

October 2024

Pathways to Growth

Gender-smart business
actions that work



Gender Equality

**Pathway 6
Workplace Safety**



Establish robust systems for addressing sexual harassment

- + Employee satisfaction / retention
- + Attract more diverse talent
- Legal risks

- + Equity in the workplace
- Harmful norms

**Pathway 1
Product Delivery**




Deliver high-impact products and services to women customers

- + Sales to existing and new customers
- + Customer satisfaction

- + Economic empowerment
- Time poverty

**Pathway 2
Agriculture**

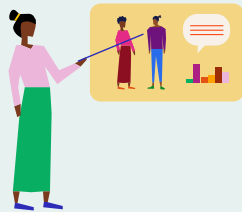


Connect women smallholder farmers to formal supply chains

- + Supply volume and quality
- + Retention of suppliers

- + Income for women farmers
- + Agency for women

**Pathway 5
Work Culture**



Foster an inclusive work culture in which women can thrive

- + Employee retention and productivity
- Absenteeism

- + Opportunities for working caregivers
- Sexual harassment of women
- Stress and burnout

**Pathway 4
Last-mile Sales**



Equip women sales agents with the tools to excel

- + Sales through new customers
- Agent turnover

- + Income opportunities for women
- + Access to products in rural areas

**Pathway 3
Recruitment**



Hire more women by creating quality jobs and inclusive hiring practices

- + Market size and profitability
- Employee turnover

- + Women entering key fields
- + Employee satisfaction
- Gender pay gap

Pathway 6

Workplace safety

Improve productivity and retention by establishing robust systems for addressing sexual harassment



Violence and harassment in the workplace are commonplace and negatively impact employee well-being and performance. Yet many companies fail to pay sufficient attention to address sexual harassment. Companies can foster a safe workplace where all employees can thrive by developing robust policies and mechanisms to reduce the risk of and respond to sexual harassment.

Which enterprises this pathway works for:

All enterprises, but potential for a particularly high impact in sectors in which women have historically been underrepresented (e.g., construction, technology, manufacturing). In these sectors, cultural norms may tacitly endorse sexist attitudes and a blind eye towards harassment, and policies are often inadequate for addressing harassment. This makes it difficult for victims to report and resolve issues and for companies to ensure a culture of safety.

The challenge: Violence and harassment in the workplace are entirely too common. A survey across specific industries in eight African countries revealed that 50% of women had experienced sexual harassment at work.¹⁰⁹ Sexual harassment also affects men, who can be directly targeted as well as broadly experience the effects of a negative workplace culture.

Insufficient attention to addressing sexual harassment and workplace safety can, in addition to being devastating to survivors and those experiencing sexual harassment, reduce employee productivity and increase absenteeism and employee attrition.¹¹⁰

What businesses can do: Companies can start by prioritizing a safe work environment and making it clear that leadership takes sexual harassment seriously. Companies can:

- **Develop a sexual harassment policy** and create awareness of it, including through regular training and inclusion in onboarding.
- **Collect data** on employee perceptions of sexual harassment.
- **Set up a grievance mechanism** with confidential reporting channels and transparent investigation processes.
- **Adopt a survivor-centric approach**, responding to the needs of victims and/or people affected and providing sufficient support, resources, and information for the affected person(s); and
- **Provide mandatory training on harassment prevention** and response and specialized training for Human Resources staff.

Best practices: An effective sexual harassment policy

Based on Value for Women's experience and relevant publications, a sexual harassment policy is most effective when it aligns with local legal requirements and covers the following at a minimum:^{111 112}

1. Takes a stance: an opening statement stating the behaviors that are not tolerated and why.
2. Defines terminology and gives examples:

provides definitions of harassment, assault, and violence, including clear examples.

3. Outlines prevention measures: such as training programs and awareness campaigns.
4. Defines response and reporting mechanisms: explains how to report incidents and includes templates to make a report.
5. Explains the investigation process: includes explaining who will be involved, confidentiality mechanisms, and the consequences for violators.
6. Fosters a safe space: explicitly states that complaints will be confidential and there will be no retaliation for making a complaint. States the company's zero-tolerance culture for harassment.
7. Provides communication channels: including various reporting methods (i.e., phone, email, etc.), trained focal points, and all related contact information.

Business outcomes:

- Improved employee satisfaction and retention.¹¹³
- Reduced legal risks and associated costs.¹¹⁴
- Improved company reputation.¹¹⁵
- Attraction of more diverse talent, which has been shown to drive innovation and better decision-making.¹¹⁶

Social outcomes:

- Improved job satisfaction and performance.¹¹⁷
- A more equitable workplace.¹¹⁸
- Challenging harmful norms, thus bringing broader societal benefits.¹¹⁹



Moko, Kenya

Case study

Moko



Company profile

Moko Home + Living (Moko) is a Kenyan-based manufacturing and furniture company that creates tailored products at an attractive price point. Ninety-five percent of its products are made from recycled materials. The company has two business lines: business-to-consumer (accounting for 30% of its business) and business-to-business (accounting for the other 70%). Moko's workforce consists of 389 employees (125 women and 264 men) across departments from finance and manufacturing to sales.

Background

Moko leadership was seeing a need to raise the bar on employee awareness and compliance regarding sexual harassment. While Moko had a sexual harassment policy in place, leadership saw that employees neither fully understood it nor knew their options for reporting incidents. This was a material risk for Moko, both for overall culture and work performance.

So in 2021, when one of Moko's investors, the AlphaMundi Foundation, offered its portfolio companies support from Value for Women to take gender-smart actions to improve business and social outcomes, Moko was interested.

Business priority and entry point for the gender work

Value for Women began by conducting a Gender Diagnostic, during which interviews pointed to multiple concerns that workplace sexual harassment was possibly occurring, particularly in the manufacturing department. As a result, the company decided with Value for Women to conduct an employee survey focused specifically on sexual harassment.

This employee survey confirmed that despite Moko having an anti-sexual harassment policy, there were gaps in employee perceptions of workplace safety and of the importance of addressing these issues. Specifically:

- Women were 7% less aware of Moko's policies addressing sexual harassment.¹²⁰
- Compared to their male counterparts, 12% fewer women felt that sexual harassment was taken seriously and complaints were appropriately addressed.¹²¹
- Ten percent fewer women felt safe at work compared to men.¹²²

This highlighted the need for a universally understood sexual harassment policy at Moko.

Actions

So with support from Value for Women, Moko updated its anti-sexual harassment policy. In the updated policy, it expanded the description of what constitutes sexual harassment and included a clearer, more defined grievance redress procedure that explained the reporting steps and timeline. Moko also established an Anti-Sexual Harassment (ASH) Committee to drive this forward. Value for Women trained both the ASH Committee and Moko's department heads to raise their awareness of, and equip them with, the necessary skills to reduce the risk of and redress sexual harassment issues.

Then, the ASH Committee facilitated online and in-person training sessions to raise awareness of the policy among Moko's 389 employees. To avoid disrupting business operations and still reach both office staff and floor staff, the training was conducted in multiple, smaller groups scheduled at different times.

To sustain the effectiveness of the ASH procedure, Moko is ensuring the procedure maintains permanent visibility, becomes part of the company culture, and is supported by ongoing processes rather than being treated as one-off initiatives. To achieve this, Moko is implementing periodic gender sensitization training, updating its new employee induction process to include dedicated sessions on the

company's anti-sexual harassment policy and grievance mechanisms, and considering the addition of an external legal expert to the ASH committee to address the complex nature of sexual harassment cases.



Results

After the training, 99% of women employees reported being aware of Moko’s anti-sexual harassment policy — a solid increase from 83% before the technical assistance began.¹²³ With employees now actually aware of Moko’s anti-sexual harassment policy, the company’s handling of complaints significantly improved and the ASH committee has handled multiple complaints effectively. And the company has observed more respectful behavior and language among employees.

Moko saw improvements in men and women employees’ perception of Moko’s seriousness about sexual harassment, men’s perception that Moko does not tolerate disrespectful jokes or behaviors, women’s feeling of being respected by their colleagues, and women’s overall satisfaction

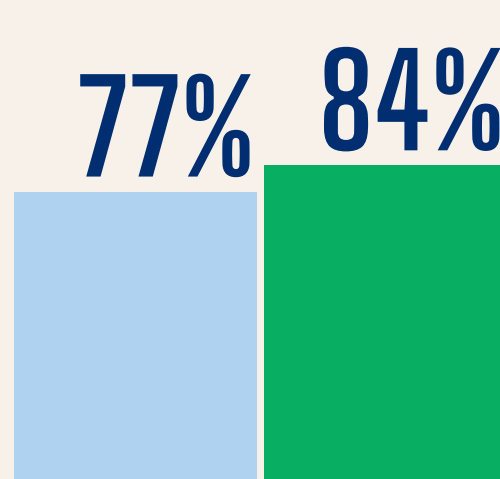
The percentage of women employees satisfied with Moko increased from 73% to 84% over the six months of this work. This shift brought women employees’ satisfaction almost up to that of men employees.^{124, 125}

The percentage of women employees who perceived Moko as taking sexual harassment seriously and investigating and appropriately addressing it rose from 81% to 93%.¹²⁶

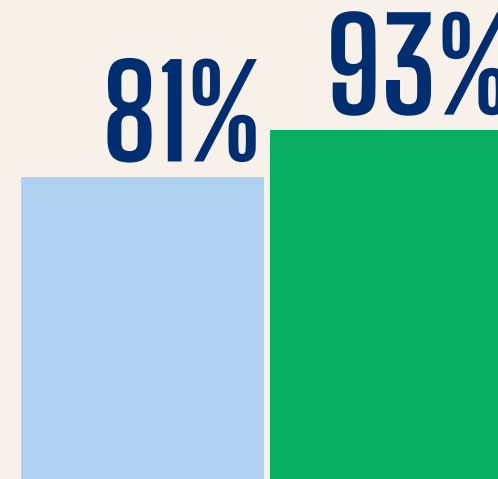
The percentage of men employees who agree their workplaces does not tolerate disrespectful jokes or behaviors on the basis of gender, race, or sexuality rose from 88% to 95%.¹²⁷

99%

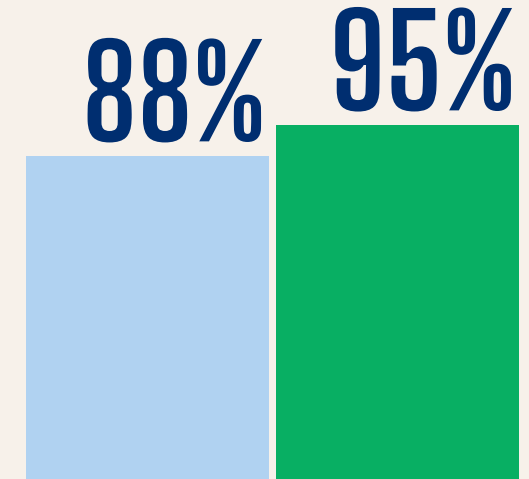
of women employees reported being aware of Moko’s anti-sexual harassment policy



women employees satisfied with Moko



women employees who perceived Moko as taking sexual harassment seriously



agree their workplaces does not tolerate disrespectful jokes or behaviors

What contributed to Moko's success?

Employees feel they are working in a space where they are going to be heard. They feel they are working in a safe environment. They feel heard and that they can speak openly. This has the effect of increasing morale and productivity. Employees feel like they can focus on work and not worry about colleagues being inappropriate with them.

— Team Member, Moko

Internal leadership

Training Moko's new ASH Committee and having this Committee lead the implementation of the updated policy, instead of relying on external parties, increased employee buy-in, engagement, and active participation. Employees felt heard and accountable for a gender-inclusive workplace.



Timely pivots

When Moko faced headwinds that constrained the availability of Moko personnel to work on strategy implementation, it raised this issue and, with the support of Value for Women, pivoted to a strategy that was feasible to take on.



Mini case study

d.light



Case Study: d.light improved employee confidence in reporting sexual harassment



Sector: Renewable Energy



Country: India

d.light is a global solar energy manufacturer and distributor committed to increasing access to reliable lighting. Operating in over 70 countries, d.light provides both solar-powered devices and financing solutions.

Challenge

In 2022, d.light India wanted to grow its market share and revenues and respond to investor priorities on gender. As a key strategy for this, d.light India set a goal to reduce gender gaps in its team composition. At that moment, only 3.5% of its India employees were women. And Value for Women's employee survey found low employee confidence that sexual harassment would be taken seriously.

Actions

In response, with Value for Women and FMO's support, d.light India revamped its anti-sexual harassment policy and committee. It aligned the policy with local legal requirements and instituted for the committee mandatory

50% female representation and at least one external member. The company also introduced comprehensive anti-harassment training for all employees.

Results

Within six months, d.light India saw:

- Improved employee confidence in reporting incidents (from 77% to 86%)¹²⁸ and
- Increased employee awareness of the committee as the proper line of reporting for sexual harassment incidents (from 71% to 90%).¹²⁹

See the full case study by Value for Women [here](#).

Mini case study

Deevabits



Case Study: Deevabits increased women sales agents' knowledge of whom to contact in case of unsafety and their feeling of being respected



Sector: Clean energy



Country: Kenya

Deevabits is a for-profit social enterprise headquartered in Kenya that distributes and finances energy products and services to rural customers. Its sales agents are commission-based and primarily women and youth.

Challenge

Deevabits faced challenges attracting and retaining women into sales roles. This was primarily due to safety and security concerns associated with extensive travel in remote areas.

Actions

With support from Value for Women and the Global Energy Alliance for People and Planet (GEAPP), Deevabits conducted a gender diagnostic. The diagnostic showed that changes were needed to Deevabits' existing anti-sexual harassment policy to meet Kenyan legal standards and, critically, to more effectively address field-level risk (e.g., the risks that sales agents faced while traveling and interacting with customers).


Deevabits acted on these findings with the support of Value for Women. It formalized a policy for agents to travel in pairs when visiting clients at their homes and limited sales agent working hours to 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Additionally, Deevabits established an Anti-Sexual Harassment Committee (which included sales agents) and Value for Women trained the committee to prevent incidents and manage complaints effectively. This training was the first of its kind for Deevabits.


Results


Deevabits addressed critical safety and security concerns among women sales agents, seeing:

- A 122% increase in women sales agents aware of whom to contact in case of unsafety.
- Almost 2x increase in the percentage of women sales agents who strongly agree they feel respected by their colleagues.¹³⁰



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This pathway contains references from the our report, Pathways to Growth: Gender-smart business actions that work. Please refer to the full report for complete context and to access the referenced footnotes and additional details.