

Working with girls in the value chain: lessons learned from **SPRING**



SPRING was an accelerator programme that helped businesses develop products and services to improve girls' lives.

SPRING businesses targeted girls aged 10-19 in nine countries. In order to understand what works to reach girls, we carried out in-depth case studies with 28 businesses. Some of these businesses focused on creating jobs for girls and increasing their incomes.

Reaching girls in the value chain

Businesses included girls in their value chain to increase their economic independence and skills. Out of our sample, 14 businesses included adolescent girls as part of their value chain. They engaged with girls in different ways. Girls were often hired to sell products and services. In some cases, they worked in production activities. Most businesses hired girls for social impact reasons and to appeal to clients and investors.



There were two main ways to include girls in the value chain.

Some businesses focused on including girls in their value chain solely and preparing them for employment. Others saw girls as clients or beneficiaries, and also included girls in the value chain where possible to improve their client reach.

TANZANIA

MHI developed a girl-specific health insurance and education product. It hired adolescent girls for its distribution, with girls marketing the girl-focused health products to others their age.

www.microhealthinitiative.org

RWANDA

Shekina set up farming cooperatives of adolescent girls to manage the processing of cassava leaves. It also hired girls to market and sell Shekina products.

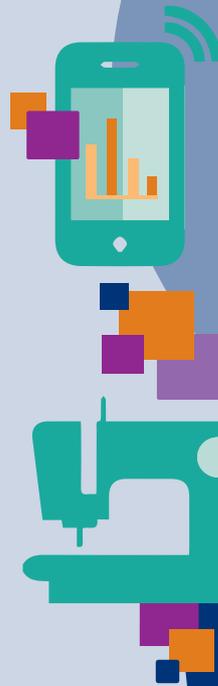
www.shekinafoods.com



Businesses which targeted girls through the value chain reached small numbers of girls, but with potential for impact in the longer-term.

By providing work opportunities, businesses have potential to impact girls' skills, aspirations, and incomes.

Even though businesses included girls in their value chain in different ways, they all faced important challenges. Businesses that managed to continue reaching girls made specific efforts. They provided support, mentoring, and flexibility, responding to girls' needs and set of skills.



NEPAL

Rooster Logic trains and employs adolescent girls in a part-time capacity as enumerators and data collectors for a variety of institutions across Nepal. Its retention and training programme brought a sense of belonging to these girls. By July 2019 about a third (372) of the company's 1197 enumerators were adolescent girls.

www.roosterlogic.com

KENYA

Cherehani aimed to increase financial inclusion of adolescent girls through the financing of sewing machines and provision of business loans. To encourage savings behaviour amongst those girls, Cherehani included girls and older women in their savings groups. The women served as role models, having borrowed and repaid business loans from the company.

www.cherehani.org



Barriers to hiring adolescent girls

Businesses faced legal and cultural barriers to hiring adolescent girls. In most countries, girls under 16 did not have legal citizen status, limiting the activities they could take part in. Girls often could not own a mobile phone, have their own bank account or take out loans. Stigma around child labour also posed reputational risks. Other barriers include girls' limited maturity, availability, experience, interest and resources. Most businesses found it easier to hire young women 18 years and above.

Key lessons and recommendations



Businesses need to respond to girls' needs, skills, level of maturity, and experience. Flexible, part-time work with high levels of support and mentoring is often most effective. Legal and cultural barriers also need to be considered.



Strong safeguarding mechanisms need to be in place both in terms of health and safety at work and safe payment methods. Girls should be supported and encouraged to continue attending or return to school, even when working.



Not all businesses can provide the training and mentoring girl employees need. Businesses that are too focused on their own growth often cannot invest the time and resources needed to support girls' development and should consider other ways they can interact with girls.