VALUE FOR WOMEN | Global Energy Alliance for People and Planet | Shortlist

LEVELING THE PLAYING FIELD

New data on gaps and opportunities for women in field roles

Opportunities for increasing women's representation in field roles?

For more information, please refer to the full report

- Women are underrepresented in field roles, representing only ~30% across sectors.[1]
- This is a missed opportunity for women's economic development and businesses alike, as job opportunities in field roles are expected to grow exponentially in the next few years.[2]
- Practical and sociocultural barriers hinder women from entering and staying in field roles.
- Further, employers are hindered by the lack of sex-disaggregated data on field staff's experiences and needs.

What do we mean when we talk about field staff?

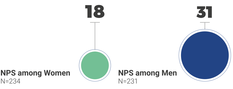
"Field staff" refers to staff and contract workers who spend 50% or more of their time engaging with clients in locations outside of a fixed office or store.

Addressing the lack of information on field staff gender differences

This research project, based on a dedicated survey among 533 field staff (50% women, 50% men) across 10 renewable energy companies in 4 African countries, provides a first-of-its-kind contribution to closing this data gap. Below, we present insights on identified gender differences paired with an actionable checklist that will help employers design and adapt field roles to attract, retain, and support both women and men.

ACTIONABLE INSIGHTS AND STRATEGIES

1 Women in field roles are less satisfied than men in field roles

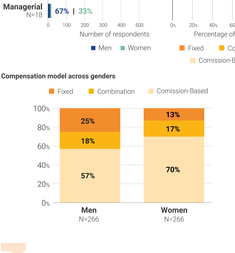


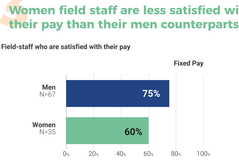
"Female employees are exiting the company more than male employees."
- WOMAN FIELD STAFF, SISTEMA.BIO

Checklist for the action-oriented employer

- **Include** your field staff in regular employee satisfaction surveys
- **Analyze** your employee feedback data in a sex-disaggregated manner

2 Women field staff are overrepresented in commission-based sales roles, increasing their exposure to financial instability and unpredictable schedules





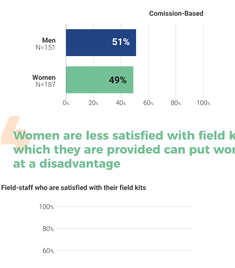
"Our [sales] workforce is majority women because we believe they have a higher persuasion rate."
- HR ASSISTANT, MWANGAZA LIGHT

Checklist for the action-oriented employer

- **Explore** the extent to which women's representation might be due to prohibitive social norms (through anonymous surveys)
- **Communicate** your commitment to gender inclusion (to staff, recruiters, job seekers, community members)
- **Set targets** for women's representation in men-dominated roles
- **Communicate gender-inclusively:** Ensure your materials are inclusive
- **Implement bias awareness training** and instigate informal conversations about gendered perceptions and beliefs

Refer to KPEA's journey towards shifting biased perceptions for inspiration

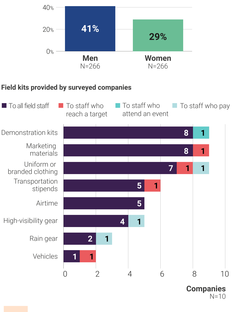
3 Women field staff are less satisfied with their pay than their men counterparts



Checklist for the action-oriented employer

- **Include** your field staff in regular pay gap analyses
- **Conduct a gender income gap analysis** – looking not only at commission per unit sold, but also final take-home pay (inclusive of all commissions and bonuses)
- **Where gender income gaps exist, investigate possible barriers** to women's success (consider, for example, field kits provided - see below)
- **Increase transparency and awareness in pay and commission calculations**, to ensure staff are aware of how their commission is determined

4 Women are less satisfied with field kits than men, and the terms on which they are provided can put women's performance at a disadvantage

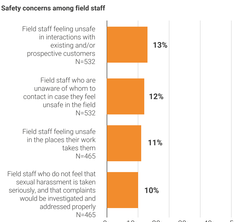


"Sometimes it's tough. In some months you go even without selling a single sale and when that arises you are unable to proceed to the next month because of transport challenges."
- WOMAN FIELD STAFF, SISTEMA.BIO

Checklist for the action-oriented employer

- **Assess satisfaction** with field kits on a regular basis
- **Sex-disaggregate** satisfaction data
- **Ensure gender-inclusive design of field kits**: Design for both women's and men's physiques
- **Reconsider tiered access to field kits:** By limiting (certain types of) field kits to staff that work or earn above a certain threshold, companies may disproportionately exclude women, further hampering their growth.
- **Ensure there is a nearby, convenient and safe location** where field staff can access and return demo kits easily at the beginning and end of their day.
- **Provide travel support and/or stipends** for field staff

5 Safety concerns exist for a proportion of (women) field staff



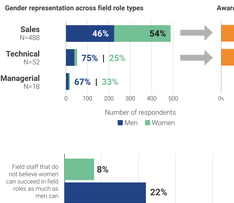
"We should be provided with aprons. We also need uniforms for the community to recognize us."
- WOMAN FIELD STAFF, MWANGAZA LIGHT

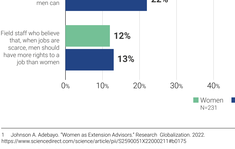
Checklist for the action-oriented employer

- Ensure field staff have an **easily accessible and anonymous method to share safety concerns**
- Ensure field staff –and not only office-based staff– are **covered in your safety policies**
- Implement a **dedicated safety hotline** for field staff
- In policy documents and trainings, **explicitly include clear examples and exercises from field staff's day-to-day reality**

Refer to Deevabitts's journey towards increasing safety measures for field staff

6 Limited awareness of career growth opportunities undercuts field staff progression, especially for women





Checklist for the action-oriented employer

- Ensure that your company has **standardized professional development procedures,** which apply to field as well as office staff.
- **Clearly and equally communicate job openings** and ensure that managers tell field staff when new roles are available.

1 Johnson A. Adebayo. "Women as Extension Advisors." Research. Globalization. 2022. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2590051X22000119#s0175

2 IEA. "World Energy Employment 2023." International Energy Agency. 2023. https://iea.blob.core.windows.net/assets/8934984a-0d66-444f-a0ef-641a4a3ef1de/World_Energy_Employment_2023.pdf

3 Net Promoter Score (NPS) is a gauge of satisfaction and loyalty. Any positive score is good, a score above 20-30 is generally considered above average, above 50 is considered excellent, and a negative score is considered poor.

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