

September 2024

# Barriers, Opportunities, and Exemplars

*Women's Economic Empowerment  
and Financial Inclusion*



BILL & MELINDA  
GATES foundation



# Executive Summary

The goal of this work has been to examine a set of barriers inhibiting women's access and usage of financial services, determine which barriers are most resonant to different segments of women in different markets, and make recommendations about the kinds of interventions and programs that might help remove, mitigate, or address these barriers so women can have access to and use a range of financial services that will fit their needs. Ultimately, our goal is to remove barriers to women's economic empowerment in the financial inclusion arena.

A part of our work has been to help ensure the Inclusive Financial Systems (IFS) Team at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) is focusing on and addressing the *right* barriers to achieve their Women's Economic Empowerment and Financial Inclusion (WEE-FI) 2030 vision and strategic goals, and to understand the opportunities, challenges, available tools, and trade-offs as they set priorities and make new investment, collaboration, and advocacy decisions across the whole team.

IFS' WEE-FI Vision Statement

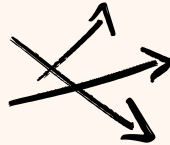
**By 2030, women will have near ubiquitous (80% adults worldwide, 60% of those who earn <\$2 a day), equal access to DFS, and can easily, safely, and confidently use them to manage their complex daily lives and aid in their aspirations, over which they have agency and control.**

# Barrier Categories

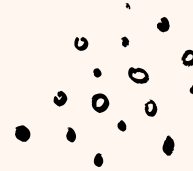
*These categories were defined by the BMGF IFS Gender Team in 2021.*



**Prerequisites**



**Accessibility**



**Cost**



**Social Norms**



**Information Availability  
& Capability**



**Product &  
Service Quality**



**Human  
Resources**



**Consumer  
Protection**

# Full List of Barriers (1 of 2)



## *Prerequisites*

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Broader legal constraints  
(e.g. male signature)

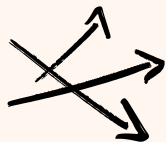
Internet/Mobile connectivity

KYC requirements

Lack of credit history  
(for credit products only)

Digital/Foundational ID

Phone/SIM ownership



## *Accessibility*

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Mobility constraints (e.g.  
legal curfews, norms)

Distance from bank/  
FSP/CICO agent



## *Cost*

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Cost of mobile/internet

Cost of using DFS  
(incl. transaction cost)

Perceived and/or  
lack of money

Non-transparent fee  
structures / hidden costs



## *Information Availability & Capability*

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Lack of peers/family/  
network who use DFS

Basic literacy and numeracy

Digital literacy

Financial literacy

Unclear or unavailable  
info about products/uses

Unclear or difficult  
process to open account

# Full List of Barriers (2 of 2)



## *Product & Service Quality*

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Reliability of payments system and network

Reliability and quality of in-person services

Lack of products that meet women's needs

Lack of products and services that create value

Navigability of user interface of the digital product



## *Consumer Protection*

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Potential (or actual) privacy violations

Predatory lending

Over-charging

Fraud and scams

Fear of making mistakes

Online/Phone/Social media harassment

Difficulty resolving complaints



## *Human Resources*

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Lack of women in leadership at DFS providers and policy-makers

Lack of female agents



## *Social Norms*

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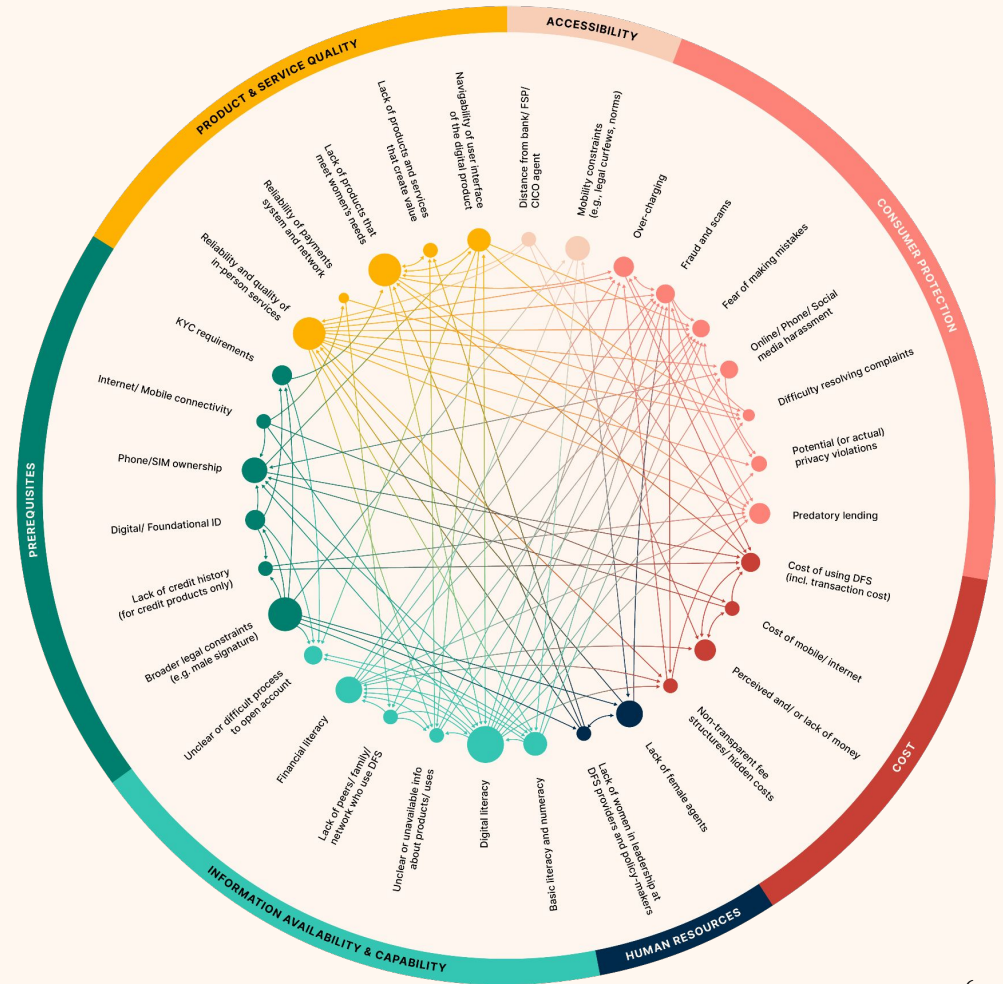
Ambivalence or antagonism towards women's financial independence

Expectation that men control HH finances

Women's disproportionate time burden

Biases that center men as financial customers

# Connected Barriers Map





The general sentiment is that *all barriers contribute to an inequitable financial system* that makes it difficult for women to access and use services and products in ways that will allow them to *achieve economic empowerment*.

All barriers are *important* and play a role in a woman's lack of ability and access to choose and use a financial product or service.



Ultimately, our intention was to try to help focus efforts in each market as we asked the following question:

**Can we identify barriers that are relevant and not yet resolved so partners can *center their programs and interventions on critical issues* facing women?**



# Financial Inclusion Segments

*In 2021, BMGF asked Mathematica to create a segmentation model that would allow us to analyse and compare women across different markets.*

**01**

Excluded, marginalized

**02**

Excluded, high potential

**03**

Included, underserved

**04**

Included, not underserved



*Lower potential for inclusion*

*Greater potential for inclusion*

# Financial Inclusion Segments

*This represents the segmentation approach as defined by Mathematica.*

## 01. Excluded, marginalized

Does **not own** a financial account  
*and*

**Has not** conducted **certain transactions** in the past 12 months  
*and either*

Does **not have** an **income source**  
(neither in the workforce nor have received a G2P payment)  
*or*

**Cannot access financial services**  
(does not have a mobile phone, and financial institutions are too far away)

## 02. Excluded, high potential

Does **not own** a financial account  
*and either*

**Has** conducted **certain transactions** in the past 12 months  
*or*

**Has** an **income source** (from being in the workforce or receiving a G2P payment)  
*and*

**Can access financial services**  
(does have a mobile phone and financial institutions are not too far away)

## 03. Included, underserved

**Owns** a financial account  
*and*

**Has not** conducted more than one type of **advanced transaction** in the past 12 months

## 04. Included, not underserved

**Owns** a financial account  
*and*

**Has** conducted more than one type of **advanced transaction** in the past 12 months



*Lower potential for inclusion*

*Greater potential for inclusion*

# Defining the Segments

## *Certain transactions*

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Certain transaction(s) include saving through a formal financial institution, borrowing through a formal financial institution, paying utility bills through a formal financial institution or mobile phone, receiving wages through a formal financial institution or mobile phone, receiving agricultural payments through a formal financial institution or mobile phone, receiving government payments through a formal financial institution or mobile phone, receiving business payments through a formal financial institution or mobile phone, paying bills online, and/or buying something online.

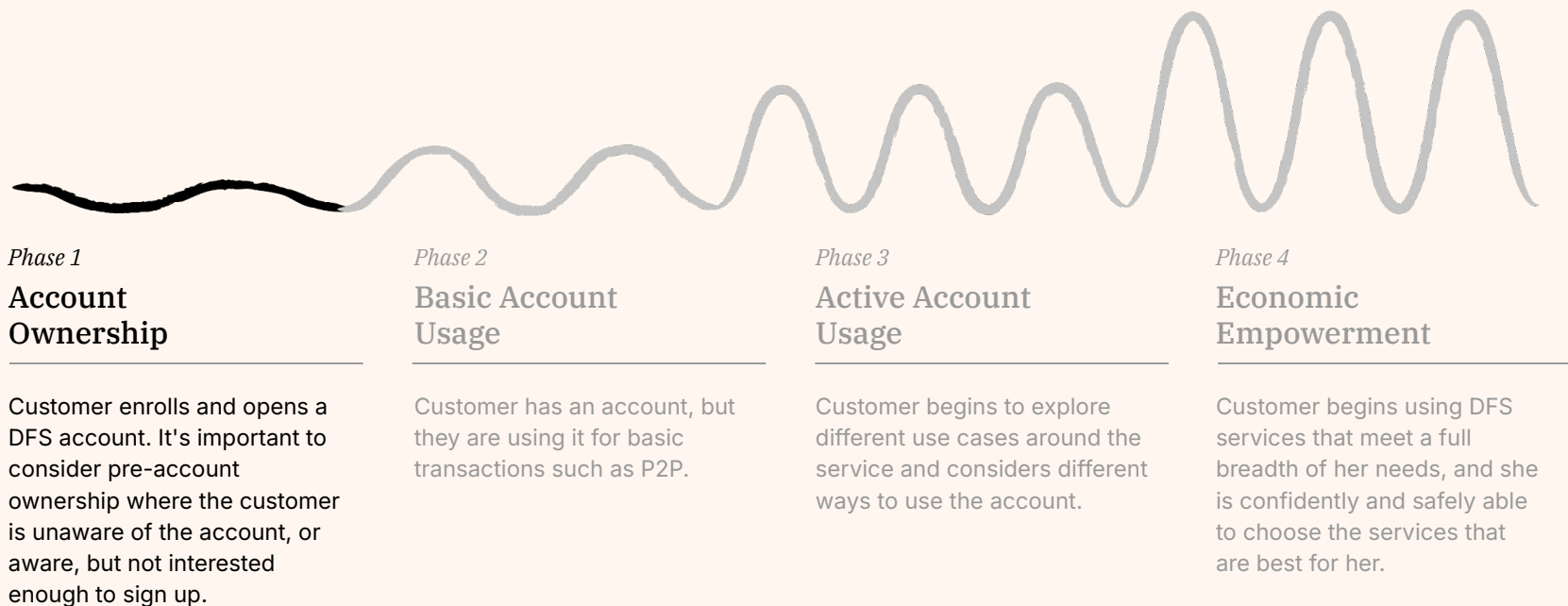
## *Advanced transactions*

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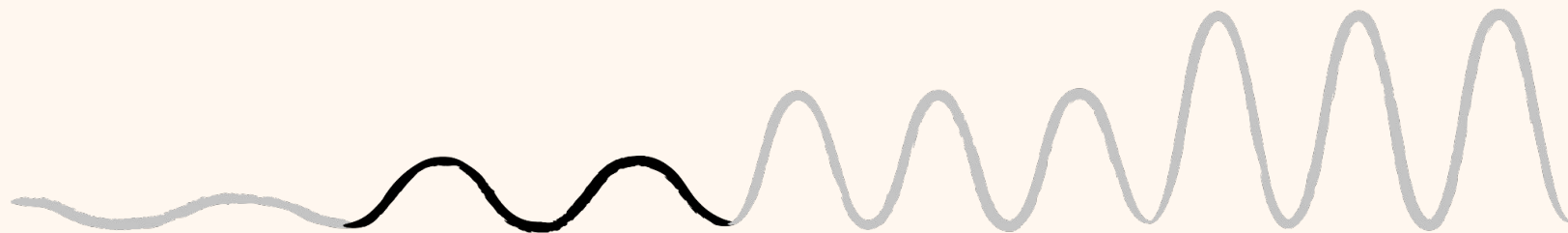
Advanced transactions include saving through a formal financial institution, borrowing through a formal financial institution, paying utility bills through a formal financial institution or mobile phone, and/or receiving wages through a formal financial institution or mobile phone.

# Customer Journey

*The financial inclusion segments are closely related to the customer journey from access to empowerment.*



# Customer Journey



## *Phase 1*

### **Account Ownership**

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Customer enrolls and opens a DFS account. It's important to consider pre-account ownership where the customer is unaware of the account, or aware, but not interested enough to sign up.

## *Phase 2*

### **Basic Account Usage**

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Customer has an account, but they are using it for basic transactions such as P2P.

## *Phase 3*

### **Active Account Usage**

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Customer begins to explore different use cases around the service and considers different ways to use the account.

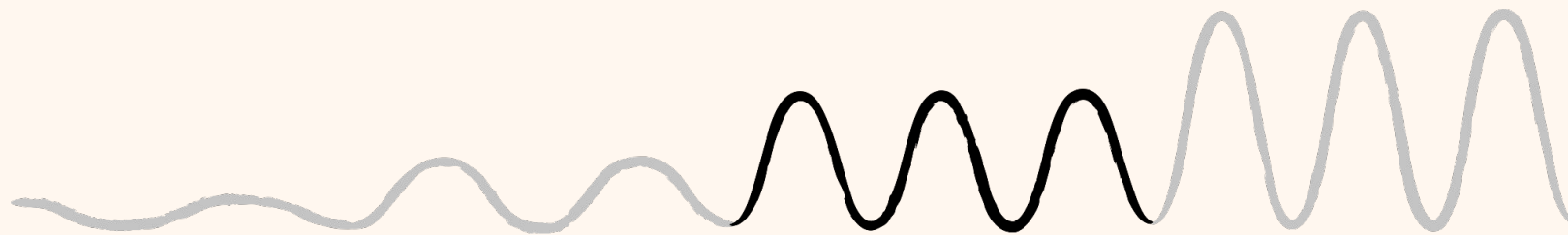
## *Phase 4*

### **Economic Empowerment**

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Customer begins using DFS services that meet a full breadth of her needs, and she is confidently and safely able to choose the services that are best for her.

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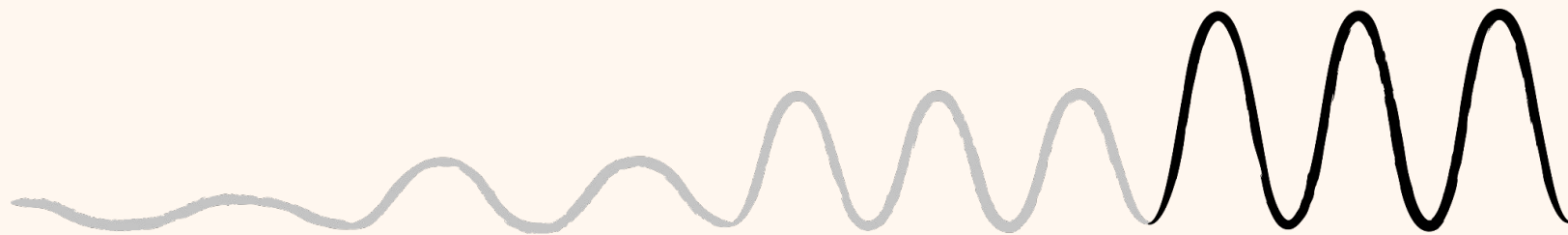
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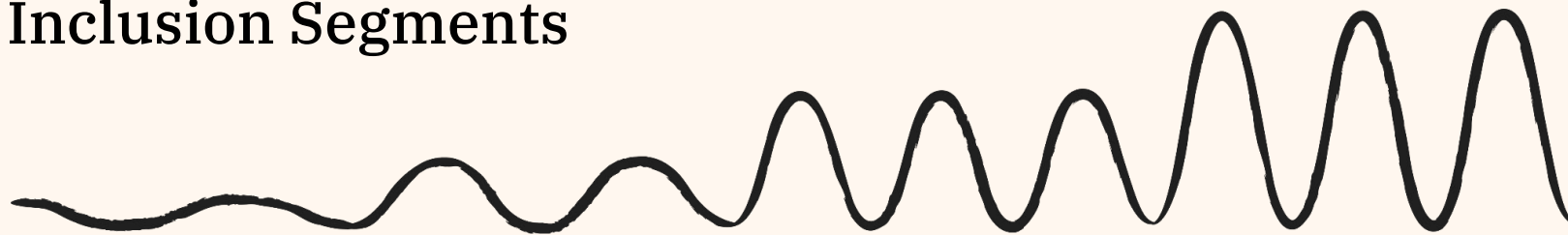
## *Phase 4*

### **Economic Empowerment**

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Customer begins using DFS services that meet a full breadth of her needs, and she is confidently and safely able to choose the services that are best for her.

# Customer Journey and Financial Inclusion Segments



*Phase 1*

**Account  
Ownership**

*Phase 2*

**Basic Account  
Usage**

*Phase 3*

**Active Account  
Usage**

*Phase 4*

**Economic  
Empowerment**

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*The financial inclusion segments are closely related to the customer journey from access to empowerment.*

Women in **Segments 1 and 2 are at the beginning phases** of their customer journey. The key barriers they face are likely to lie in the prerequisites category, such as owning a mobile phone/sim and having access to an ID. These customers also often struggle with cost, accessibility, basic numeracy and literacy, and digital literacy.

Women in **Segment 3** face many of the *same barriers* as those in Segments 1 and 2. The key difference is the *addition* of barriers that relate to **active usage**, such as product and service quality, consumer protection, and the reliability and quality of in-person services. Accessibility is less of an issue, though proximity to reliable agent networks can still present issues.



# Relevant Barriers Per Segment

# Barriers Relevant Across All Four Segments

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*Prerequisites*

Broader legal constraints (e.g. male signature)

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*Cost*

Cost of using DFS (incl. transaction cost)

Cost of mobile/internet

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*Social Norms*

Biases that center men as financial customers

Expectation that men control HH finances

Ambivalence or antagonism towards women's financial independence

Women's disproportionate time burden

Lack of female agents

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*Human  
Resources*

Key barriers for **Segments 1 and 2** are many, with a focus on **Prerequisites**, **Cost**, **Accessibility**, and **Information**.

<i>Prerequisites</i>	Phone/SIM ownership Digital/Foundational ID Broader legal constraints (e.g. male signature)
<i>Cost</i>	Cost of using DFS (incl. transaction cost) Perceived and/or lack of money Cost of mobile/internet
<i>Information Availability &amp; Capability</i>	Basic literacy and numeracy Digital literacy Unclear or unavailable info about products/uses Lack of peers/family/network who use DFS
<i>Accessibility</i>	Distance from bank/FSP/CICO agent
<i>Social Norms</i>	Biases that center men as financial customers Expectation that men control household (HH) finances Ambivalence or antagonism towards women's financial independence Women's disproportionate time burden
<i>Human resources</i>	Lack of female agents

While **Segment 3** faces many of the same barriers as Segments 1 and 2, key differences lie in **Product & Service Quality**, and **Consumer Protection**.

*Prerequisites*

Digital/Foundational ID

Broader legal constraints (e.g. male signature)

**Lack of credit history (for credit products only)**

*Cost*

Cost of using DFS (incl. transaction cost)

Cost of mobile/internet

*Information Availability & Capability*

Basic literacy and numeracy

Digital literacy

Unclear or unavailable info about products/uses

Lack of peers/family/network who use DFS

*Social Norms*

Biases that center men as financial customers

Expectation that men control household (HH) finances

Ambivalence or antagonism towards women's financial independence

Women's disproportionate time burden

*Human resources*

Lack of female agents

*Accessibility*

Distance from bank/FSP/CICO agent

*Product & Service Quality*

Lack of products that meet women's needs

**Reliability of payments system and network**

**Lack of products and services that create value**

**Reliability and quality of in-person services**


*Consumer Protection*

**Over-charging**

Based on *Findex data* and analysis of other sources, some barriers typical for the largest represented segments in each market may be *more or less relevant based on local context*. This doesn't mean other barriers should be ignored or deprioritized. Rather, in all markets, *one should take a contextualized approach* to determine which barriers need to be addressed more urgently than others based on what has already been resolved and attempted in the market.

All of our reference materials live on the internet as a set of public goods. They are free to download and access.


Women's Economic Empowerment & Financial Inclusion Home Resources About



### Barriers, Opportunities, and Exemplars

The goal of this work has been to examine a set of barriers inhibiting women's access to and usage of financial services, in order to determine which barriers are most relevant to different segments of women in different markets. Ultimately, we intend to suggest which types of interventions can address those critical barriers.

I want to explore



We believe that if we, as an industry, can align on an approach to addressing the key barriers to women's

# Thank you!

*For questions please contact:*

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