



Grand Challenges Canada®  
Grands Défis Canada

## Gender Equality Case Study: Ayzh



Ayzh is an organization that meets the GE3 criteria<sup>1</sup>, and demonstrates its intentionality through not only serving women as beneficiaries, but also having an explicit focus on adolescent health, as well as Reproductive, Maternal Newborn, and Child Health (RMNCH) with a gender-based mission and vision.

### THE CHALLENGE

Approximately **1 million** mothers and babies die annually due to complications relating to childbirth. Over **95 percent** of these deaths occur in lower-and middle-income countries, and many are preventable.

### THE INNOVATION

Through affordable medical kits, such as its Clean Birth kit and Postpartum Mother Care kit, ayzh aims to:

- Help rural and semi-urban women deliver in a safe and hygienic atmosphere
- Promote social empowerment through education around sexual and reproductive health
- Create avenues for economic empowerment through its 'for Women by Women' for-profit business model.

### EXAMINING GENDER-BASED CAUSES OF MATERNAL MORTALITY

- Fewer females generally seek treatment or are able to access educational resources
  - Gendered stigma and cultural norms associated with women seeking care and resources around sexual and reproductive health and family planning
  - Risk of maternal mortality highest in adolescent girls who tend to lack the agency and self-efficacy to participate in decision-making in maternal care
- Geographic or economic barriers to accessing antenatal care
  - Direct causes of maternal death (e.g., hemorrhage, hypertension, unsafe abortion) particularly affect women who are poorer, migrants, or rural-dwelling.

### GENDER STRATEGY: AREAS OF FOCUS

- **Data collection and intentional product design**
  - Engage women for feedback in each stage of product development
- **Addressing systemic gender challenges**
  - Expand efforts around education and advocacy in spaces of menstrual hygiene and family planning, thereby promoting equality in decision-making and addressing significant barriers that prevent women and girls from accessing quality health care
  - Utilize strategic partnerships to expand distribution to under-served regions and hard-to-reach groups of women
- **Community-based distribution system**
  - Build into scaling initiatives a deliberate focus on impact on local economy and community through job creation, training, and empowerment opportunities for women
- **Workplace culture and governance**
  - Commitment to a minimum 50/50 distribution of male and female leadership at all levels
  - Develop Human Resources policies and procedures around: parental leave, wage equity, sexual harassment prevention and response, and adherence to international labour standards
  - Develop targeted initiatives to increase workplace Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) access.



<sup>1</sup> Grand Challenges Canada applies a gender equality coding system to funding candidates during the due diligence process. The GE3 rating notes that gender equality outcomes are the targeted or principle purpose for undertaking the initiative.