and has also advised international institutions such as the United Nations Department of International and Public Affairs.

About Nikore Associates



Nikore Associates is a youth-led public policy research group that advocates for implementing gender mainstreaming strategies across different sectors. The think tank has conducted extensive primary and secondary research on identifying long-term trends in women's labor force and workforce participation in India, worked on analysing India's gender budgets and uncovering gendered divisions in unpaid care work across the G20 countries. Some of the other focus areas include working on the gender digital divide in India, understanding the impact of hybrid work on women's workforce representation and studying the role of gender-inclusive urban mobility ecosystems in facilitating female labor force participation. Nikore Associates has done extensive industry-level research to provide practical steps for MSMEs, startups, and small businesses to enhance diversity, equity and measures; and advised companies on enhancing gender diversity within their portfolios.

Endnotes

1. Ministry of Finance. (2023). "Summary of Economic Survey 2022-23." <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1894932>
2. Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementations. (2023). Periodic Labour Force Survey 2021-22 https://www.mospi.gov.in/sites/default/files/press_release/Press_note_AR_PLFS_2021_22_24022023.pdf
3. FE Online (2021). \$158 billion finance gap for India's 15M women MSMEs, 66% don't have bank account: <https://www.financialexpress.com/industry/sme/158-billion-finance-gap-for-indias-15m-women-msmes-66-dont-have-bank-account-ifcs-qamar-saleem/2357938/>
4. International Finance Corporation (IFC) (2020). Private Equity And Value Creation A Fund Manager's Guide To Gender-Smart Investing. https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/topics_ext_content/ifc_external_corporate_site/gender+at+ifc/resources/gender+smart+investing+guide
5. HSBC (2019). Diversity: The next step. <https://www.hsbc.com/news-and-media/hsbc-news/diversity-the-next-step>
6. Bank of America (2022). 4 ways to invest in Women's Equality. <https://www-amp.bankofamerica.com/amp-stories/gender-lens-investing/>
7. MSCI. (2015). "Women on Boards: Global Trends in Gender Diversity on Corporate Boards." Available at: <https://www.msci.com/www/research-paper/research-insight-women-on/0263428390>
8. Credit Suisse Research Institute. 2012. "Gender Diversity and Corporate Performance." <https://www.credit-suisse.com/about-us-news/en/articles/media-releases/42035-201207.html>
9. Care International (2019). Giving women better access to finance could unlock \$330 billion in annual global revenue <https://www.care-international.org/news/giving-women-better-access-finance-could-unlock-330-billion-annual-global-revenue>
10. Credit Suisse Research Institute. 2016. "The CS Gender 3000: The Reward for Change." <https://www.credit-suisse.com/about-us-news/en/articles/news-and-expertise/cs-gender-3000-report-2019-201910.html>
11. European Investment Bank. (2022). "Investing with a gender isn't just socially right, it's financially savvy." <https://www.eib.org/en/stories/investing-gender-lens>
12. International Finance Corporation. "Financial Inclusion for Women-owned MSMEs." <https://>

www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/region__ext_content/ifc_external_corporate_site/south+asia/resources/financial+inclusion+for+women-owned+msmes+in+india

13. Nikore, Mitali Prabhu, Poorva; Gupta, Manvika; Narang, Vidhi; Bhatnagar, Khyati; Talwar, Ashruth; Ganesh, Chandni; Singh, Ujjwala; and Banerjee, Samarpita. "India's missing working women: Tracing the journey of women's economic contribution over the last seven decades, and during COVID-19." *Journal of International Women's Studies* <https://vc.bridgew.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2779&context=jiws>
14. Bain & Company and Google (2019). *Powering the Economy with Her: Women Entrepreneurship in India*. https://www.bain.com/contentassets/dd3604b612d84aa48a0b120f0b589532/report_powering_the_economy_with_her_-_women_entrepreneurship_in-india.pdf
15. Foundation Strategy Group (FSG) <https://www.fsg.org/>
16. Rathi S., Lebus F. and Amaya L. "Investing in Women: A Powerful Approach for Investors in India." <https://www.fsg.org/blog/investing-in-women/>
17. Wharton School. "Key Insights from the Latest Gender Lens Investing Report." <https://www.wharton.upenn.edu/story/project-sage-3-0-key-insights-from-the-latest-gender-lens-investing-report/>
18. International Finance Corporation. (2020). "A Fund Managers Guide to Investing." https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/f9ad4204-42eb-4603-9c44-e99760a7c240/202011_GenderSmartInv_Guide.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CVID=nnhxYiD
19. CDC Group. "How to Measure the Gender Impact of Investments." <https://assets.cdcgroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/16111901/How-to-measure-the-gender-impact-of-investments.pdf>
20. 2X Global (2022) "Principles for Responsible Exits in Gender Lens Investing." <https://www.2xcollaborative.org/exitprinciples>
21. Observer Research Foundation. (2022). "Building India's Economy on the back of Women's Unpaid Work: A Gendered Analysis of Time-Use Data." <https://www.orfonline.org/research/building-indias-economy-on-the-backs-of-womens-unpaid-work/#038;fbclid=PAAaYCdzMtIxEbD8sJKOLZvh4fMDjdO79Uv96O7reJE4YEWemYHc3fqoB455l>

