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Women as agricultural sales agents get results



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Direct sales agent models can empower women economically and meet agribusiness objectives.

When working on an MSD or PSD programme odds are you have at least one intervention using a direct sales agent model. For more than a decade, development programmes have partnered with the private sector to adapt direct sales agent (DSA) models - like those made famous by Avon and mobile network operators - to serve different sectors (e.g. agriculture, energy, health) and markets (e.g. rural, peri-urban).

For example, MEDA's GROW programme in Northern Ghana found that women soybean farmers' growth potential was being constrained by lack of access to inputs, information, services and markets. Implementing a **women sales agent model (WSA)**, as one of several tactics, increased the incomes, market linkages and sustainability of women soybean farmers.

"A woman-to-woman model serves the market gap, stemming from the potential reluctance of men traders to buy from women farmers [...] and the possible negative reaction of women advancing economically in a sphere traditionally dominated by men." *GROW case study*

New guidance for a more inclusive and effective DSA model

Despite the widespread use of direct sales agent models to reach rural and peri-urban poor in MSD and PSD programmes, there is only a small handful of cases like

GROW and few guidance documents available advising practitioners on how to design effective and inclusive models.

PRISMA's new brief - [Adapting the agent model to be more inclusive and effective for the agricultural sector](#) - shares experiences in designing and implementing agent models that fulfil business objectives and contribute to women's economic empowerment. It is part of a [series by PRISMA](#) which examined opportunities and constraints facing sales agents and the impact of COVID-19 on DSAs.

This new brief includes:

- > seven practical design considerations for inclusive agricultural DSA models
- > a practical design checklist for practitioners

Four of the considerations are specific to inclusive agricultural DSA models and include a deep dive into gender and DSA models. The other considerations focus on general improvement recommendations such as minimising customer acquisition costs and creating a product basket with a good mix of push and pull products.

"Our study found that women agents are not only preferred by most women farmers, but are also appreciated by men farmers, due to their communication skills and agricultural knowledge. This is one of the reasons why we believe women agents can have an integral role in reaching more farmers." *Maryam Piracha, Portfolio Adviser – Agriculture, Gender Equality and Social Inclusion, PRISMA*

WEE and DSA models

DSA models can be an effective mechanism for women's economic empowerment.

Previous PRISMA research showed that DSA models contribute directly to increased economic advancement, leadership and networking opportunities as well as access to assets, services and needed support. However, the research also showed that the agent profile, and support available, matter.

This latest brief looks in depth at opportunities and constraints facing women sales agents and offers recommendations on how to optimise women's potential as agricultural direct sales agents.

About PRISMA

The Australia-Indonesia partnership for Promoting Rural Incomes (PRISMA) is a multi-year development programme in Indonesia working to accelerate poverty reduction through inclusive growth. [View PRISMA's profile](#).

