

2026-30 strategy: Embed, scale, impact



About the GDC

The Global Distributors Collective (GDC) is an international network of 300 last mile distributors (LMDs), operating in more than 60 countries around the world, that sell beneficial products such as solar lights, improved cooking solutions, and water filters to underserved customers.

Our 2030 goal

GDC members have strengthened their businesses and increased their reach from 44 million customers (cumulatively), to 150 million; 75% of whom will be first time purchasers of the beneficial product. Inclusive outcomes for women and young people will be embedded in enterprise growth. To achieve our 2030 goal, we will:

1. **Help distributors improve business performance and grow**, by providing – and enabling others to provide – solutions and services that help save time, reduce costs, build capacity, and develop catalytic partnerships.
2. **Act at the system level** to unlock greater flows of appropriate capital, improve policy and investment frameworks, and elevate the collective voice of locally led distributors, accelerating market creation beyond our direct membership.

GDC's endgame

The GDC's role is to integrate the systems, capital flows, and collective capabilities that allow locally led distributors to thrive, without relying on the GDC as a central hub. By 2030, we aim for the sector to begin standing on its own – anchored by strong country demonstrators, shared data and finance mechanisms, and a valued collective voice.

GDC's journey to date

We have built a thriving community of over 300 LMDs and have supported them to grow:

82% of members said that joining the GDC had increased their knowledge and job skills

96% of members would recommend the GDC to other distributors

We have raised the visibility of LMDs and built a collective voice for the sector:

- Over a quarter of GDC members surveyed secured **new collaborations** through the GDC.
- We have put LMDs 'on the map', **increasing credibility** among funders, investors, and policymakers.
- We have helped **unlock financing and recognition** for smaller, locally led distributors.

Vision

A world in which all communities have access to beneficial products that improve their lives.

Mission

To help LMDs make beneficial products available and affordable to all.



Sales agent showing a potential customer a solar light
Photo credit: Practical Action

The problem and the opportunity

Billions of people in the hardest-to-serve markets still lack access to beneficial products that improve their lives because of a lack of awareness, affordability, and availability.

LMDs are uniquely placed to bridge this gap:

- They specialise in building inclusive, sustainable markets, introducing a new product into an area and creating demand through sales agents and community distribution channels.
- They are embedded in their communities, trusted by their customers, and have deep local market knowledge.
- They are resilient, adaptive, and operate with low overheads.

Farmer irrigating his land using a hose attached to a solar-powered water pump
Photo credit: Practical Action



But challenges remain...

- LMDs often operate without the recognition, resources, or influence they need to fully unlock their potential.
- Persistent gaps in access to finance, tailored skills development, and a dual understanding of how to engage with and benefit from the support of the wider ecosystem hold them back.

GDC set up (2018–21)

Develop (2022–25)

Embed and scale (2026–30)

What is different about our 2026–30 strategy?

We will...

- Shift from creating tools to embedding and scaling what works, through AI-enabled technology, local language delivery, and delivering through partners.
- Anchor our activities in sub-Saharan Africa, with a focus on one to two countries through the creation of country demonstrators, to influence national-level systems and unlock local financing, while ultimately remaining a global platform.
- Explore creating dedicated LMD finance vehicles and shared services.
- Have a stronger focus on systemic change and catalytic interventions.

How we will work

- **Unlock finance:** we will prepare more LMDs for investment, help to unlock country-level financing mechanisms, and create LMD-focussed debt facilities.
- **Shape systems and local leadership:** we will build country demonstrators and influence global and national agendas so that LMDs are visible, valued, and represented.
- **Scale innovation:** we will identify, test, and replicate high-value business innovations and remove ecosystem barriers.
- **Strengthen business performance:** we will deliver training, shared services, and data tools that reduce business costs and improve efficiency, in scalable formats.

As vital market creators, LMDs need greater recognition, targeted support, and meaningful inclusion in system-level discussions so they can access the resources, partnerships, and visibility required to sustain and scale their impact.



It's an amazing community for last mile distributors. It's a gold mine. We have gotten so much help through them. Membership has helped us attract partnerships, and the GDC funding database has helped us get to know donors who will fund the work we do.

Kukula Solar, GDC member operating in Zambia and Malawi



GDC values



We put members first

We are driven by member needs, and by having deep and continuous engagement with members. We particularly seek to profile and strengthen locally and women-led members, who constitute 88 per cent and 47 per cent of GDC membership, respectively.



We maintain neutrality

We do not promote or prefer individual members, products, suppliers, or service providers. We seek to provide impartial information that helps members make informed decisions.



We are transparent

We are transparent in how we are governed, what we are learning, what activities we undertake, and why.



We are collaborative

We seek to co-create solutions with members and partners, and help others to deliver as much as possible rather than doing everything ourselves.



We act boldly

Given the size and urgency of the challenge, we want to take bold action to support LMDs.

Why is the GDC important now?

The GDC is the only global platform dedicated to strengthening LMDs – companies that reach low-income customers at scale and deliver strong social returns. With 300 members already active across over 60 countries, the GDC has built a trusted, representative mechanism for supporting LMDs and channelling donor investment efficiently.

In a nutshell

We will continue to offer the services valued by our members, but our emphasis will shift from creating these services to ensuring that they take root, are at scale, and deliver a lasting sector-wide impact.

**Global
Distributors
Collective**

Contact

GDC@practicalaction.org.uk

<https://globaldistributorscollective.org/>

**Practical
ACTION**

**bop
inc**

The GDC is hosted by Practical Action alongside strategic and implementing partner Bopinc