



OPPORTUNITY'S KEY LEARNINGS

WOMEN AND GIRLS



OPPORTUNITY
International

Opportunity International seeks to achieve gender equality by enabling women and girls to have full and equal access to social, educational, and economic opportunities. We invest in sustainable, inclusive financial service delivery to help women and girls to gain knowledge, decision-making capacity, and empowerment to reach their full potential. The following brief summarizes recent learnings shaping our work with women and girls.

How do Opportunity's women clients benefit from financial products and services?

INSIGHT 1: Women microfinance clients in India significantly increase income and well-being.¹

- Nearly all clients (98%) reported significant improvements in well-being, compared to 80% of non-clients.
- The majority (85%) of clients interviewed were women living in rural communities on less than \$2.50/day.
- Most clients (88%) used their loan primarily to invest in a business or their farm.
- Average monthly income increased by an average of 66%.

INSIGHT 2: Women small and medium enterprise (SME) clients in Ghana report high satisfaction with the financial services and business training they receive.²

- The vast majority of clients are satisfied with financial services (92%) and training (96%), with men and women reporting the same levels of customer satisfaction. Most women SME clients (71%) reported improvements in financial and business management skills as a result of training and networking events.

How is Opportunity identifying and addressing barriers faced by women in local economies?

INSIGHT 3: Opportunity links more women to agricultural markets through proactive outreach strategies, without excluding men.³ Some examples of proactive outreach strategies used in Mozambique include:

- Orienting staff to the value of women's empowerment and building their capacity to serve women better.
- Prioritizing crop value chains where women are already the most active (e.g., vegetables).
- Delivering a clear message to men and women that women farmers are invited to participate in program activities through traditional, male-led structures.
- Recruiting women leaders through women's organizations (e.g., savings groups and empowerment organizations).

INSIGHT 4: SME clients, regardless of gender, create jobs for both women and men in Ghana.⁴

- Over 1.5 years (Jul 2017 - Dec 2018), 8,000 SME clients (53% women) created nearly 1,500 new jobs for women and about 3,700 jobs for men and women combined.
- These 8,000 SME clients now employ roughly 19,600 women in total.
- On average, women SME clients were less likely than their male counterparts to reduce their number of employees, thus providing more stable employment.

INSIGHT 5: Pilot programs in Ghana and Uganda indicate that voice messaging in the local languages made clients feel valued by financial institutions and stimulated increased savings, especially among women.⁵

- In a year-long pilot test, nearly 55,000 clients received voice messages in their respective local languages with brief financial tips and “nudges” to incorporate positive financial behavior, mainly saving.
- Voice messaging was more effective at reaching women than other digital finance channels. In Uganda, women’s engagement with voice messages was only 4% lower than for men, compared with mobile money usage, which is 11% lower for women. (Ghana: 6% vs. 17%)
- Clients felt proud and valued when they received these messages, and many responded by visiting their local branch to save money and ask questions to get additional information.
- On average, savings account balances of clients who listened to messages was twice that of non-listeners. In Ghana, one dollar (USD) of additional savings was generated for every \$0.36 spent on voice messaging.

How is Opportunity supporting girls’ education and career pathways?

INSIGHT 6: The vast majority of women clients interviewed across five countries⁶ were actively supporting their children’s education and taking pride in their successes.⁷

- Many women clients reported financing their daughters’ education through their businesses.
- In cases where their children were now grown, all women clients’ children had completed more schooling than their mothers, and many had gone on to secure formal employment.
- Lack of funds and competing economic interests were the most common reason for school dropouts in all five countries. Women clients’ most common goal was to own a home to improve their financial stability.

INSIGHT 7: Students’ confidence in financial and life skills increased through in-school financial literacy programs.⁸

- As part of Opportunity’s partnership with UK Aids Girls’ Education Challenge, girls in Uganda at schools benefiting from the project:
 - demonstrated confidence in financial planning and budgeting (98%)
 - started social enterprises to earn income, including vegetable gardens and snack-making (78%)

INSIGHT 8: Girls at Opportunity partner-financed schools in Uganda improved their learning outcomes.⁹

- Over three years, girls at schools financed by an Opportunity financial institution partner improved literacy by 64% and numeracy by 32%.

For more information on Knowledge Management’s work, visit opportunity.org/knowledge-exchange/

¹ *Client Impact Assessment* – figures shared here from institution RGVN only. 2016

² *Small and Medium Enterprise Client Evaluation of Sinapi Aba Savings and Loans*, Ghana. 2019

³ *Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Program*, Mozambique. 2017

⁴ *Small and Medium Enterprise Client Evaluation of Sinapi Aba Savings and Loans*, Ghana. 2019

⁵ *Digital Client Engagement: Interactive Voice Response*. 2019

⁶ Focus group discussions and key informant interviews using the journey mapping methodology in Colombia, India, Ghana, Malawi, Philippines

⁷ *Understanding Girls’ Education and Career Pathways in Context*. Colombia, India, Ghana, Malawi, and Philippines. 2018

⁸ *GEC Project Completion Report*. Uganda. 2017

⁹ *GEC Project Completion Report*. Uganda. 2017