



# Global Sisters Measuring up for growth

This case study is designed to help those interested or engaged in impact measurement by providing insights into the learnings from the development and ongoing evolution of Global Sisters' Outcome and Impact Measurement (OIM) processes.

## Key take outs

- Global Sisters' OIM has supported growth through providing: confidence to scale their operations; insight into their customer experience; evidence to help develop new initiatives; and timely feedback to enable continuous improvement.
- Investment in developing impact domains as part of the launch of Global Sisters provided clarity and supported prioritisation of activities.
- Engagement with their customers (Sisters) to develop and refine their OIM has provided Global Sisters with a strong evidence-base for their impact domains and confidence to scale.
- Global Sisters have been careful to ensure that their ambitions for scale did not adversely impact their ability to continue to make an impact for Sisters.
- Using simple OIM technology systems in the initial organisational development and implementation phases would have allowed Global Sisters to be clearer on what OIM technology-based tools are most appropriate for the complexity of their programs and the way they want to measure and report their outcomes.
- Recognising that many of the traditional approaches to OIM don't reflect diverse female perspectives, Global Sisters seeks to provide accessible reporting. This supports accountability and transparency.



# About Global Sisters

Global Sisters provides women opportunities to improve their financial situation through micro business. By providing accessible pathways and support to entrepreneurship, Global Sisters aims to support participants (called Sisters) to be self-employed and financially resilient.

The not-for-profit organisation works with women across Australia, including single mothers and women over 50 who are unemployed or under-employed due to systemic and structural barriers. They support Sisters through all stages of business development – from business ideation to business growth.

The organisation was officially launched in 2016 and offers a number of programs at no charge to Sisters. Programs are designed around a Sister Roadmap (Figure 1).

Sisters can enter the program at any stage of business and access the programs and tools that they need at that point in time including business education, business coaching, microfinance and digital sales and marketing support via The Marketplace.

Figure 1 - Sister Roadmap



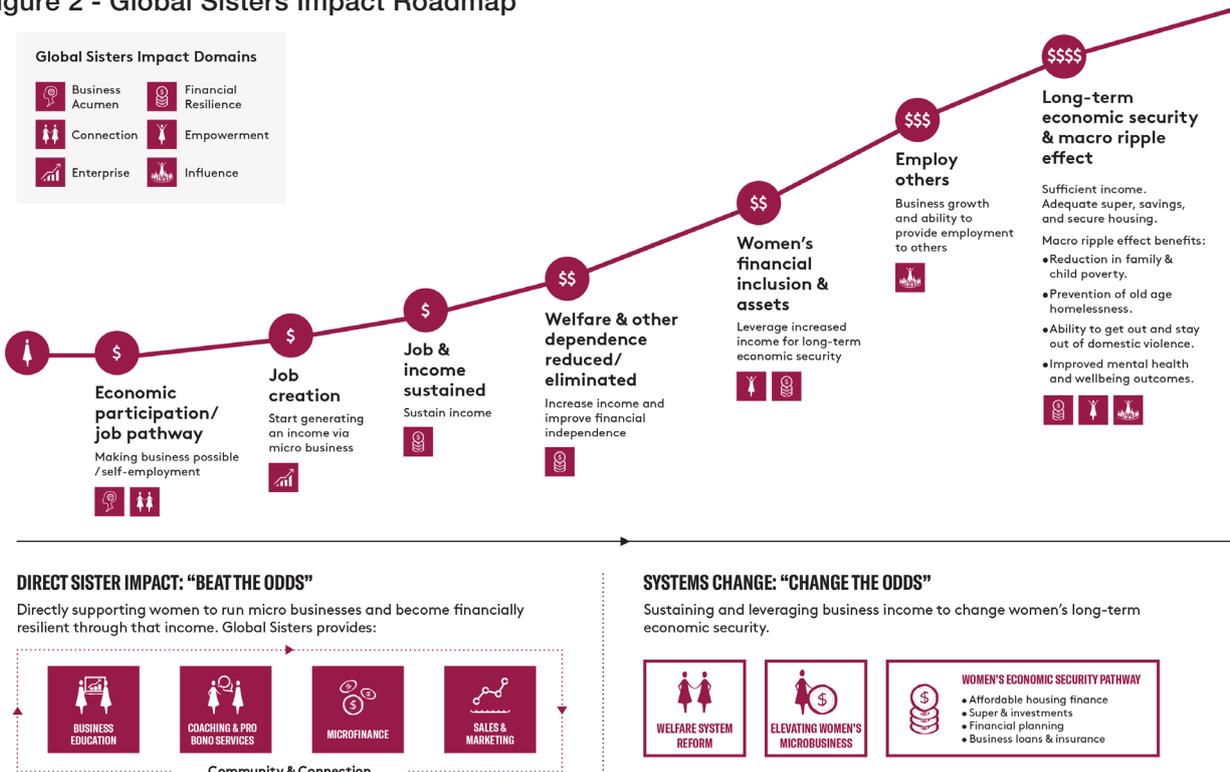
# Measuring impact

Global Sisters have developed a Social Impact Platform that identifies and measures their impact across the six domains below.

 <h2>1. Business Acumen</h2> <p>Sisters have established and embedded strong business foundations through the enhancement of knowledge, skills and networks.</p>	 <h2>2. Enterprise</h2> <p>Sisters develop the business, moving forward in business stages with the ultimate goal being income generation and a sustainable business</p>
 <h2>3. Financial Resilience</h2> <p>Sisters have strengthened financial resilience.</p>	 <h2>4. Empowerment</h2> <p>Sisters see themselves as a real businesswoman, with dignity, opportunity, freedom and choice</p>
 <h2>5. Influence</h2> <p>Sisters actively create connection, networks and opportunities with and for others. Their growing leadership capability has a positive ripple effect on their family and community.</p>	 <h2>6. Connection</h2> <p>Sisters belong to a community of likeminded women. They are stronger with others and lift each other up. They connect with local and national business opportunities, network and support.</p>

Each year Global Sisters provide reporting on their activity and impact via the [Global Sisters Impact Report online portal](#). This reports on the various stages of their Impacts Roadmap (Figure 2).

Figure 2 - Global Sisters Impact Roadmap



# A plan for growth

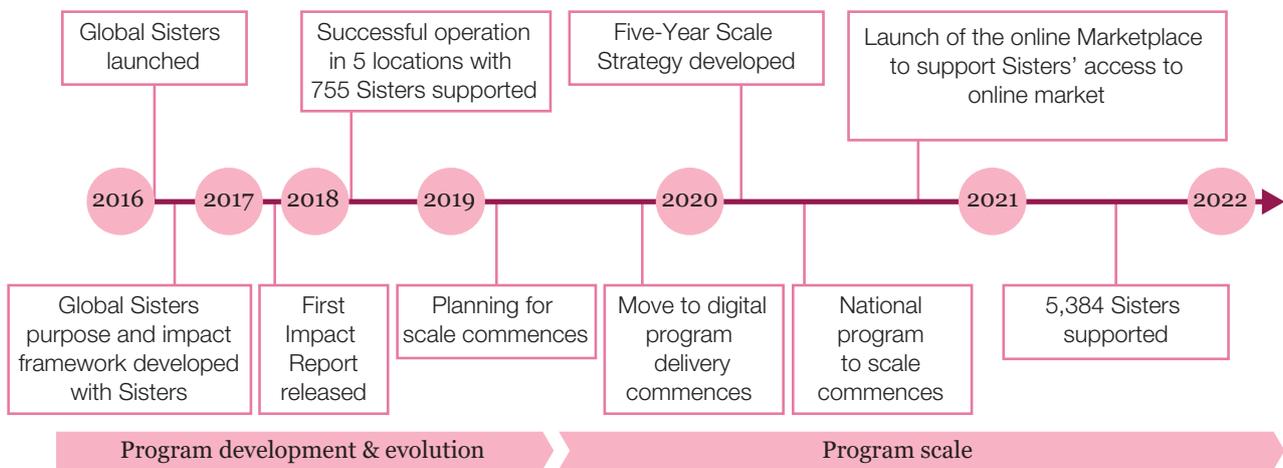
Global Sisters launched operations in 2016 and the focus of the first three years of operation was on developing and refining the support for Sisters. Since 2019, there has been a focus on increasing the impact of Global Sisters through scaling the program, predominantly through digital transformation to enable Sisters to access the program from anywhere in Australia.

The Global Sisters 5 Year Scale Strategy detailed the organisation’s plan for scaling activities through:

- increasing Sister impact
- facilitating systems change
- supporting the organisation’s financial sustainability and governance.

The Strategy sets out a number of goals regarding the increased Sister impact of scale.

**Figure 3 - Global Sisters Timeline**



## Global Sisters Impact Goals

**Figure 4 - Global Sisters Impact Goals**



Source: Global Sisters 5 Year Scale Strategy

The digital transformation process involved the automation of systems and processes to transition from a mainly place-based service to a full roadmap of programs, tools and customer experience in an online environment. At the same time, Global Sisters also undertook a review of their OIM and, as a result, implemented their

new Measurement, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) Framework. One of the key areas of focus of the Framework was identifying how Global Sisters would measure their impact, and ensuring that the processes for collecting data on the experience and outcomes for Sisters was appropriate to their new online program delivery.

# Unlocking opportunities through lockdown

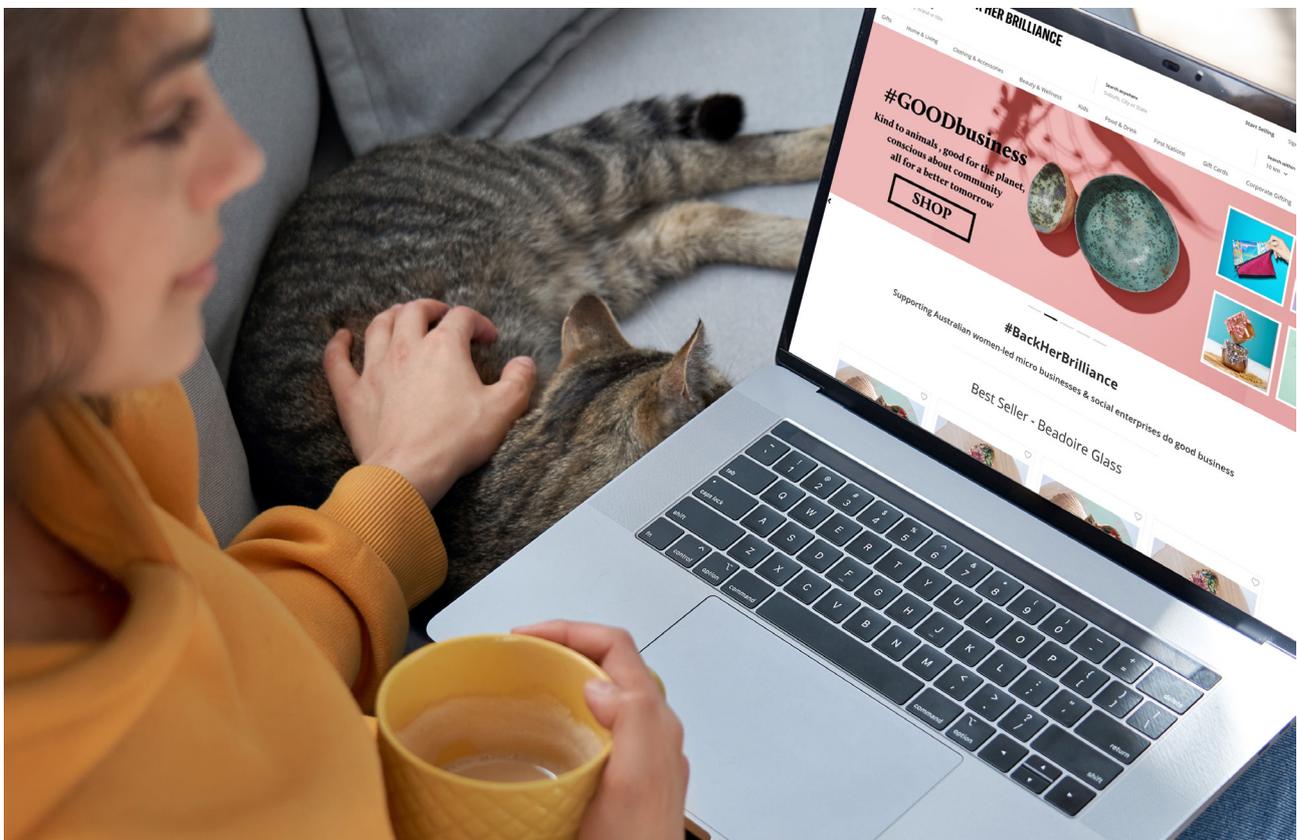
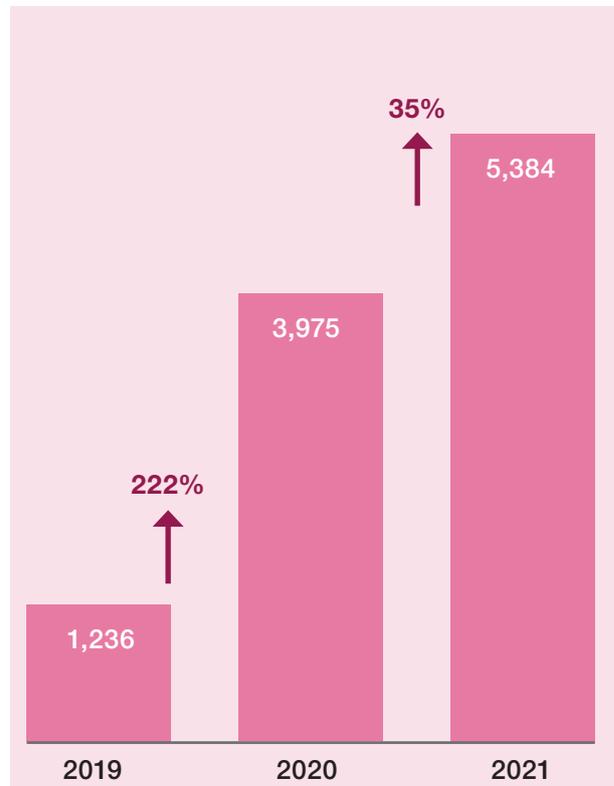
At the same time that Global Sisters launched their transition to digital service delivery, Australia was impacted by lockdowns as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This saw women being disproportionately impacted by job losses or removal from the workforce, increased caring responsibilities with schools and other services shut down and increased rates of domestic violence.<sup>1</sup>

To support women seeking to increase their financial resilience, Global Sisters accelerated their digital transformation program to enable women all over Australia to access their programs and support. This saw the number of Sisters supported by the program grow more than threefold in 2020.

Limited or non-existent face-to-face retail opportunities during the 2020-21 lockdown periods also posed a significant challenge for Sisters' businesses, many of whom traded through farmers markets or other in-person retail channels. As a result, Global Sisters launched the Global Sisters Marketplace in November 2020. The Marketplace is the first online sales portal in Australia to support women-led micro businesses.

Within a year, the Marketplace had 315 Sisters selling on it and had generated almost \$125,000 in sales.

Figure 5 - Number of Sisters supported by Global Sisters



<sup>1</sup> Global Sisters (n.d) The role of Global Sisters in the post pandemic recovery. Available at [impact.globalsisters.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/GS210413-Post-Pandemic-Recovery-Paper.pdf](https://impact.globalsisters.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/GS210413-Post-Pandemic-Recovery-Paper.pdf)

# Using OIM to support scale

Global Sisters' OIM activities supported their focus on scaling their programs and impact through providing:

- Confidence to scale
- Timely feedback for continuous improvement
- Evidence for development of new initiatives
- Insight into customer experience.



## Confidence to scale

Global Sisters' OIM has been a focus for the organisation since it launched in 2016. This has allowed Global Sisters to demonstrate progress against their six impact domains.

This evidence of impact allowed Global Sisters to plan for scale with confidence that their program was appropriate and effective.

## Evidence for development of new initiatives

Impact data collected against the Financial Resilience domain helped identify the need for Sisters to access a suite of appropriate, affordable and accessible financial products and services. This led to Global Sisters developing a Systems Change Strategy and working with Ecstra to build out a roadmap of financial products and services designed with women's voices front and centre.

## Timely feedback for continuous improvement

The implementation of Global Sisters' MEAL Framework included the integration of rapid evaluation. This provided timely insight into which elements of the digital Global Sisters program were working (and what wasn't) and supported a dynamic approach to continuous improvement.

This was particularly valuable within the condensed timeframe of the digital transformation project as Global Sisters attempted to meet the growing demand for the program as a result of COVID-19.

## Insight into customer experience

Hearing from Sisters is a key element of Global Sisters' OIM. This has provided invaluable insight into Sisters' experience of the program, supporting Global Sisters to evolve their model as they scale up.

For example, by mapping Sisters' journeys through the program, Global Sisters identified that Sisters were accessing programs and support at different points in their business' development rather than going through the program in a particular sequence. This helped inform Global Sisters' digital transformation and ensure that the program design corresponds to the way Sisters use the program.

# OIM learnings for the sector

Global Sisters is now in their sixth year of operation and has successfully commenced their journey to achieving scale and helping to support 43,000 Sisters by 2025. Reflecting on their learnings regarding OIM, Global Sisters has five key pieces of advice for other impact organisations.

## 1. Be clear on the impact you want to make and stick to it

Global Sisters spent a considerable amount of time and effort during their start-up phase identifying their impact domains. This allowed them to identify which activities they should focus on to facilitate the outcomes they wanted for Sisters.

**The most important thing is just to be super clear on the impact that you want to create. It sounds so simple, but if you are crystal clear on what you want to achieve, then then you just work backwards from that.**

*Global Sisters Management*

Clearly defined impact domains also helped Global Sisters to develop their OIM Framework to ensure that they had the appropriate indicators for their intended outcomes.

## 2. Involve your customers from the beginning

Engagement with Sisters has been at the heart of the development and continual refinement of Global Sisters' OIM. This has allowed Global Sisters to be confident in their impact domains, as they reflect the feedback of Sisters on the impact that the support provided by Global Sisters has on their lives and the lives of their family and community.

**In the very early days we engaged with our Sisters to truly understand what changes they wanted to see in their own lives and developed our impact domains off the back of that.**

*Global Sisters Management*

Sisters' feedback has also been vital in supporting the growth of Global Sisters. By seeking regular feedback from Sisters on new initiatives through rapid evaluations, Global Sisters has been able to quickly identify learnings and implement appropriate continuous improvement initiatives to support the quality of their programs.



### 3. Balance your ability to make impact and your ambitions for scale

As a social impact organisation, Global Sisters is passionate about providing opportunities for as many women as possible to create their own economic future. However, they have been very cautious to avoid the potential for ambitions of scale to reduce the quality of their programs and therefore their ability to impact Sisters' lives.

This cautious approach to scale is demonstrated through Global Sisters' initial focus on the development and evolution of the programs and ensuring that they were confident in their ability to affect their intended impact prior to commencing strategic planning for scale.

**We've always had conversations around trying to get the balance right between scale and impact. While it's important to us to scale we never wanted to do that at the expense of deep and lasting impact.**

*Global Sisters Management*

### 4. Learn what you want to measure before you invest in costly technology-based OIM tools

While Global Sisters was clear on their outcome measures, it has taken several years to develop an understanding of which OIM tools are most appropriate to help them measure and report on their outcomes.

**Keep it really, really simple. It doesn't matter if your measures aren't perfect, just keep tracking over time, align to your original purpose and mission, and you'll be right.**

*Global Sisters Management*

Based on their experience, Global Sisters suggests that other impact organisations keep their initial OIM system simple and refine this approach over time. This will provide an opportunity to learn what support is needed and avoid investment in OIM tools or systems that may not provide the required support or insight.

### 5. Challenge the status quo

Global Sisters recognises that many of the traditional approaches to measuring and reporting social impact don't reflect diverse female perspectives relevant to the outcomes that Global Sisters are aiming to achieve. Global Sisters pushes against embedded beliefs that traditional methods and overly intellectual language to communicate findings are indicators of rigour, compared to more accessible approaches. By using visual and interactive reporting, Global Sisters aims to ensure that all stakeholders (including Sisters) can make sense of their key impact insights, which improves accountability and the likelihood of learnings being engaged with and utilised by both internal and external stakeholders.

Global Sisters' online Social Impact Platform provides its audience with key data and insights, allowing users to interact with reporting dynamically. This reflects Global Sisters' commitment to being transparent on the impact they are trying to achieve for Sisters. Aligning data collection with key phases in a Sister's journey improved data quality and allowed for key outcomes of interest to be highlighted within reporting. By having reporting available online, Global Sisters can provide timely updates on their impact and can utilise their strong visual identity and various multimedia formats such as video and infographics to engage their OIM audience. Tying everything together is a focus on democratising reporting by providing a platform for Sisters to share their journeys and experience. This helps create a personal connection and provides a depth of insight that would not be possible using quantitative data alone.

For more information on Global Sisters visit [globalsisters.org](https://globalsisters.org) and to find out more about the impact the program is having view the [Global Sisters Social Impact Platform](#).

*This case study part of a series of case studies following Global Sisters' approach to outcome and impact measurement (OIM) and how they use OIM to support growth and scale.*

*The case studies are funded by the Department of Social Services (DSS) to provide information to the social impact investing sector to better understand, define, measure and communicate their non-financial social outcomes and impact.*