



M-KOPA

USAID/Microsoft Airband Initiative

OUTCOME COLLECTION
October 2023



PROJECT OVERVIEW

CLIENT: ITR/T and GenDev

POP: May 12, 2021 - December 31, 2022

BUDGET: \$484,771

M-KOPA, through the USAID/Microsoft Airband Initiative, provides digital financial services to underbanked consumers in Africa, allowing more women to access affordable smartphones through their Pay-As-You-Go model. To further expand women's economic opportunities and bridge the gender divide, M-KOPA researched and piloted solutions in the Kenyan market to improve its engagement with female agents and customers.

OUTCOME 1

IDENTIFIED SCALABLE AND COMMERCIALY VIABLE GENDER-INTENTIONAL APPROACHES AND STRATEGIES

PROBLEM AND APPROACH

Before this project began, M-KOPA had not made gender inclusion a central focus or priority. The USAID/Microsoft Airband Initiative became instrumental in M-KOPA's efforts to discover effective and profitable strategies for engaging a previously overlooked demographic: women. They initially analyzed their existing customer base, agents, and commercial data to pinpoint areas where gender disparities existed. Then M-KOPA explored business strategies targeting women that could be both financially viable and sustainable.



OUTCOME 1

IDENTIFIED SCALABLE AND COMMERCIALY VIABLE GENDER-INTENTIONAL APPROACHES AND STRATEGIES

OUTCOME

Kiosks: In response to initial research with female sales agents that showed that half were dissatisfied or left the job due to gender-based reasons, M-KOPA set up stationary kiosks for female sales agents. **20 kiosks** were piloted to test the concept in 2 service locations. When that proved successful, M-KOPA scaled the model across more service centers in Kenya with **almost 200 kiosks** and stationary tent sales points for female agents.

Kuza Chama Initiative: This initiative formalized engagement with chamas--informal cooperative groups comprised of both men and women used to pool and invest savings in East Africa. It was found that targeting chamas was impactful because they resulted in higher quality sales. By the end of the project, **637** chamas were reached and **2,456** smartphone phones were sold through chamas; **60%** of those sales were to women.

#BreakTheBias Campaign: This campaign challenged misconceptions about women's purchasing behaviors. M-KOPA incentivized sales agents to increase smartphone sales to women by providing an extra bonus for every smartphone sale made to a woman. During the month of the campaign, the percentage of female customers increased from **38%** to **40%** reaching over **34,000** new women, the highest number of new female smartphone customers during their contract period.

LESSONS LEARNED

- ▶ Testing strategies within existing commercial operations worked.
- ▶ Pilots need sufficient time for testing and data collection.
- ▶ For sales incentive programs, feedback from sales agents was that a larger incentive bonus or sales agents fully understanding how the campaign positively benefited women in their community might have led to increased sales.

OUTCOME 2

GREATER AWARENESS AND BUY-IN TO INCORPORATE A GENDER LENS IN THEIR COMMERCIAL STRATEGY

PROBLEM AND APPROACH

Prior to the project, there were not many conversations or strategies related to gender at M-KOPA. At an event attended by staff from all levels in April 2023, participants brainstormed how they could be more aware of existing gender disparities, how to use data, and how to make their products more gender intentional to increase sales.

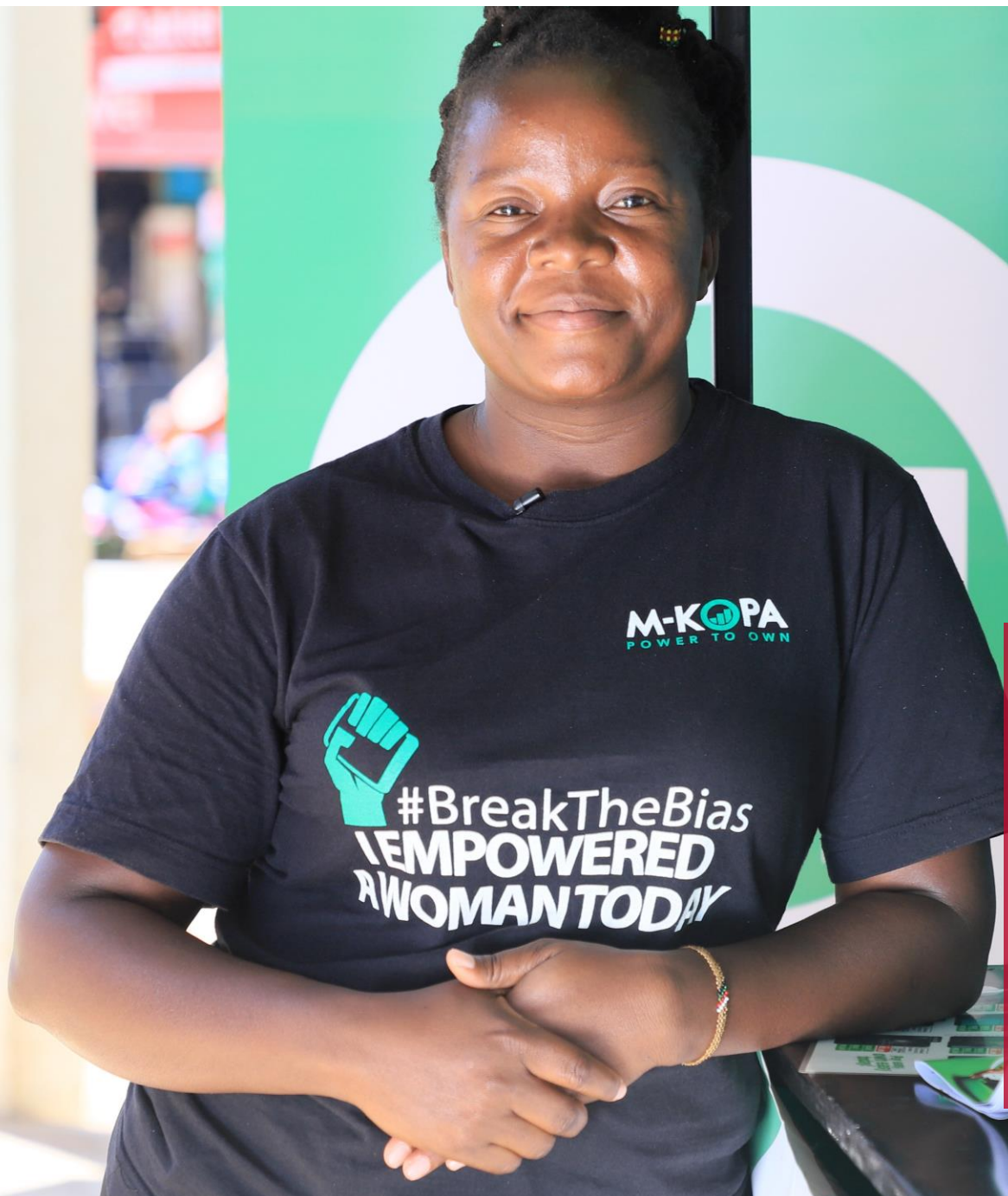
OUTCOME

The results of the project contributed to bringing about greater awareness to look at practices from a gender lens:

- Inclusive hiring practices were also instilled by this project. By the end of the project, M-KOPA recruited and trained **6,449 female sales agents (52% of all sales agents)**.
- M-KOPA also put together an **Impact Strategy**, which they aim to roll out at the end of the year to all their markets, that provides guidance for each department and market to help them develop gender intentional actions and targets.
- A **Gender Lens & Action Toolkit** was developed to help different teams within M-KOPA assess their work through a gender lens, identify areas of opportunity and action, and commit to these actions through the course of the year with clear KPIs.

LESSONS LEARNED

- ▶ The MVP approach requires staff to be grounded, empathetic, good communicators, and code-switchers, equally comfortable in all dialects and social registers to engage with stakeholders from across the social spectrum.
- ▶ Need to include diverse subject-area experts to develop innovative programming.



M-KOPA #BreaktheBias Campaign

OUTCOME 3

INCREASED ACCESS TO SMARTPHONES AND DIGITAL SKILLS FOR WOMEN

PROBLEM AND APPROACH

Despite increased smartphone penetration across the country, Kenyan women are still less likely than men to own a mobile phone or use mobile internet. In Kenya, **59% of men** have adopted mobile internet practices compared to only **39% of women**. The project contributed to the development of female focused sales strategies that led to more women owning smartphones and developing digital skills.

OUTCOME

Over the course of the project, of the 682,000 phones sold, **258,000 of them were sold to women** (38%). M-KOPA saw their highest sales numbers, reaching over 83,931 new customers (**34,000 were women**), during the #BreakTheBias campaign and after the roll out of the Kuza Chama Initiative and kiosks.

M-KOPA developed digital skills trainings for their sales agents and chama members. The M-KOPA Academy, a digital learning management system, was developed to provide interactive training on sales skills, product knowledge, and professional development for sales agents.

LESSONS LEARNED

- ▶ Training sales agents increased their perceived ability to make sales.
- ▶ Access to smartphones helped female sales agents make sales.
- ▶ Female customers use their smartphones for business.

OUTCOME 4

IMPROVED QUALITY OF LIFE AND INCOME FOR FEMALE CUSTOMERS AND SALES AGENTS

PROBLEM AND APPROACH

Based on the impact study, 94% of those who experienced challenges in buying a smartphone cited affordability. M-KOPA's Pay-As-You-Go model helped mitigate this issue. The sales strategies allowed more women to buy smartphones, which positively impacted their lives.

OUTCOME

The kiosk initiative increased the morale and motivation of the female sales agents to look for more sales, especially to female customers. Since working at the kiosks, **68%** of female agents at the kiosks reported that they felt significantly safer in their job. They also spent less time and money to do their job and made more sales due their central location and visibility.

Regarding smartphone usage, **83%** of women who purchased their smartphone through the Kuza Chama Initiative said that the initiative increased their awareness of smartphones and digital access. **4 in 5** female customers (56 in total) who use their smartphone for business saw an improvement in their income because of using their M-KOPA smartphone.

LESSONS LEARNED

- ▶ The kiosks improved retention of female sales agents.
- ▶ Initial focus groups with female sales agents were instrumental to designing the kiosk initiative. Focus groups identified challenges such as sales agents feeling unsafe in the field because of security concerns in the area. The kiosks were M-Kopa's solution to address these concerns and to improve the quality of life for their female sales agents.

SIGNIFICANCE AND IMPACT M-KOPA

IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS

Over the course of the project:

637 CHAMAS REACHED

2456 SMARTPHONES SOLD THROUGH THEM



1/4 WERE FIRST TIME SMARTPHONE CUSTOMERS



258K SMARTPHONES SOLD TO WOMEN



6449

FEMALE SALES AGENTS RECRUITED/TRAINED

3 MOST COMMON OUTCOMES REPORTED BY SALES AGENTS

38% *Increased savings to support family*

26% *Helped to support their children's education*

17% *Increased earnings*

*Data current as of July 2023

SIGNIFICANCE AND IMPACT

M-KOPA

OUTCOME 1

Identified Scalable and Commercially Viable Gender-Intentional Approaches and Strategies

M-KOPA adopted three main strategies to target more women while also demonstrating commercial success/scalability to business stakeholders:

1. The **kiosk approach** – setting up stationary tent sales points for female agents.
2. The **Kuza Chama Initiative**, partnering with chamas—informal cooperative groups—and relying on their gender-inclusive network to sell smartphones.
3. The **#BreakTheBias Campaign** incentivized sales agents to increase cell phone sales to women with the reward of receiving a bonus.

84%

OF SURVEYED SALES AGENTS
EXPERIENCED AN

**INCREASE IN SALES TO
WOMEN**

AS A RESULT OF THE SALES CAMPAIGN



KIOSK-BASED FEMALE SALES AGENTS
NOW SELL BETWEEN

**70 & 100 PHONES
EACH MONTH**

A SIGNIFICANT INCREASE FROM THE
5 TO 10 PHONES SOLD PREVIOUSLY

SIGNIFICANCE AND IMPACT

M-KOPA

OUTCOME 2

Greater Awareness and Buy-In to Incorporate a Gender Lens in their Commercial Strategy

- M-KOPA recruited and trained 6,449 female sales agents (52% of all sales agents).
- M-KOPA put together an Impact Strategy, which provides guidance for each department and market to help them develop gender intentional actions and targets.
- A Gender Lens & Action Toolkit was developed in 2022.

81%

OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS
REPORTED THEIR EARNINGS

INCREASED

SINCE USING THE M-KOPA
SMARTPHONE

SIGNIFICANCE AND IMPACT M-KOPA

OUTCOME 3

Increased Access to Smartphones and Digital Skills for Women

- Over the course of the project, of the **682,000 phones sold**, **258,000 of them were sold to women (38%)**.
- Through M-KOPA's Academy, **12,319 sales agents received digital upskilling trainings** to improve digital familiarity and comfortability with using digital tools to meet their commercial goals.

9 in 10

OF THE ACADEMY
PARTICIPANTS REPORTED
THAT THEIR ACQUIRED
SKILLS

INCREASED
THEIR
EARNINGS

SIGNIFICANCE AND IMPACT M-KOPA

OUTCOME 4

Improved Quality of Life and Income for Female Customers and Sales Agents

- Initiatives improved the employment conditions of female sales agents and increased their income. 89% of female sales agents saw an increase in income after working at the kiosks.
- Nine in ten female customers believed their M-KOPA smartphones led to positive changes in their quality of life, as their phones helped them make financial transactions, connect with family and friends, and access new information online.

97%

OF FEMALE SALES
AGENTS SAW A

POSITIVE
IMPACT

IN THEIR QUALITY OF LIFE
AFTER WORKING WITH
M-KOPA