



mWomen

# Case Study: Dialog's 5 Star Partner Programme

June 2014

# Dialog 5 Star Partner: An introduction



## Background

In Sri Lanka less than half the population owns a mobile connection and a large proportion of customers are not aware of the full range of mobile services. The most underserved segment in this market are rural women.

Dialog saw an opportunity to create a network of carefully selected, well trained rural retailers to drive penetration of mobile and VAS among rural communities, particularly women.

## The training programme

Dialog's 5 Star Partner training programme includes:



### Talent recruitment

Candidates were selected based on:

- Performance in a previous Dialog retailer training programme
- Location and level of community engagement
- Performance in an interview with a Dialog team member



### Mobile and business training

Retailers participate in two workshops before graduating to "5 Star Partner" status

Training content includes:

- Business management
- Social entrepreneurship
- Customer services
- Technical knowledge on Dialog's VAS



### Tailored aftercare

After graduating, retailers receive ongoing support from Dialog including:

- An exclusive hotline phone service
- SMS communication
- Branded signage and uniforms

# Benefits of training female retailers

Trained rural women retailers can help drive penetration of mobile and VAS

## Women have high levels of customer service



Research showed women in Sri Lanka are often **more comfortable** interacting with female retailers

Survey data showed that both male and female customers rated women retailers as having **better customer service**

“Women prefer to get the service from another woman due to ‘trust’ factor”  
– Female 5 Star Partner

## Women retailers support customers in their mobile understanding



Survey data showed that women retailers were more **willing to share their mobile expertise** with their customers

Female 5 Star Partners are now **serving more female eZ Cash (mobile money) customers** than their male counterparts

“I received a comprehensive knowledge of eZ Cash, now I am doing really well”  
– Female 5 Star Partner

## Trained women retailers are better business people



After training, female retailers reported better management skills and **new mobile business activities**

Women 5 Star Partners are on average selling **12% more Dialog SIMs** than they did prior to training

“Now we have diversified into services such as SIM card activation and eZ Cash”  
– Female 5 Star Partner

# Challenges of training female retailers

Successful training programmes take into account the specific needs of rural women

## Technical training needs to be tailored to women retailers

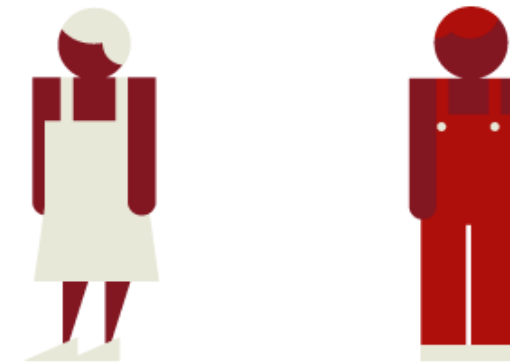


Although both male and female participants found the training valuable overall, on average **male retailers benefited more from the technical training** on Dialog's VAS.

Like women in Sri Lanka generally, **female retailers often have lower technical literacy** than men which needs to be taken into account during training.

“Need more awareness on Dialog services. They did not discuss them in detail”  
– A female 5 Star Partner on the training she received

## Cultural norms can make recruiting women more challenging



Identifying suitable female retailers in Sri Lanka was challenging as there are many fewer women retailers than men. Even once suitable female retailers were identified ~50% did not attend as they were **replaced by a husband or another male relative**.

Dialog is reviewing how their training model can be more female-friendly including:

- Allowing chaperones or more than one person to attend from each retail outlet
- Selecting appropriate training venues

“We had started this shop many years back. My husband attends all important events. I've never been.”  
– Female retailer, Hambantota

# Recommendations for operators

## Incubate and acquire capabilities

### Create a dedicated team to incubate the initiative

- A successful programme requires time and commitment
- Consider which part of your organisation should incubate mWomen initiatives such as this, until they are ready to be brought into the mainstream organisation

### Explore whether innovative partnerships could enhance your training programme, for example

- Organisations that already have useful training content
- NGOs with grassroots networks who could help recruit retailers

## Design the approach

### Ensure the most suitable person, or persons, at the retail shop is invited to the training

### Ensure the training model and arrangements accommodate the needs of women and their families, for example, consider:

- An appropriate venue
- Childcare facilities
- Inviting chaperones

### Design the technical part of the training to benefit women participants as much as men

### Include training content related to general business management and customer service

## Pilot and deliver training

### Pilot the training prior to full rollout, and leave time to evaluate and course-correct. For example pilot with

- Women and men
- Rural and urban retailers
- Conservative vs. less conservative areas

### Encourage and equip training participants to share their new knowledge and skills with others at their shop

## Provide ongoing support to retailers

### Provide post-training support to retailers through an exclusive 'hotline' phone service

### Consider other ways to keep retailers engaged after the training to drive brand loyalty and performance, for example:

- SMS communication
- Branded signage and uniforms



# Questions for operators

- Can women's customer service skills and strong social networks drive rural mobile penetration in your market?
- To what extent can well-trained female retailers grow VAS understanding and awareness amongst rural women?
- Are there particular products and services that are likely to be more popular among women, and therefore which female agents would be more successful at promoting?"
- What are the opportunities to work with local partners such as NGOs to develop a network of trained rural women retailers?

**For more information see our full report:**

[http://www.gsma.com/mobilefordevelopment/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/GSMA-mWomen\\_Dialog\\_Feb-2014\\_Final\\_web.pdf](http://www.gsma.com/mobilefordevelopment/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/GSMA-mWomen_Dialog_Feb-2014_Final_web.pdf)

