

TARGET GENDER EQUALITY: THE BUSINESS OF INCLUSION

THE CHALLENGE:

Globally, since 1991, the share of women's participation in the labour force has grown, albeit with differences from region to region and within regions. Research by the ILO also indicates that the share of women in managerial positions across the globe is growing considerably. However, this growth has been evidently subpar in Africa and the Middle East; and more importantly, has yet to lead to a major shift in the gender composition of senior leadership and decision-making positions within companies on a major scale.

Gender balance, both in the general workforce or among senior managers, is defined as 40-60 per cent of either gender. Yet, per an ILO global survey of almost 13,000 enterprises in 70 countries, nearly half of enterprises reported that women hold fewer than 30 per cent of entry-level management positions. Consequently, it is no surprise that in 60 per cent of companies, fewer than 30 per cent of senior managers and top executives are women.

In the 'business space', it is no longer news that there are more female entrepreneurs in Africa than there are in any other continent, with African women more likely than African men to start a business at a rate of one in four choosing to explore entrepreneurship. Small businesses are the backbone of the continent's economy, thus women – as both homemakers and business owners – are the true backbone of Africa's economy.

Yet, despite these significant facts, which point to massive potential for women-led economic transformation at the macro level, African women still face severe challenges in accessing financial services.

For instance, they are less likely to receive formal funding from private equity investors, bank loans are inaccessible to most, and many lack the network to find and access angel investors.

The African Development Bank (AfDB) estimates that the funding gap between men and women in Africa stands at about \$42 billion. That is a significant opportunity left on the table, and a barrier to Africa's growth. It becomes more troubling when we see that women reinvest up to 90% of their income into their family compared to 40 – 30% for men and are, thus, capable of stirring growth at the micro-level.

THE IMPERATIVE

Without argument, gender inclusion is more than a mere moral or institutional requirement; it is also the smart thing to do. Equality and empowerment are critical means to a broad end—development that is environmentally and socially sustainable—as well as vital linchpins for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Societies fall behind when half their citizens cannot live to their full potential. Economies lag when half a country's productive adults have inadequate capabilities, are excluded from the formal labour market, cannot gain access to credit, or are subjected to violence.

Innovation stagnates when the thoughts and ideas of half the people are unheard or discounted. Corruption flourishes when those in power are not accountable to half the population. Families struggle when half the adults do not have access to good jobs with decent working conditions, and children are less likely to thrive when their mothers lack control over household resources.

The evidence is overwhelming and unambiguous: women's empowerment and gender equality drive development progress. The ways in which equality and empowerment advance development objectives can be seen by analyzing a few key drivers for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals

THE UN GLOBAL COMPACT RESPONSE: TARGET GENDER EQUALITY

As a major part of its role in mobilizing companies and organizations to fully integrate Corporate Gender Equality and Decent Work into their strategy and operations, the UN Global Compact has developed a key Global Impact Initiative, *Target Gender Equality*.

Target Gender Equality is a gender equality accelerator programme for participating companies of the UN Global Compact. Through facilitated performance analysis, capacity building workshops, peer-to-peer learning and multi-stakeholder dialogue at the country-level, Target Gender Equality will support companies engaged with the UN Global Compact in setting and reaching ambitious corporate targets for women's representation and leadership, starting with the Board and Executive Management levels.

Companies participating in Target Gender Equality have the opportunity to deepen implementation of the Women's Empowerment Principles and strengthen their contribution to Sustainable Development Goal 5.5, which calls for equal women representation, participation and leadership in business globally.

Importantly, companies will be equipped with the latest data and research supporting the business case for gender equality, and will have access to crucial insights from UN partners and experts on how to accelerate progress on gender equality.

How does TGE help my company?

The TGE Accelerator enables participating companies to:

- ✓ Confidently set ambitious and realistic corporate targets for gender equality demonstrating commitment and action to your employees, investors and other stakeholders
- ✓ Understand your current gender equality performance through the facilitated use of the Women's Empowerment Principles Gender Gap Analysis Tool
- ✓ Engage in accelerated learning opportunities specific to your country context
- ✓ Build a network of peers, UN partners and experts to support your gender equality strategy and work collectively to tackle persistent barriers to gender equality
- ✓ Showcase women in your company who are driving business success, sustainability and contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)