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# ADVANCING WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT: PRIVATE SECTOR ENGAGEMENT LANDSCAPING STUDY

USAID WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT  
COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

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## USAID WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

APRIL 8, 2022

FUNDING MECHANISM: Gender Integration Technical Assistance II (GITA II) Contract  
47QRAA18D00CM | 7200AA19M00013

Implemented by:

**Banyan Global**

1120 20<sup>th</sup> Street NW, Suite 950  
Washington, D.C., 20036  
Phone: +1 202-684-9367

**RECOMMENDED CITATION:** Jones, Meghann. 2022. USAID Women's Economic Empowerment Community of Practice Advancing Women's Economic Empowerment: Private Sector Landscaping Study. Prepared by Banyan Global.

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Meghann Jones, senior consultant to Banyan Global, researched and wrote this landscaping study with support from: Malini Patel, Senior Associate, USAID Women's Economic Empowerment Community of Practice (USAID WEE CoP) and Renee Fuentes, Communications Coordinator, Banyan Global. This publication was developed with guidance from USAID, particularly the following individuals in the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Hub (GenDev) in the Bureau for Development, Democracy, and Innovation (DDI): Diana Prieto, Director; Jennifer Hansel, Women's Economic Empowerment Team Lead and Senior Advisor; Gwen Snyder, Private Sector Engagement and Women's Economic Empowerment Adviser; Gigi Koch, Women's Economic Empowerment Program Analyst; Anjali Fleury, Fund Program Manager; and Natalie Lovenburg, Senior Communications Specialist.

## ACRONYMS

BRPL	BSES Rajdani Power Limited
BSR	Business for Social Responsibility
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CoP	Community of Practice
DDI	Development, Democracy, and Innovation
EDCO	Electricity Distribution Company
EDGE	Economic Dividends for Gender Equality
ELN	Early Life Nutrition
ESG	Environmental, Social, and Governance
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations
GALS	Gender Action Learning System
GenDev	Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Hub
GBV	Gender-based Violence
GLI	Gender-Lens Investing
GSK	GlaxoSmithKline
IBEDC	Ibadan Electricity Distribution Company
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IFC	International Finance Corporation
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
J&J	Johnson & Johnson
M&S	Marks & Spencer
P&G	Procter & Gamble
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
UN	United Nations
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VSLAs	Village Savings and Loans Associations
WEE	Women's Economic Empowerment
WEPS	UN Women's Empowerment Principles

## BACKGROUND

United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has a long standing commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment, including promoting women's economic empowerment (WEE) through thoughtful and innovative programming. Supported under the USAID Gender Integration Technical Assistance II Task Order, Banyan Global is the implementing partner for the USAID Women's Economic Empowerment Community of Practice (USAID WEE CoP).

Through the USAID WEE CoP, members share knowledge to better understand what works, what doesn't, and how to exponentially accelerate increasing women's economic empowerment and gender equality. The USAID WEE CoP was established to gather and generate evidence and address data gaps. To support USAID WEE CoP member learning related to WEE and private sector engagement, this landscaping study explores the following learning question:

***What drives companies to invest in policies, practices, and programs to increase women's equitable participation in leadership, operations, and supply chains? And which policies, practices, and programs have been proven to be effective?***

Conducted between July and November 2021, this study is based on a review of more than 500 sources, including company publications, independent evaluations, and academic papers, as well as on interviews with 46 key informants from companies around the world, including multinational and national companies from across sectors and of various sizes.

There was a heavy reliance on English language material published by companies, creating an inherent bias in the evidence used for the study. The most reliable evidence comes from academic studies and independent evaluations of company programs. However, companies do not typically carry out such evaluations. Hence, there are gaps in the evidence.

During the analysis of primary and secondary data, a typology was developed to catalog policies, practices, and programs for increasing women's equitable participation in leadership, operations, and supply chains. The typology includes the following six categories: strategic approaches, workforce, leadership, supply chain, asset leverage, and external engagement. The data were then assessed based on agreed evidence-criteria (Table I).

**TABLE 1: EVIDENCE CATEGORY, DESCRIPTION, AND CRITERIA**

<b>Proven:</b> clear beneficial effect and strength of evidence	Good evidence based on multi-country and/or longitudinal analyses, peer-reviewed articles, randomized control trials, quasi-experimental studies, external evaluations, or several individual or regional studies that all indicate similar findings (published research or conducted by internationally recognized institutions).
<b>Promising:</b> promising beneficial effect and strength of evidence	Sufficient body of evidence drawn from one or more country-level studies, internal assessments, or evaluations and project-specific reports that demonstrate a correlation between outputs and outcomes.
<b>Potential:</b> positive trend with limited or mixed effects; not well studied	Several reports indicating positive trends or impacts, but no systematic reviews or analyses. The trends or impacts are largely anecdotal or qualitative.

Illustrative company examples—with outcome data when available—were used throughout this landscaping study. Their inclusion alone should not be read to imply evidence of impact. In addition, the availability of evidence led to a focus on large companies in specific sectors, which does not necessarily reflect the total volume of activity in this field.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To address evidence gaps for the [USAID WEE CoP](#), this landscaping study researched the drivers of company investment in increasing women’s participation and sought evidence for the impact of company policies, practices, and programs.

[Section 1](#) provides an overview of the current status of private sector engagement on WEE, highlighting the broader societal barriers as well as private sector barriers to increasing women’s participation.

[Section 2](#) highlights the key drivers compelling businesses to engage in WEE, noting that companies that increase women’s equitable participation experience overall business growth, stronger financial performance, and increased productivity because they can attract the best talent, focus on innovation, and gain access to new and changing markets. Concerns about the sustainability of supply chains, human rights compliance, reputation, license to operate, and responsiveness to social movements also shift business perspectives and drive activity to increase women’s equitable participation.

[Section 3](#) presents the opportunities for increasing women’s participation in key industries, including financial services; information and communications technology; consumer products; health care; and other “legacy industries,” tourism, and transportation. Although individual companies have unique histories, organizational structures, and operating contexts that impact their engagement with increasing women’s equitable participation, companies face common challenges and opportunities within specific industries (as summarized in Table 2).



**TABLE 2: INCREASING WOMEN'S EQUITABLE PARTICIPATION IN KEY INDUSTRIES**

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES	KEY POLICIES, PRACTICES, AND PROGRAMS
<b>FINANCIAL SERVICES</b>	
Women are significantly underrepresented in leadership and on boards. Women also represent a vast, untapped consumer market globally, offering a significant opportunity to generate business growth as well as increase women's economic participation.	The industry is working to increase women in leadership and technical positions. It is also customizing products for women and leveraging expertise to offer business and financial education to women. Gender-lens investing is a growing field that is beginning to impact mainstream investing.
<b>INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (ICT)</b>	
Women lack equitable and safe access to ICT products and services and constitute a significant untapped market for this industry. The industry lags behind in women's workforce and leadership participation, not least because of its reputation for having a macho culture and treating women employees poorly. This prevents companies from attracting and retaining talent.	The industry is investing heavily in encouraging girls to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), working to reduce the gender digital divide, and leveraging its knowledge to support increasing women's participation. For example, the industry is adapting recruitment practices that increase women's participation in the workforce and innovating to improve online safety.
<b>CONSUMER PRODUCTS</b>	
From the farm, to the factory, to the retail store, the consumer goods industry workforce is disproportionately women and low-paid. Women also tend to be the primary decision-maker regarding the purchase of consumer goods within households.	Companies are adapting their procurement practices to favor businesses that are women-owned or led, or have strong gender equality policies. They are also developing more women-centric products and working to eliminate harmful stereotypes in products and advertising.
<b>HEALTH CARE</b>	
Women are underrepresented in leadership, but overrepresented in a frontline workforce that is overworked, vulnerable, and low-paid. Women are the industry's largest consumer base, though products and services are rarely designed to meet their needs.	The industry is working to increase the number of women in technical and senior positions, for example, by investing in STEM education. There is also some work to improve conditions for frontline workers and customize products and services to meet women's needs.

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## OTHER INDUSTRIES

Women's participation has been slow within the operations, leaderships, and supply chains of “legacy industries,” tourism, and transportation.

There is less evidence of company policies, practices, and programs for these industries, though some companies are seeking to transform their workplaces to address gender outcomes.

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Section 4 organizes company policies, practices, and programs that increase the equitable participation of women in leadership, operations, and supply chains into five typologies: strategic approaches, workforce, leadership, asset leverage, and external engagement. The policies, practices, and programs are further organized per the evidence categories outlined in Table 1. Tables 3 to 5 summarize the two proven, 22 promising, and 26 potential policies, practices, and programs that increase women's equitable participation.

**TABLE 3: TWO PROVEN PRACTICES**

Increasing Equitable Participation in the Workforce	1. Inclusive Recruiting Language
Increasing Equitable Participation in Leadership	2. Hiring External Recruiters

**TABLE 4: TWENTY TWO PROMISING POLICIES, PRACTICES, AND PROGRAMS**

Strategic Approaches to Increase Equitable Participation	1. Auditing, Measurement, and Analysis 2. Company-wide Policies and Targets 3. Cross-Functional Integration of Gender Goals
Increasing Equitable Participation in the Workforce	4. Pay Analysis and Transparency 5. Employee Pipeline Development 6. Engaging Men 7. Family Leave and Return-to-Work Programs 8. Childcare Provision 9. Health Care Provision 10. Gender-based Violence (GBV) Initiatives
Increasing Equitable Participation in Leadership	11. Targets and Policies 12. Role Modeling

Increasing Participation and Equity in Supply Chains	13. Sourcing 14. Creating Access to Markets 15. Procurement 16. Skills-based Training: Factory Workers 17. Skills-based Training: Agricultural Producers 18. Skills-based Training and Mentoring: Entrepreneurs 19. Digital-Financial Access Initiatives 20. Community Development 21. Community Gender Sensitization 22. GBV Initiatives
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**TABLE 5: TWENTY SIX POTENTIAL POLICIES, PRACTICES, AND PROGRAMS**

Increasing Equitable Participation in the Workforce	1. Positive, Inclusive Framing 2. Unconscious Bias / Diversity Training 3. Shifting Perceptions of Women in Non-Traditional Roles 4. Employer Branding 5. Blind Candidate Assessment 6. Structured Interviewing 7. Hiring Tests 8. Flexible Work Options 9. Improving Workplace Safety 10. Grievance Reporting
Increasing Equitable Participation in Leadership	11. Performance Management 12. Mentoring and Sponsorship 13. Peer Groups 14. Leadership Training 15. Global Mobility
Increasing Participation and Equity in Supply Chains	16. Holistic Approaches
Leveraging Company Assets to Increase the Equitable Participation of Women	17. Gender-Smart Products 18. Inclusive Marketing and Advertising 19. Gender-Lens Investing and Partnering
Engaging Externally to Increase the Equitable Participation of Women	20. Commitment to Principles and Standards 21. Certification and Labels 22. Disclosure and Benchmarking 23. Participation in Associations and Coalitions 24. Participation in Campaigns 25. Research and Advocacy 26. Partnering

## EVIDENCE GAPS

Section 5 lists nine specific gaps in evidence under three categories: the business case; industry and business types; and policies, practices, and programs. In summary, these gaps are:

1. There is virtually no evidence regarding the extent to which specific policies, practices, and programs to increase women's equitable participation impact business performance.

2. There is little evidence of activity around increasing women's participation in sectors and companies that have limited exposure to public and media scrutiny and in small- and medium-sized companies that may not have the resources to invest in studying and communicating about their activities or may not engage in any activities to increase women's participation.
3. There is limited evidence for policies, practices, and programs in general, which means there is a heavy focus on large companies in sectors with urgent challenges related to gender equity. This evidence is unlikely to reflect the total volume of activity in this field, and reliance on evidence produced by companies creates bias in the analysis.

## KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Section 6 contains 18 recommendations, summarized below, for companies, governments, or development partners.

- Customize the business case to the unique circumstances of individual companies using in-depth analysis, considering the data needs of specific stakeholders across multiple functions, and using positive framing to highlight opportunities for increasing women's equitable participation.
- Promote holistic policies, practices, and programs within companies to increase gender equity, such as integrating gender equality across all functions and showcasing women and men in non-traditional roles. Shifting company norms and everyday practices are more likely to have a positive impact than conditioning women to participate in legacy systems.
- Build a gender-equal ecosystem to support companies, e.g., education, workforce development, and legally mandated parental leave.
- Conduct evaluations of policies, practices, and programs that seek to increase women's equitable participation in leadership, operations, and supply chains. More evidence is needed to understand how to effectively increase women's participation and how businesses can optimize their investments. Industries such as transport, tourism, and legacy industries,<sup>1</sup> small and medium-sized companies, and companies operating in culturally traditional environments in particular would benefit from an improved evidence base for the business case and what works to increase women's equitable participation.

# I. PRIVATE SECTOR ENGAGEMENT IN WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Realizing human rights and achieving long-term development require economically empowering women and girls. At the current rate of change, the gender gap in economic participation will take 267 years to close.<sup>ii</sup> The private sector, at the center of global economic growth and development, will drive the pace of change by acting—or not acting—to increase women's equitable participation in company leadership, operations, and supply chains.<sup>iii</sup> However, there are both societal as well as private sector barriers that must be addressed.

## I.1 BARRIERS TO WOMEN ACHIEVING FULL PRIVATE SECTOR PARTICIPATION

In most countries, women have limited public policy support for their participation in the workplace, and many countries legally restrict when and where women can work.<sup>iv</sup> At the same time, gender norms—frequently perpetuated by products and marketing—devalue care work and suggest that women are less capable than men.<sup>v</sup> Two-thirds of working women globally are in the informal sector, which is characterized by instability, lack of social protections and benefits, and low earnings.<sup>vi</sup>

Many countries also restrict women's access to property rights, financial services, and digital technology.<sup>vii</sup> Despite a narrowing gender gap in education, most illiterate adults are women,<sup>viii</sup> and women generally lack access to skills training.<sup>ix</sup> Far fewer women than men study STEM in tertiary education, leading to underrepresentation in technology fields.<sup>x</sup>

Finally, GBV at work and at home negatively impacts women's health and security. This increases absenteeism and the rate of women permanently leaving the workforce, limiting their ability to participate in the economy.<sup>xi</sup>



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## I.2 PRIVATE SECTOR BARRIERS TO INCREASING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION

Many companies say that increasing the equitable participation of women is important, but most do not make it a strategic priority.<sup>xii</sup> Companies have historically made isolated investments rather than used cross-functional strategies to leverage resources to address women's participation.<sup>xiii</sup>

In addition, company leaders have little experience in addressing women's equitable participation.<sup>xiv</sup> Without investment in a deeper understanding of how women's equitable participation impacts business performance, a company's leadership may view achieving gender-related goals as less urgent than other issues that compete for their attention, such as climate change.

Strong social norms, as well as traditional socioeconomic and legal environments, can make increasing women's equitable participation in the workplace feel like an impossible goal in some contexts. For

example, measures to increase women's equitable participation risk backlash from employees and communities.<sup>xv</sup>

Ensuring that companies have the right expertise and resources to not just increase the equitable participation of women, but also to influence the systems that support them, requires effective collaboration with stakeholders and experts, often from different sectors.<sup>xvi</sup> However, communications and procedural differences between sectors can make this collaboration challenging.<sup>xvii</sup>

## 2. BUSINESS DRIVERS FOR INCREASING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION

The participation of women in the private sector has been increasing, albeit very slowly, for decades. Reinvigorated civil rights and social movements, the mainstreaming of Environment, Social, and Governance (ESG) reporting, and, most recently, the impact of COVID-19 has renewed attention to the persistent inequity women face in the workplace.

In parallel, the evidence base for the business value generated by increasing equity in the workplace has grown stronger, although it tends to be limited to correlations between greater equity and business performance. More evidence is needed regarding the impact of specific activities on equitable participation and the return on investment from these activities.

Regardless of the unique history, size, structure, products, clients, supply chain, and socioeconomic operating context of companies, there are common opportunity-, risk-, and value-based drivers for companies to increase women's equitable participation. Eight common drivers are outlined below.

### 2.1 GROWTH AND FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

Greater participation by women in leadership and on boards is strongly linked to better financial performance.<sup>xviii</sup> In addition, diversification of supply chains can have a significant impact on company revenues and profits and reduce vulnerability in times of crisis.<sup>xix</sup>

Financial performance results from a range of factors, including productivity, innovation, accessing markets, developing talent, risk mitigation, and customer engagement. The evidence demonstrates that increasing women's equitable participation in the labor force positively affects each of these factors.

### 2.2 PRODUCTIVITY AND INNOVATION

Gender diversity brings different perspectives to the workplace, resulting in more innovation that enables companies to develop better problem-solving strategies, which can create an edge for businesses in competitive global markets.<sup>xx</sup> Investments in the equitable participation of women have been shown to increase productivity and reduce absenteeism in the formal workplace.<sup>xxi</sup> As the world's primary consumers,<sup>xxii</sup> women add value to the design, strategy, sales, marketing, and delivery of products, which are central to customer engagement.<sup>xxiii</sup> Studies in the agricultural sector have shown that investments in women can dramatically increase agricultural outputs.<sup>xxiv</sup>

### 2.3 ACCESSING NEW AND EVOLVING MARKETS

In low- and middle-income countries, there is a sizable gender gap in access to products and services.<sup>xxv</sup> Closing that gap can increase market reach for companies. For example, it has been estimated that closing the global gender gap in mobile access represents a US\$170 billion market opportunity.<sup>xxvi</sup> Many companies, in particular in the financial sector, are creating new products and services designed specifically to meet the needs of women.<sup>xxvii</sup> Companies that adapt their products, services, and communications to align with evolving values and meet women's needs have a clear competitive advantage.<sup>xxviii</sup>

## 2.4 ATTRACTING AND RETAINING TALENT

Women are key to meeting increased demand for scarce, high-level skills in the workforce.<sup>xxix</sup> Companies that are perceived to practice ethical behavior, which can include improving gender equity in their workforce and supply chain, reduce attrition and make recruitment and hiring more efficient.<sup>xxx</sup> This is particularly true when hiring younger people, who increasingly put purpose ahead of salary.<sup>xxxi</sup> Major employers are actively recruiting more women and using gender-equal and family-friendly benefits packages to improve recruitment and retention.<sup>xxxii</sup>

## 2.5 ENSURING A SUSTAINABLE SUPPLY CHAIN

Increasing the number of women-owned and women-led businesses in the supplier base can have several positive benefits, including increased competition, greater continuity and flexibility, lower costs because of supplier gains in productivity, innovation, and reduced absenteeism and attrition.<sup>xxxiii</sup>

As a result of increased attention to ESG analysis and reporting, companies are finding that investing in the equitable participation of women can mitigate human rights risks and positively contribute to a broad range of company goals by ensuring legal compliance around worker rights.<sup>xxxiv</sup> For example, companies can amplify their environmental impact by encouraging women's leadership of environmental initiatives.<sup>xxxv</sup>

## 2.6 REPUTATION AND SOCIAL LICENSE TO OPERATE

Companies that practice and publicize gender diversity can substantially enhance their reputation and prevent potential backlash in response to poor practices.<sup>xxxvi</sup> This strategy helps gain favor with investors, who focus heavily on reputation and rely on investor rating platforms, which are increasingly adding gender equality metrics such as pay equity and board quotas.<sup>xxxvii</sup> For example, in the mining industry, companies that operate in specific communities may value a strong reputation among community members—sometimes known as “a social license to operate”—and invest in improving community development outcomes, including increased women's participation.<sup>xxxviii</sup>

## 2.7 LEGAL AND REGULATORY COMPLIANCE

Companies must comply with laws and regulations that may include the provision of benefits, such as family leave, health care, and salary equity.<sup>xxxix</sup> In addition, companies may be required to have women on boards<sup>xl</sup> and refrain from using stereotypes in advertising.<sup>xli</sup> While laws can sometimes mandate non-discriminatory practices, enforcement is often lacking.<sup>xlii</sup>

A binding European Union (EU) regulation regarding human rights in global supply chains, which is gaining momentum, has the potential of extending protections to women workers beyond EU-based operations.<sup>xliii</sup> Many companies favor such legislation as it creates a level playing field, enabling them to support their ESG goals while remaining competitive.<sup>xliv</sup>

## 2.8 THE RIGHT THING TO DO

Recently there has been a vigorous debate about the role of businesses in society; climate change and COVID-19 have increased scrutiny of business behavior, and social movements such as #MeToo and #BlackLivesMatter are driving increased business attention on addressing GBV, sexual harassment,



diversity, equity, and inclusion.<sup>xlv</sup> Widespread recognition that women not only have a right to participate in the economy on an equal terms with men but also that their participation is necessary to achieve sustainable development has led key business leaders to champion these goals.<sup>xlvi</sup>

### 3. KEY INDUSTRIES: OPPORTUNITIES FOR INCREASING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION

While the business case for investing in women's participation is specific to every company—and to the stakeholders it is presented to—there is value in understanding common opportunities and challenges through an industry lens.

This section highlights the opportunities for increasing women's participation in key industries, including financial services; information and communications technology; consumer products; health care; and other “legacy industries,” tourism, and transportation.

For each industry, there is a summary of the current status of the industry as it relates to women's equitable participation, a discussion of the opportunities for the industry in the future, and illustrative examples of policies, practices, and programs undertaken by industry actors. These examples are shared to provide a current status of industry investments to date and are not ranked by the evidence criteria in [Table I](#).



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#### 3.1 FINANCIAL SERVICES

As women business owners and wage earners increase their participation in the global economy, they are demanding financial products and services that meet their needs. Expanding access to financial services, such as credit and savings to low-income women, presents financial institutions with the opportunity to build a key future market.<sup>xlvii</sup> From the consumer perspective, although women's personal wealth has risen rapidly in recent years,<sup>xlviii</sup> many factors, including legal and cultural barriers, continue to limit their access to financial services. This impedes women's access to resources and their ability to grow their businesses and achieve economic independence.<sup>xlix</sup>

Despite recent progress, women working in the financial services industry, including asset management, banking, insurance, and payments, are less likely than men to be promoted to management. Women account for just 20 percent of global representation on executive committees in major financial services firms.<sup>i</sup> Elevating women to leadership positions in the financial sector will help institutions capitalize on the growth in new markets and ensuring that women are well represented in technical positions and at management levels will spur innovation in product development and expand customer engagement.<sup>ii</sup>

#### POLICIES, PRACTICES, AND PROGRAMS

The major financial institutions have used their expertise and resources to empower the future workforce and potential partners by offering business and financial literacy education, mentoring, and networking for women and girl consumers and entrepreneurs.<sup>iii</sup>

- Expertise and Resource Examples: [Bank of America Mentoring Women in Business](#), [Barclays' Life Skills](#), [Goldman Sachs 10,000 Women](#), and [Mastercard Girls4Tech](#).

Local partnerships between multinationals, public institutions, microfinance institutions, and civil society organizations, are providing savings and credit options for women. These initiatives have helped to improve perceptions of—and increase trust in—women as consumers.

- Savings and Credit Examples: [Access Bank W Initiative](#), [BRAC](#), [Grameen Bank](#), [International Financial Corporation \(IFC\)](#) and [Goldman Sachs Women Entrepreneurs Opportunity Facility](#), [Mastercard farmer and retailer programs](#), [MiCash](#), and [VimoSEWA](#).

A multitude of investment funds aim to transform investments, nudge the companies they invest in toward increased gender awareness,<sup>liii</sup> and accelerate the development of women fund managers and entrepreneurs.<sup>liv</sup> Known as gender-lens investing (GLI), this investment approach has grown rapidly in the last decade and is receiving increasing attention from mainstream financial institutions.<sup>lv</sup>

- GLI Examples: [2X Collaborative](#), [Acumen](#), [AlphaMundi Group](#), [Calvert Impact Capital](#), [CARE SheTrades](#), [Ignite](#), [Mastercard Start Path](#), [RH Capital](#), [Root Capital](#), and [WIC Capital](#).

### 3.2 INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

The ICT industry, which includes communications networks and the technologies that supports them such as applications, faces immense challenges attracting, retaining, and advancing women employees to leadership positions,<sup>lvi</sup> not least because of its reported problems with poor work-life flexibility, sexism, harassment, and general exclusion.<sup>lvii</sup> Evidence suggests that investing in STEM education for women and shifting workplace norms can help ICT companies address the talent shortfall through an increased supply of qualified women graduates. Investment in STEM education for women also lays the foundation for continued growth by fostering innovation, enhancing operational efficiency, improving product quality, and meeting the needs of women consumers.<sup>lviii</sup>

From the consumer-citizen perspective, the [gender digital divide](#) exacerbates existing inequalities and limits women's access to the economy.<sup>lix</sup> Furthermore, ICT products such as social media platforms can facilitate and amplify the sexual harassment and exploitation of women online, as well as perpetuate unhelpful stereotypes and social norms.<sup>lx</sup> The ICT industry has significant potential to support the increased economic participation of women by improving women's access to information and communications technology and reducing the gender digital divide, increasing the customer base. In addition, the ICT industry can work to deliver products and services that promote positive gender norms, freedom, and women's voices.<sup>lxi</sup>

### POLICIES, PRACTICES, AND PROGRAMS

Company programs encourage girls to study STEM subjects and pursue STEM careers. The programs focus both on building technical skills and breaking down stereotypes and shifting social norms through role models.

- STEM Examples: [Girls Who Code](#) corporate partnerships including AT&T, Apple, and Dell Technologies; [Google Women Will](#) and [#IamRemarkable](#); [Intel Million Girls Moonshot](#); [Mastercard Girls4Tech](#), and [Qualcomm Thinkabit Lab](#).

By providing women with equipment and internet access, companies are significantly increasing women's participation and reducing the gender digital divide. These initiatives alone enable women to engage in business and gain access to online goods and services, including financial services.

- Closing the Gender Digital Divide Examples: [Ericsson Connect To Learn](#), [GSMA Ecosystem Accelerator](#), [Microsoft Airband Initiative](#), and [Qualcomm Wireless Reach](#).

Companies are leveraging ICT products to increase their understanding of issues that affect women, such as access to economic opportunities. Through data analysis, they are improving online safety and developing women-centric products, including digital-financial products to support women-owned businesses.

- Data Analytics Examples: [Google Women Techmakers](#), [Inclusive Fintech 50](#), [LinkedIn Talent Solutions](#), [Mastercard Digital Payroll](#), [Uber-IFC Rideshare Analytics](#), and [Vodafone TecSOS](#).

### 3.3 CONSUMER PRODUCTS

The consumer products industry produces and sells a wide variety of household goods,<sup>lxii</sup> with a workforce—from the farm, to the factory, to the grocery store—that is disproportionately made up of women, often in vulnerable and low-paid roles.<sup>lxiii</sup> The consumer products industry could potentially improve its productivity and operational efficiency by reducing the gender pay gap and creating safe working conditions throughout the supply chain, as well as by increasing the number of women in leadership positions.<sup>lxiv</sup>

Paradoxically, while gender inequality is a driving force for cheap consumer goods, women have potentially transformational power: up to 80 percent of purchasing decisions are made by women,



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women own 36 percent of small businesses worldwide, and half of the world's smallholder producers are women.<sup>lxv</sup> The consumer products industry would benefit from adapting to changing social norms by working in-house and with its supplier base to customize products to meet women's needs and end the use of harmful gender stereotypes, such as idealized, unrealistic body types, perpetuated through consumer products and advertising, most notably clothing, cosmetics, hygiene products, and toys.<sup>lxvi</sup>

### POLICIES, PRACTICES, AND PROGRAMS

Companies have adapted their procurement practices to boost women's equitable participation. For example, they have increased the number of women-owned or women-led businesses from which they buy goods and services. They have also attached conditions to contracts with suppliers requiring the adoption of policies and practices that support their gender equity goals.

- Procurement Examples: Procter & Gamble (P&G), The Coca-Cola Company, Unilever, UPS, SheTrades, Walmart, WEConnect/Women Owned, and Women's Forum for the Economy & Society.

As a result of shifting social norms, increased legislation, and greater awareness of the harmful impacts of gender stereotypes,<sup>lxvii</sup> companies are changing how they develop and advertise products, particularly in relation to a woman's body image and her ability to participate in activities traditionally dominated by men.<sup>lxviii</sup>

- Advertising Examples: AB InBev, Aerie, Diageo, Dove, Hasbro, Lego, Mattel Barbie body redesign, gender-neutral dolls, and women-in-STEM Barbies, Musket Transport, P&G, and Safaricom.

Multinational companies facing human rights and reputational challenges have initiated direct programs with factory owners, workers, agricultural producers, and “last mile” distributors and retailers to shift norms, offer paths to career development and recourse for discrimination, and build an enabling environment for women workers to increase their participation in the labor force.

- Workforce Support Examples: Gap Inc.'s PACE and supplier partnerships, Levi Strauss/VF Corporation/Marks & Spencer (M&S) with Mastercard, L'Oréal, M&S, PepsiCo, The Coca-Cola Company, Unilever, and World Cocoa Foundation.

### 3.4 HEALTH CARE

Women are underrepresented in leadership across the health care industry, which includes everything from manufacturing equipment, pharmaceuticals, and supplies to the delivery of services. At the same time, women represent 70 percent of the frontline workforce, which is understaffed, low-paid, and vulnerable.<sup>lxix</sup> Improving work conditions—pay, benefits, work hours, and safety—and providing educational opportunities for women can increase productivity and efficiency in health care companies, thereby improving the delivery of products and services to customers.<sup>lxx</sup>

Women are also the largest consumers of health care.<sup>lxxi</sup> Despite women's greater needs due to pregnancy, infant, child, and elder care, and general responsibility for the health of their households, health care products and services are often not designed to meet these needs. Moreover, they are frequently expensive and inconvenient.<sup>lxxii</sup> Increasing the number of women in technical and leadership positions can lead to innovation and the development of products and services that meet women's specific needs. The development of women-centered products and services can expand the industry's access to markets while also increasing women's economic participation by improving women's ability to work.<sup>lxxiii</sup>

### POLICIES, PRACTICES, AND PROGRAMS

Health care companies are setting ambitious targets and investing in policies and programs to increase women's representation at senior levels. Programs include providing mentors and role models, as well as encouraging girls to study STEM subjects and pursue STEM careers.

- STEM and Mentorship Examples: GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) targets and programs, Johnson & Johnson (J&J), Medtronic, Merck, and Pfizer.

Companies have developed a range of approaches to improve conditions for frontline health workers. This includes commitments to pay a living wage, recruit and train frontline community health educators, support the development of health infrastructure, and provide education and training.

- Workforce Support Examples: [GSK](#), [J&J](#), and [Novartis](#).

Health care product development that has been shown to empower women and increase their economic participation includes affordably pricing for medicine and services, enhancing access to affordable menstrual hygiene and reproductive health products including contraception, closing research and development gaps, and improving service access in rural areas.

- Inclusive Product Examples: [Novo Nordisk](#), [GSK](#), [Merck for Mothers](#), [Merc & Co](#), [Bayer](#), [Eli Lilly](#), [BD](#), and [The Coca-Cola Company](#).

### 3.5 OTHER INDUSTRIES

Other industries, such as “legacy industries,”—which include energy, mining, utilities and waste services, materials, and industrial sectors—tourism, and transportation are critical to increasing the economic participation of women in the economy. However, they have been slower to address increasing women’s participation in their operations, leadership, and supply chains. Therefore, there is less evidence of company policies, practices, and programs for these industries.

#### LEGACY INDUSTRIES

Many “legacy industries” are under increasing pressure to innovate and transform, including oil, coal, construction, paper products, metals and mining chemicals and utilities and waste services. These industries are traditionally dominated by men within the workforce, executive management, and board seats, and the low participation of women throughout the workforce is in part because the work involves manual or technical work that is legally prohibited or culturally stigmatized for women.<sup>lxxxiv</sup>



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Some companies are striving to transform their workplaces with programs to increase women’s participation in the workforce. For example, companies are reducing the gender pay gap,<sup>lxxv</sup> implementing mentoring programs,<sup>lxxvi</sup> and developing protective equipment for women.<sup>lxxvii</sup> Companies are working on developing a talent pipeline by funding STEM education for girls,<sup>lxxviii</sup> establishing internships and creating job opportunities,<sup>lxxix</sup> providing professional training,<sup>lxxx</sup> and establishing employee resource groups.<sup>lxxxi</sup> They

are also adopting policies that require inclusive hiring practices and supporting women entrepreneurs in supply chains.<sup>lxxxii</sup> As industries evolve toward green technology, increasing women’s equitable participation will be critical for success. As primary household consumers and caretakers, women are community-minded and future-oriented, and they are more likely to invest resources in sustainable outcomes.<sup>lxxxiii</sup>



Finally, companies with a heavy presence in specific communities, for example in the extractive industries, have a history of community investment programs, which have increasingly recognized the importance of addressing the challenges of underserved groups, including women.<sup>lxxxiv</sup>

## TOURISM

Activity to increase women's equitable participation in the tourism sector is predominantly public sector driven, but recently industry groups have paid more attention to the issues facing women,<sup>lxxxv</sup> especially considering their contribution to the growing eco-tourism industry.<sup>lxxxvi</sup> By employment numbers, tourism is the world's largest industry.<sup>lxxxvii</sup> Women make up slightly more than half of the global tourism workforce, yet they are concentrated in the lowest-paid, most vulnerable, lowest status jobs, for example, cleaning and food services. Women also perform a significant amount of unpaid work in family tourism businesses, and due to the nature of the work—such as room cleaning or customer service roles (e.g., bar work)—they are at a heightened risk of GBV.<sup>lxxxviii</sup>

## TRANSPORTATION

The transportation industry has a clear role to play in increasing women's equitable participation in society and the economy. Transportation systems tend to be predominantly funded, regulated, and managed by governments. While some systems have introduced policies to increase women's equitable participation in the transportation labor force and in the use of transportations systems,<sup>lxxxix</sup> there is limited evidence of steps taken to improve women's recruitment, hiring, promotion, and retention in privately held companies. Gender-sensitive design of transport services can broaden women's access to services and employment. Diversifying the transportation workforce can better serve the needs of women customers.<sup>xc</sup>

## 4. EVIDENCE: PROVEN, PROMISING, AND POTENTIAL COMPANY POLICIES, PRACTICES, AND PROGRAMS

There is a wide range of company policies, practices, and programs with the goal of increasing the equitable participation of women in leadership, operations, and supply chains. They have been categorized below into six typologies—strategic approaches, workforce, leadership, supply chain, asset leverage, and external engagement—and have been assessed based on the evidence-criteria outlined in [Table I](#).

Illustrative company examples—with outcome data when available—were presented throughout this section. Their inclusion alone should not be read to imply evidence of impact. The availability of evidence led to a focus on large companies in specific sectors, which does not necessarily reflect the total volume of activity in this field.

### 4.1 IMPLEMENTING STRATEGIC APPROACHES TO INCREASE EQUITABLE PARTICIPATION

The study identified three promising policies, practices, and programs that took place at the strategic level, meaning that they were overarching, cross-functional, comprehensive, or foundational to achieving company goals for women's participation.

#### PROVEN

No proven company policies, practices, or programs were found.

#### PROMISING

##### AUDITING, MEASUREMENT, AND ANALYSIS

Gender and diversity assessments—including disaggregation,<sup>xcv</sup> materiality analysis,<sup>xcvi</sup> gender auditing,<sup>xcvii</sup> employee surveys,<sup>xcviii</sup> and needs assessments<sup>xcix</sup>—can help companies to understand challenges, develop a business case, identify priorities, and dedicate resources to increasing women's equitable participation.

- **Gender Diversity Survey Example: eBay** conducted a gender diversity survey of its top 1,700 leaders. The survey, which identified a mix of unconscious mindsets, behavior, and blind spots that colored employees' gender perceptions, led to changes aimed at embracing individual differences within the business.

Targeted assessments to address specific issues/programs, such as salary gap analysis,<sup>xcvi</sup> talent pipeline and leadership gap analysis, and skills mapping to support unbiased succession planning and promotion, can also support increasing women's equitable participation.

- **Job Evaluation Example: Swedbank** put in place a job evaluation system to map, evaluate, and compare each job in the organization. If gender gaps were found, the company took corrective measures using a budget set aside specifically for this purpose.

Toolkits can help companies conduct gender-based auditing, measurement, and analysis. Examples include the [Women's Empowerment Principles \(WEPs\) Gender Gap Analysis Tool](#), pay analysis tools such as [Payscale](#), and the [Gender Data Report in Sedex Analytics](#), which is based on the Business for Social Responsibility's (BSR) Gender Data and Impact Framework.



- Gap Analysis Tool Example: **Sumitomo Chemical** used the WEPs Gender Gap Analysis Tool to assess its gender equality performance, identify focus areas, and engage departments across the organization. This assessment raised awareness, identified key drivers of inequity, and highlighted opportunities for increasing gender equity.

Gender-based supply chain analysis has helped companies to understand gender-based needs, challenges, and opportunities for women workers and producers. Companies have used this type of analysis to restructure their policies, practices, and programs to increase women's equitable participation.<sup>xcvii</sup>

- Gender-based Supply Chain Analysis Example: **McCormick & Company** conducted a diagnostic study of women in its raw material supply chains to understand gender-based risks and opportunities relating to supply chain and community resilience. A dashboard supports effective resource allocation and tracks the impact of investments.

While challenging to implement, rigorous baseline and impact studies that incorporate metrics around women's productivity, income, and well-being can help companies understand how their investments impact women's equitable participation in their supply chains.<sup>xcviii</sup>

- Impact Study Example: **Mondelez International** includes women respondents at the farmer household and community levels, as well as women's empowerment metrics, in the rigorous impact studies it conducts for its Cocoa Life program, enabling it to understand women farmer and community member needs and customize its interventions.

## COMPANY-WIDE POLICIES AND TARGETS

A high-level commitment paves the way for policies to ensure that women are equally represented and valued throughout a company's workforce.<sup>xcix</sup> Commitment from leadership enables cross-functional, company-wide policies, practices, and programs to support increasing women's equitable participation.<sup>c</sup>

- Equal Employment Example: **Electricity Distribution Company (EDCO)** implemented an equal employment opportunity policy that led to a focus on increasing women's participation throughout the organization, resulting in increased participation and improved perceptions of women as employees.

Companies have successfully increased the proportion of women in their workforce and leadership by setting targets for interview shortlists, including women on hiring panels, and ensuring that they have a pool of strong women candidates not only at each stage of the hiring process but also in succession planning.

- Recruiting Example: **DNB** set a goal of at least 40 percent women in top management positions and implemented policies that included recruiters identifying the best-qualified men and women candidates for management positions before final selection. This increased women in top management from 30.5 percent to 38.1 percent over four years.

Despite legislation to mandate board diversity and the recognition of the value of women on boards, there has been limited progress in increasing the presence of women on boards.<sup>ci</sup> To overcome perceived limitations,<sup>cii</sup> companies can add board seats, limit terms, and introduce better search approaches.<sup>ciii</sup>

## CROSS-FUNCTIONAL INTEGRATION OF GENDER GOALS

A decade ago, WEE programs tended to be individual, opportunistic, siloed, and often philanthropic activities not connected to day-to-day business operations.<sup>civ</sup> It is now more commonly accepted that an integrated, holistic approach across business activities is necessary to accelerate women's equitable participation.<sup>cv</sup>

- Integrated Approach Example: **Unilever's 2020 Compass strategy** incorporates WEE across functions and departments, from achieving gender balance in leadership, to supporting women in its supply chain, to driving and amplifying products and messages through its brands for its predominantly women consumer base.

## POTENTIAL

No potential company policies, practices, or programs were found.

## 4.2 INCREASING EQUITABLE PARTICIPATION IN THE WORKFORCE

The study identified 18 policies, practices, and programs—ranging from inclusive recruiting language and pay analysis to health care provision and positive, inclusive framing—that were focused on achieving the equitable participation of women within the workforce of the company. While these policies, practices, and programs may have included management and leadership, they did not include operations (e.g., supply chains) outside of the company.

## PROVEN

### INCLUSIVE RECRUITING LANGUAGE

Using more inclusive language in job advertisements encourages women to apply for work in industries dominated by men, and men to apply for work in industries dominated by women.<sup>cvi</sup> Careful use of language in job advertisements can also encourage women to negotiate their salaries and benefits in the recruitment process, closing the pay gap.<sup>cvi</sup>

- Job Advertisement Example: **Electricidade de Moçambique** increased its ability to hire women by revising language used in jobs ads, ensuring job profiles were gender-inclusive and attractive for women, improving candidate application screening techniques, and helping candidates fill out their applications.

## PROMISING

### PAY ANALYSIS AND TRANSPARENCY

Rigorous and transparent pay analyses have been demonstrated to reduce the gender pay gap and contribute to the retention of women staff in some countries.<sup>cvi</sup> Pay analyses can also serve as a motivating factor for potential women recruits.<sup>cix</sup>



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- Compensation Example: **Starbucks** analyzed compensation and compensation decisions. It shared salary equity information with employees and potential employees and explicitly permitted employees to discuss wages. In 2018, it announced 100 percent pay parity for employees in the United States as a result of these policies.

## EMPLOYEE PIPELINE DEVELOPMENT

By investing in education, companies can support the entry of women into fields traditionally dominated by men, particularly in STEM, and create a more robust pipeline to support their diverse workforce and skills needs.<sup>cx</sup>

- Investing in STEM Education Example: **Intel's Women in Technology** scholarship program is part of a broader strategy to support the attraction, growth and development of diverse talent, which has contributed to achieving 43 percent annual diverse hiring and 100 percent gender pay equity across U.S. job types.

Even smaller companies who cannot commit to significant investment in workforce development are able to benefit and meet their diverse hiring goals by engaging directly with educational institutions to promote the study of STEM subjects and their business as a place to work.

- Investing in Education Example: With a workforce of 21 percent women, **EVN** visited schools to encourage girls and their parents to think about jobs in the power sector, offered scholarships and vocational programs, and emphasized that women make great engineers and technicians. As a result, 39 percent of new hires were women a year after the program began in 2017.

Internship programs have also been shown to increase the entry of women into positions traditionally held by men.<sup>cx</sup> While some larger companies can administer their own successful programs, smaller companies can benefit from participation in externally funded internship programs.

- Internship Example: Rwanda and Tanzania-based Africa Energy Services Group, in partnership with USAID's Women in Rwandan Energy program, implemented an internship program that enabled the company to hire more women in technical and management roles and demonstrated the value of increasing women's participation to business stakeholders.<sup>cxii</sup>

## ENGAGING MEN

Men in leadership roles are often the most effective messengers and role models for policies and practices that aim to increase the participation of women.<sup>cxiii</sup> There is particularly strong evidence of this relating to the uptake of family leave by men, even in traditional environments.

- Parental Leave Example: **EY** introduced a gender-neutral parental leave policy accompanied by an effort to encourage fathers to make use of the leave, including supportive messaging by men in leadership positions. The proportion of fathers taking leave increased from 19 percent to 38 percent in the first year after the introduction of the new policy.

In communities where men traditionally hold dominant roles, it may be helpful to engage men in increasing women's participation and to shift social norms. This engagement is particularly helpful in places where men may respond negatively to activities that focus specifically on women.<sup>cxiv</sup>

- Community Forum Example: **Ibadan Electricity Distribution Company (IBEDC)** Nigeria conducted forums and community initiatives to support WEE. It also conducted after-school programs for both girls and boys to encourage buy-in to targeted policies and practices to increase the participation of women in the utilities business.

## FAMILY LEAVE AND RETURN-TO-WORK POLICIES

There is a wealth of evidence demonstrating that strong family leave policies, including elder care and long-term sick care, keep women in the workforce and have a positive business impact, particularly when they go beyond what is required by legislation.<sup>cxv</sup>

- Family Leave Example: **Danone Nutricia Early Life Nutrition (ELN)** introduced a campaign informing parents of their rights as caretakers at work and, simultaneously, increased parental leave and pay for birth and adoptive parents. The program led to more parents using this leave and other benefits through its return-to-work program.

Proven to be beneficial for retaining women, increasing productivity, and reducing absenteeism, return-to-work programs might include gradual return, support and mentoring, additional facilities for new parents such as breastfeeding rooms, and support accessing childcare.

- Return-To-Work Example: **Martur Fompak International** provides fully equipped lactation rooms, free transportation for women needing to breastfeed, and some childcare provisions. As a result, more women returned to work, absenteeism fell by more than half, and staff turnover decreased by more than 3 percent between 2013 and 2017.

## CHILDCARE PROVISION

Improving access to childcare goes hand in hand with fostering workplace gender diversity and helping parents enter and advance in the workforce.<sup>cxvi</sup> Employer-supported childcare can also encourage fathers to share the role of caretaker, enabling the increased participation of women in the workforce.<sup>cxvii</sup>

Solutions to support working parents can be adapted to the characteristics and size of each company at zero or low cost.<sup>cxviii</sup> More resource-intensive strategies include workplace-based childcare facilities. Less resource-intensive strategies include providing information, referral services, and back-up care benefits.

- Childcare Subsidy Example: **Borusan Group** offers a childcare subsidy, childcare facilities at some locations, and flexible working and leave arrangements. As a result, it has attracted and retained its best workers, maintained a positive corporate reputation, and attracted investment and business partners.

## HEALTH CARE PROVISION

Provision of extended health care benefits, such as on-site facilities, digital health care access, and paid time off to procure health care has been shown to support the retention of women in the workforce, as well as improve productivity and reduce absenteeism.<sup>cxix</sup>

- Mobile Health Example: **VF Corporation's** Worker and Community Development initiative addresses worker and community issues in its manufacturing zones. For example, in Cambodia, a mobile clinic was used to make health care more accessible to workers, leading to reduced absentee and turnover rates.

## GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE REDUCTION INITIATIVES

Company practices can promote a safe working environment, reducing GBV. Company approaches that systematically address GBV and harassment emphasize training for staff and management, engagement with women's organizations and GBV service providers, and the empowerment of women workers.<sup>cxix</sup>

- Safe Transportation Example: **Supreme Poultry** introduced dedicated transportation for night-shift workers to address their personal safety concerns about moving through the local area at night. Both women and men have benefited from this program.

## POTENTIAL

### POSITIVE, INCLUSIVE FRAMING

Framing diversity efforts positively—for example, engaging managers, increasing their on-the-job contact with women workers, and promoting accountability based on managers;" desire to be fair-minded—is more effective than highlighting and penalizing the wrong behavior.<sup>cxix</sup>

Focusing on equality and inclusivity rather than specific groups avoids potential backlash driven by a perception that initiatives are unfair and not meritocratic.<sup>cxix</sup> Furthermore, programs that focus on women can reinforce the belief that it is women, and not company norms, that are the problem.<sup>cxix</sup>



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### UNCONSCIOUS BIAS / DIVERSITY TRAINING

Training courses that focus on gender diversity strategies, policies, and codes of conduct, as well as gender awareness, anti-discrimination, diversity and inclusion, and unconscious bias are a common approach to increasing gender equity in the workplace.<sup>cxix</sup>

- Inclusion Training Example: **Sodexo** holds a mandatory one-day inclusion training for all managers, as well as more than 25 voluntary learning labs to help employees continually strengthen their knowledge about gender inequity issues and develop their skills to foster a more inclusive environment.

The effectiveness of this type of program depends heavily on the quality of implementation. Some studies have found that the positive effects of diversity training only last for a short time; other studies suggest that training can activate bias or spark a backlash if negative messages and implied threats are used in the training.<sup>cxix</sup>

## SHIFTING PERCEPTIONS OF WOMEN IN NON-TRADITIONAL SPACES

Exposing workplaces to images of women in non-traditional roles positively shifts attitudes toward women in these roles.<sup>xxxvi</sup> More broadly, demonstrating that women can do well in roles traditionally held by men, such as technical and manual work, can shift attitudes and encourage greater participation.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

- Advertising Example: **K-Electric** tackled stereotypes about women in the energy sector by producing a commercial showcasing the first-ever women meter readers, appointing women to work with households as safety ambassadors, and promoting women into leadership positions.

Proactively seeking and engaging with women can help industries traditionally dominated by men, such as the financial and energy sectors, to recognize women as reliable customers and business partners. Some initiatives have found women to be more reliable than men, for example, with making utility payments.<sup>xxxviii</sup>

- Employee Training Example: **Bank of Palestine** launched the Felestineya Mini-MBA program, where Bank of Palestine employees supported businesswomen with training and coaching. A key program outcome was that Bank of Palestine managers developed an improved perception of women as customers.

## EMPLOYER BRANDING

Most employment candidates research companies before applying for a position.<sup>xxxix</sup> Therefore, companies must invest in communicating their business as a good place for women to work, as well as implement its stated values with current employees, who may rate their employers online.<sup>xxx</sup>

- Website Example: **Shell** emphasized its commitment to promoting women in its workforce by publishing profiles of women employees from around the world in a variety of leadership and technical roles on the careers area of its website.

Benchmarks, “best places to work” lists, and awards can gain a company recognition as a good employer for women based on factors such as having a zero tolerance harassment policy, workforce and leadership diversity, and flexible work options.<sup>xxxi</sup>

- Award Example: **The Catalyst Award** is given to companies of all sizes, regions, and industries with “groundbreaking” initiatives to increase gender equity. For example, 2021 winner **Barilla’s** achievement of pay equity contributed to its recognition.

## BLIND CANDIDATE ASSESSMENT

Companies have also adopted blind approaches to candidate assessment to increase the participation of women in the workforce.<sup>xxxii</sup> Some companies are using technology to provide a neutral review of resumes<sup>xxxiii</sup> but caution is needed as algorithms may reflect the gender bias of their creators.<sup>xxxiv</sup>

## STRUCTURED INTERVIEWING

There is some evidence, particularly in professions with gender imbalances, that interviews should be structured so that every candidate is asked the same questions in the same order, and their answers are scored according to strict criteria.<sup>xxxv</sup>



## HIRING TESTS

Some evidence shows that hiring tests can help to fight bias. However, to be effective, they must be used in conjunction with social norms and cultural interventions to ensure that managers do not use the tests selectively or ignore results, which may amplify rather than suppress bias.<sup>xxxvi</sup>

## FLEXIBLE WORK OPTIONS

Flexible work arrangements, such as adjusting working hours, working from home, or job-sharing, can enable workers to balance their career and care responsibilities. The flexibility allows women to stay in the workforce and men to be more involved in caring for children or other family members.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

The degree to which flexible work options increase women's participation depends, however, on the degree to which the company encourages and enables employees to use these arrangements without detriment to their career. Flexible work arrangements could reinforce gender stereotypes if the company favors working on-site and if women disproportionately utilize the arrangements.<sup>xxxviii</sup>



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## IMPROVING WORKPLACE SAFETY

Taking measures to increase workforce safety—installing security systems, requiring IDs, providing safe transportation, and allowing people to work from home—can help companies to recruit and retain women in non-traditional roles and to work alternative hours, such as during overnight shifts.

- **Security Systems Example:** **Estarta Solutions** introduced robust security systems, ID requirements, a waiting room for family member escorts, and an option to work from home. These steps led to a significant increase in women's willingness to work overnight shifts. The majority of overnight staff are now women.

## GRIEVANCE REPORTING

Aside from their value as part of a package of policies to tackle GBV and sexual harassment,<sup>xxxix</sup> there is limited evidence about what type of grievance reporting approaches and mechanisms work in supporting women's equitable participation in the workplace.

## 4.3 INCREASING EQUITABLE PARTICIPATION IN LEADERSHIP

Building on the activities in the previous section as a foundation, the study identified eight additional policies, practices, and programs that aimed to achieve the equitable participation of women in company management and leadership—from hiring external recruiters to setting targets with measurable actions.

## PROVEN

### HIRING EXTERNAL RECRUITERS

Academic research shows that leadership candidate pools include more women when headhunters select candidates than when candidates apply on their own. This is likely because women are being considered for jobs without having to put themselves forward.<sup>cxl</sup>

## PROMISING

### TARGETS AND POLICIES

Targets can be central to communicating gender-related goals, signaling a company's intentions, and providing a basis for accountability. However, targets alone are insufficient; companies must put concrete, measurable actions in place to achieve their goals.<sup>cxli</sup>

Companies that highlight the equitable participation of women in their leadership often point to comprehensive policies that they implement to achieve this goal. These policies typically contain multiple practices and programs. These policies, practices, and programs are assessed individually throughout this section of the landscaping study.

- Integrated Strategies Example: **Lilly** used four strategies to increase the participation of women in its leadership: buy-in from the top, rigorous analysis to understand the challenges, dissemination of results, and adaptation of management practices and training. In the first year, the number of women in leadership increased significantly.

### ROLE MODELING

Role models can reduce gender stereotypes that, beginning in school, discourage girls from pursuing specific careers and reinforce stereotypes for the next generation.<sup>cxlii</sup> They can shape a woman's view of leadership in the workplace and her ability to become a leader.<sup>cxliii</sup>

Exposing employees to women in leadership positively shifts attitudes of women and men toward women in leadership roles.<sup>cxliv</sup> Taking this further, telling stories about how women in leadership can benefit men helps change the narrative that women need the support of men to succeed.<sup>cxlv</sup>

- Showcasing Women in Leadership Example: **Google** discovered that women were promoted less often than men because, to be promoted, employees were required to self-nominate. The company started to showcase women leaders in workshops, outlining the promotion process. As a result, the gender difference in self-nominations virtually disappeared.

## POTENTIAL

### PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Traits that tend to be interpreted as competent behavior of leaders, such as confidence, are more associated with men, leading to barriers to promotion for women.<sup>cxlvi</sup> Training women on these traits offers one solution (see "Leadership Training" further below); changing perceptions of what constitutes leadership traits is another.<sup>cxlvii</sup>



- Adapting Evaluation Criteria Example: **BSES Rajdani Power Limited (BRPL)** India adapted its evaluation criteria of employees to focus on performance and knowledge instead of only assessing technical awareness or field experience, which can be challenging for women to gain in light of social and gender norms. This led to 20 percent of women participants obtaining a more senior role.

Changing practices to ensure unbiased performance assessment, such as using independent evaluation committees or multiple evaluators, can have some impact in eliminating bias.<sup>cxlviii</sup> Some argue, however, that eliminating bias requires shifting norms within organizations and managers more broadly.<sup>cxlix</sup>

- Using Data Example: **Unilever** introduced a Gender Appointment Ratio, which analyzed the recruitment records of some of its senior leaders for their review. This improved their gender awareness, triggered discussion, and supported future unbiased choices.

## MENTORING AND SPONSORSHIP

Mentoring can support women as they progress through their careers. It is most successful when they are matched with mentors who are men.<sup>cl</sup> However, women find it hard to connect with mentors, and they do not experience the same benefits of mentorship as men, such as growing a personal network within a company.<sup>cli</sup>

Women benefit most from sponsorship, when sponsors use their networks and knowledge to help them advance their careers.<sup>clii</sup> Sponsorship can be a complex relationship, but when it is managed well, it can increase women's confidence, compensation, and willingness to compete for positions.<sup>cliii</sup>

## PEER GROUPS

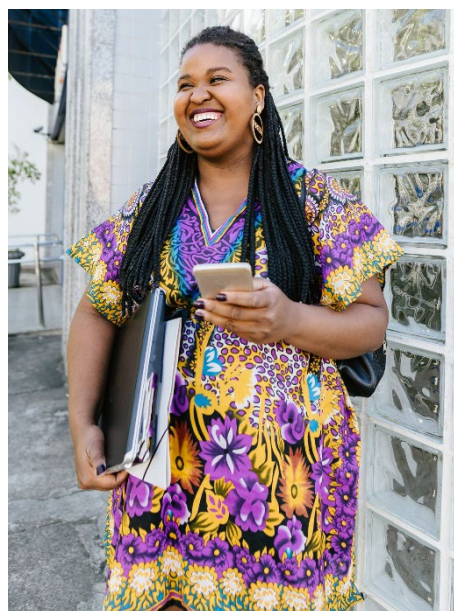
Employee groups offer a forum for peers to discuss challenges and provide a collective voice on key issues. However, there is evidence that these groups do not help women attain leadership positions, probably because they do not offer strong connections to people who can influence their careers.<sup>cliv</sup>

## LEADERSHIP TRAINING

Lack of confidence presents a barrier to women being promoted and must be addressed early in women's education and career.<sup>clv</sup> Evidence suggests that training can increase self-efficacy, but it can also be argued that companies should incorporate more diverse leadership criteria, including traits traditionally associated with women's leadership styles.<sup>clvi</sup>

## GLOBAL MOBILITY

International experiences can be key to attaining leadership positions, yet many companies perceive women as less mobile and do not select them for these opportunities.<sup>clvii</sup> Companies can adapt to ensure women have equal access to international assignments or eliminate these experiences as vital steps on the pathway to leadership.<sup>clviii</sup>



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#### 4.4 INCREASING EQUITABLE PARTICIPATION IN SUPPLY CHAINS

Beyond activities that aim to increase the equitable participation of women in companies' own operations, the study identified eleven promising and potential policies, practices, and programs that seek to achieve these goals within company supply chains. These include procurement and sourcing, skills-based training, and community development programs.

##### PROVEN

No proven company policies, practices, or programs were found.

##### PROMISING

###### SOURCING

Commitments to source from women-owned businesses have become common among U.S. companies<sup>clix</sup> and are beginning to gain traction in other parts of the world,<sup>clx</sup> leading to more opportunities for women entrepreneurs to participate in global supply chains.

- Sourcing Example: **Walmart** spent nearly US\$30 billion with women-owned businesses (for merchandising and services combined) between 2011 and 2019 and reported that offering enhanced buyer support to women-owned businesses has brought critical innovation into its retail stores.

Companies can overcome the challenges of finding women-owned partners by expanding outreach through networks such as WEConnect International, hosting or participating in supplier conferences, publishing their procurement policies and procedures, and listing supplier pages on their websites.<sup>clxi</sup>

- Networking Example: **P&G**, as a cofounder with Women's Forum and leader of the Women & Business Daring Circle, is working with WEConnect International, UN Women, and other partners to build the infrastructure in Europe to enable more companies in their journey toward gender inclusive sourcing.

## ACCESS TO MARKETS

Supporting women's participation in markets can include reducing risk for women producers through long-term contracting and guaranteed purchase agreements, as well as strengthening business relationships among exporters, traders, and processors.

- Market Participation Example: **The Coca-Cola Company's 5by20** program worked with producers of mangoes and passion fruit to support relationship building and offer technical training to help them access markets and improve sales. The program led to a 140 percent increase in income for participants.



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Companies have also supported the development of unique models to build new markets, adapt to market changes, and create new supply chains in underserved communities. Companies can also create new education and entrepreneurship opportunities for women.

- Women Distributors Example: An **international pool of manufacturing partners**, through JITA, ensures that goods reach the hands of rural consumers through a wide network of women micro-merchants and women door-to-door sales agents. As a result, women micro-distributors have increased their incomes by up to 47 percent.

Through digital access programs, companies can support women-owned businesses by opening up new market opportunities. For example, these programs help women entrepreneurs by enabling online sales and payments as well as creating demand for new services.

- Digital Ordering Example: **Mastercard Kionect** is a digital ordering system for women small kiosk owners in Nairobi, Kenya, to order and pay for products from wholesalers via SMS. Orders submitted through a feature phone create a digital record for kiosk owners to obtain access to micro-loans, which help to stock inventory and grow their business.

Increasing access to market information, such as operating dates, times, and product pricing, can improve market participation for women, particularly for those who may be disadvantaged due to limited digital access, time constraints, or low literacy levels.

- Market Information Example: **Qualcomm Wireless Reach** developed a digital application that enabled women fish processors in Senegal to minimize their trips away from home by giving them market prices in advance. The program also allowed them to share processing best practices and health information, leading to improved livelihoods.

## PROCUREMENT

Through procurement, companies can extend internal gender-based practices to their external supply chains. These practices may include corporate policies, targets for women in leadership and technical positions, training and mentorship opportunities, and gender-specific key performance indicators.<sup>clxii</sup>

- Influencing Suppliers Example: **HP Inc** asked its supplier agencies to increase the number of women and minorities in creative and leadership positions. In the first year, all agency partners exceeded the goal for women’s representation. In some cases, this increased women and minority participation by as much as 55 percent.

Technical assistance programs can help to accelerate the transition to compliance with required gender-based practices, particularly for smaller businesses in more traditional settings.

- Training Supply Chain Actors Example: **Gap Inc.** works with factories to improve labor standards and working conditions through its partnership with ILO Better Work and the Social & Labor Convergence Program. Gap Inc.’s program delivers assessment and remediation, as well as leadership training on workplace cooperation, engagement, and supervisory skills.

Initiatives advocating for the adoption of policies and practices to address the needs and rights of women workers, many of which have been implemented in the garment sector, have been successful by focusing on making the business case for improved working conditions for women workers.<sup>clxiii</sup>

- Improving Worker Conditions Example: **Gap Inc. and Better Work** have published data that indicates a clear correlation between improved factory conditions and increased productivity, profitability, and resilience for enterprises. Workers in factories who enjoy a clean, safe, and equitable working environment are also more motivated, loyal, and less likely to leave their jobs.

In the agricultural setting, supply-chain traceability and direct sourcing initiatives can advance supply-chain oversight and accountability. This transparency leads to greater recognition of women as producers and ensures that women’s rights are respected, their needs are met, and their challenges are understood.

- Direct Sourcing Example: **Primark** works with CottonConnect to increase the visibility of women in cotton production. Engaging directly with producers through trusted partners, this initiative provides skills-based programming to improve environmental, financial, and leadership outcomes.

Other agricultural supply chain programs work to formalize women’s participation in cooperatives by increasing women’s membership and incorporating women’s participation and leadership into decision-making structures through advocacy, gender sensitization, education, and use of role models.

- Working with Cooperatives Example: **Mondelez International’s Cocoa Life program** has increased women’s membership in and leadership of cooperatives in Ghana by engaging with communities, providing gender-sensitization workshops, and deploying women extension agents as role models.

## SKILLS-BASED TRAINING: FACTORY WORKERS

Across the garment sector, supply chain factory programs have addressed challenges driven by low pay, abusive and exploitative conditions, and underrepresentation of women in leadership positions by delivering skills-based training to increase the agency of women garment workers.

- Training Individuals Example: **GAP Inc. PACE Program** has trained 800,000 women and girls in 17 countries in skills including communication, problem solving, time-management, and leadership. Participants reported higher self-esteem, increased productivity, and improved communication and

financial literacy skills, as well as a greater ability to make decisions and lead in their workplaces, households, and communities.

## SKILLS-BASED TRAINING: AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS

Across the food and beverage sector, programs to improve agricultural productivity and diversify incomes in producer households have focused on expanding women's equitable participation to increase household and supply chain resilience.<sup>clxiv</sup>

- Increasing Productivity Training Example: **The World Cocoa Foundation Cocoa Livelihoods Program** found that interventions to increase cocoa productivity resulted in greater increases for women than men. The interventions increased both the resilience of the cocoa supply chain and the incomes of farmers.



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As part of training on agricultural practices, some companies have promoted sustainable farming practices that advance corporate environmental commitments while also providing economic and social benefits to women.<sup>clxv</sup>

- Sustainable Farming Training Example: **PepsiCo's** program with women potato farmers in West Bengal has demonstrated that, in addition to increasing yields and profitability, training women producers can promote sustainable farming practices that advance environmental goals.

## SKILLS-BASED TRAINING AND MENTORING: ENTREPRENEURS

“Last mile” programs with women distributors, retailers, and artisans can support women who operate informal businesses connected to corporate supply chains to grow—and formalize when relevant—their businesses, manage their finances, and increase their influence within their households around financial decision-making.<sup>clxvi</sup>

- Business Management Training Example: **The Coca-Cola Company 5by20** initiative includes more than 125 programs focused on micro-retailers. These programs offer, among other things, immersive business training, access to financial institutions and credit, and peer mentoring. Impact studies have demonstrated increased confidence, income, and savings among women micro-retailers.

Training that improves logistical and technical skills can also help to enhance women's access to markets. Programs, which include marketing and communications as well as financial management, also teach women how to connect with buyers, suppliers, investors, and other entrepreneurs.<sup>clxvii</sup>

- Logistics Training Example: **UPS's Women's Exporter Program** provides training on logistical and other business skills to women-owned businesses. It connects women with buyers, investors, and suppliers in 15 countries. The program has led to increased revenue, new jobs, and connections to microfinance institutions.<sup>clxviii</sup>

Companies are investing in accelerators and investment funds to support women-led businesses, develop potential future partnerships, and use the catalyzing effect of women's economic participation to innovate in their supply chains.



- Business Mentoring Example: **P&G Ventures** partners with entrepreneurs to build brands for P&G. So far it has invested more than US\$1 billion dollars in women-owned ventures, providing customized expertise as well as leveraging P&G’s capabilities and relationships.

## DIGITAL-FINANCIAL ACCESS INITIATIVES

Programs to educate women factory workers about money management<sup>clxix</sup> have given women more control over their finances as well as benefited factory management by creating payroll efficiency. These programs focus on a range of items including banking, loans, savings, and payslip deductions.

- Financial Literacy Example: **M&S** implemented a financial literacy program with women factory workers in India that resulted in a 30 percent increase in bank accounts held by women and a 30 percent increase in the number of women with savings, with 20 percent of women wage earners having their salaries deposited directly into their bank account.

Digital wage payments can increase confidentiality regarding when and how much workers are paid, thus contributing positively to women’s control over their income, reduce the risk of theft, facilitate household bill payments, support saving, and increase participation in financial decision-making. Multiple programs have supported factories to transition from a cash-based to a digital payment system.

- Digital Payments Example: **Mastercard, Levi Strauss & Co, Marks & Spencer, and VF Corporation** are partnering to support factory efforts to deposit wages directly into workers’ accounts, which are accessed through debit/prepaid cards or digital wallets. They are also providing digital financial literacy training.

## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

Community development programs may provide education and skills, develop school and water systems infrastructure, or provide health care or other community goods, which can have a significant impact on women in communities that are directly linked to corporate supply chains.

- Water and Sanitation Example: **VF Corporation** provided access to water, sanitation and hygiene products, such as water filters and handwashing stations, and supported community efforts to strengthen their water systems. These measures reinforced the infrastructure to support COVID-19 vaccination programs and reduced absenteeism in factories.

Companies with rural supply chains are investing in women’s groups such as Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs), which have demonstrated a positive impact on producer resilience<sup>clxx</sup> and WEE<sup>clxxi</sup> in underserved communities globally.

- VSLA Example: **Mars** implemented VSLAs in collaboration with **CARE** and with support from the Jacob’s Foundation in Côte d’Ivoire. By mid-2019, 458 VSLAs with 12,134 members—80 percent of whom were women—had mobilized a total of more than US\$700,000 in savings.

## COMMUNITY GENDER SENSITIZATION



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Gender sensitization and role modeling programs implemented with whole households and communities have shown strong results in increasing respect for women and shifting cultural norms. These programs significantly improve women's ability to fully participate as equals in their households, communities, and throughout supply chains.

- Shifting Gender Norms Example: **M&S** worked with coffee cooperatives in Peru to implement the Gender Action Learning System (GALS) methodology. As a result, over half of participating families reported a change in behaviors and a better understanding of the importance of women's roles in

coffee production. Furthermore, the number of women becoming members of cooperatives, selling at markets, and assuming community leadership positions increased.

## POTENTIAL

### COMBINED APPROACHES

The evidence suggests that impact is greater when programs are bundled, for example, skills-based training combined with market-access initiatives. Increasingly, companies are adopting ambitious approaches to tackle whole ecosystems to increase the economic participation of women.

- Bundled Interventions Example: **PepsiCo** partners with USAID in West Bengal to empower women producers in its potato supply chain through productivity training, market access, land rights interventions, and women's groups. Early outcome data suggest the effort is improving women's status as decision makers and entrepreneurs.

## 4.5 LEVERAGING COMPANY ASSETS TO INCREASE THE ECONOMIC POWER OF WOMEN CLIENTS AND CONSUMERS

This section highlights three ways in which companies may utilize their assets, for example, their financial resources, knowledge, products, or brands, to increase the equitable participation of women in leadership, operations, and supply chains.

## PROVEN

No proven company policies, practices, or programs were found.

## PROMISING

No promising company policies, practices, or programs were found.

## POTENTIAL

### GENDER-SMART PRODUCTS

The creation of new financial products for women consumers and business owners enables women to access financial services, such as digital payments, savings, and credit. These products support women's entrepreneurship and independence, as well as household resilience, by giving women more control over household decision-making.<sup>clxxii</sup>

- Digital Transactions Example: **Diamond Bank** created BETA, a doorstep service using digital transactions on mobile phones through a network of mobile agents in markets near where women live and work, reducing the prohibitive costs of formal banking for women entrepreneurs in Nigeria.

Expanding access to credit can enable women to improve health and save time,<sup>clxxiii</sup> as well as to start and grow businesses.<sup>clxxiv</sup> Digital innovation and psychometric testing have accelerated the ability of lenders to determine the eligibility of women borrowers and non-traditional loan applicants.<sup>clxxv</sup>

- Digital Credit Example: **Mastercard and Unilever's Jaza Duka initiative** combines distribution data from Unilever and analysis by Mastercard of how much inventory a store has bought over time. This effort eliminates requirements, such as a formal credit history or evidence of collateral, that women often cannot meet to qualify for credit.

Women tend to be primarily responsible for household management, including the household budget. Their concern for the conservation of resources has led the green energy sector to engage with women as primary consumers, even in very traditional communities.

- Green Energy Example: **SECCCO** uses women-centric customer service to offer green energy solutions, including solar-powered water pumps and clean cookstoves. It also partners with women's groups to make solutions affordable, improving women's ability to exercise agency within their households.

By acting on studies detailing the benefits of eliminating negative gender stereotypes,<sup>clxxvi</sup> as well as reacting to a shift in laws and social norms encouraging inclusivity,<sup>clxxvii</sup> companies have adapted products to neutralize or reverse gender stereotypes.<sup>clxxviii</sup>

- Children's Toy Example: **Mattel's** adaptations across its product line in recent years—redesigning its Barbie dolls with a diversity of body-types and adding new dolls, including gender-neutral, STEM career Barbies as well as dolls to honor women in science—reflect shifting cultural norms and show increased business resilience.

Some companies have utilized their digital user data to improve understanding of women in the marketplace and workforce. They are using this information to develop ways to challenge harmful stereotypes and empower women.

- Use of Data Example: **LinkedIn** analyzes user data to assess gender equality across industries and evaluate gender differences in self-promotion of profiles as well as to understand how men and women apply for jobs and how companies recruit employees. These data are helping businesses to benchmark their diversity goals and interact with candidates.



## INCLUSIVE MARKETING AND ADVERTISING

Advertising campaigns are increasingly attempting to break down stereotypes. For example, advertising might show a range of body types and fluid gender profiles, or depict men and women in non-traditional roles, such as fathers parenting or performing domestic work and women participating in jobs or leisure activities traditionally associated with men.

- Product Marketing Example: **P&G's Ariel Campaign** in India aimed to challenge the deeply rooted belief that it is a woman's responsibility to do the laundry. Since the beginning of the campaign, the percentage of Indian men who report thinking, "household chores are a woman's job," dropped from 79 percent to 52 percent.

Some companies have looked beyond specific campaigns and are adopting a systemic approach to eliminating harmful gender-based stereotypes within their advertising. This includes partnering with other businesses on advocacy initiatives, such as the Unstereotype Alliance, and adapting how they procure advertising, for example, by requiring women creative leads.

- Advertising Procurement Example: **Mars** mandates that marketing and advertising agency bids include a director who is a woman. In partnership with the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media, Mars annually reviews its advertising to identify and reduce gender bias.

## GENDER-LENS INVESTING

Initially focused on investing in companies with a higher representation of women on boards and in leadership, GLI has evolved to investing directly in women owners or companies that provide products and services that impact women's lives and has grown into a multi-billion dollar industry.<sup>clxxix</sup>

- Agricultural GLI Example: **Root Capital** and the Walmart Foundation are working together to strengthen gender-lens investing in the agricultural sector. They have developed innovative approaches to provide credit to gender-inclusive and women-led businesses and to catalyze gender-lens investment in the broader agricultural finance sector.

## 4.6 ENGAGING EXTERNALLY TO ADVANCE WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Finally, the study identified seven potential ways—ranging from adopting voluntary principles to conducting research to partnering with other organizations—in which companies partner externally to support their policies, practices, and programs to increase the equitable participation of women in leadership, operations, and supply chains.

### PROVEN

No proven company policies, practices, or programs were found.

### PROMISING

No promising company policies, practices, or programs were found.

## POTENTIAL

### COMMITMENT TO PRINCIPLES AND STANDARDS

The adoption of voluntary principles and standards can help companies focus their efforts, understand and address their business challenges, track progress, and build a strong corporate reputation.<sup>clxxx</sup>

- Voluntary Principles Example: The **WEPs** has 5,401 signatories committed to working collaboratively to empower women. Companies have established harassment complaint mechanisms, adapted procurement practices, and offered training and scholarships for women.

Some sector-based business associations or coalitions have developed sector-specific standards for increasing the participation of women. These associations support their members by identifying sector-relevant best practices and sharing knowledge.



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- Voluntary Standards Example: **Equal by 30** is a public commitment to work toward equal pay, equal leadership, and equal opportunities for women in the clean energy sector by 2030. In 2021, more than 135 energy companies were committed to ongoing data collection and 13 industry associations to setting industry best practices.

### CERTIFICATION AND LABELS

Certification schemes, using independent verification, can help companies progress towards goals, increase accountability, and engage with the consumer. Schemes such as the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), Fairtrade, and Rainforest Alliance have incorporated gender components into their standards. Other schemes with gender-specific standards have emerged.

- Certification Example: **Economic Dividends for Gender Equality (EDGE) Certification** works with nearly 200 organizations in 50 countries and 23 industries, measuring and reporting on workforce diversity, pay equality, and sound policies and programs.<sup>clxxxi</sup> L'Oréal was the first company in the United States to be certified with the EDGE global standard.

However, certification may not go far enough; schemes are known for their process-driven approach and limited focus on outcomes.<sup>clxxxii</sup> Moreover, they frequently focus on worker rights, which means that they tend not to provide a view on informal or invisible workers in supply chains.<sup>clxxxiii</sup>

### DISCLOSURE AND BENCHMARKING

Disclosure and benchmarking can have a significant impact on company communications, increasing equity with consumers, employees and potential employees, and other stakeholders such as investors.<sup>clxxxiv</sup> Standardized approaches to support businesses may be broad-based or gender-specific.<sup>clxxxv</sup>

There is limited evidence to date of the impact of disclosure and benchmarking on business behavior. Some studies caution that too much focus on disclosure can lead to an excessive production of documents by marketing teams, and not enough investment in outcomes.<sup>clxxxvi</sup>

## PARTICIPATION IN ASSOCIATIONS AND COALITIONS

Business participation in associations—both general and sector-specific—offer opportunities to collaborate, develop policy, standards, and best practices, advocate for public policy, and deliver programming. Associations may have groups or sub-chapters focused on supporting women in business.

- Broad-based Coalition Example: The **World Economic Forum Gender Gap Accelerator** brought together dozens of public and private sector actors to work on the global employment and pay gap. In Chile, the program has reduced wage inequality for more than seven percent of salaried employees in the private sector.

Industry-level initiatives can support progress on specific challenges whose solutions go beyond the capabilities of one organization.<sup>clxxxvii</sup> A multitude of coalitions that coalesce around shared objectives for increasing the economic participation of women has emerged.

- Industry Specific Coalition Example: The **Empower@Work Collaborative** was established by organizations working in the garment industry that have, over the last decade, developed, tested, and implemented proven empowerment, skill-building, and GBV programs for supply chain workers and managers across the garment industry.

## PARTICIPATION IN CAMPAIGNS

Collective campaigns, typically led by civil society or the public sector, offer the private sector an opportunity to demonstrate a shared perspective and influence a large audience with regards to women's rights and economic participation.

- Cross-Industry Campaigns Example: **HeForShe** is a social campaign involving hundreds of thousands of men from around the world, including chief executive officers (CEOs) of companies such as Vodafone, Twitter and Barclays, who have committed to gender equality. HeForShe has been the subject of more than 2 billion conversations on social media.

Company campaigns can also address gender equality issues, typically when issues can be linked to the industry, company, or product, for example, alcoholic beverage companies working on campaigns to tackle GBV.

- **Company-Specific Campaigns Example:** **AB InBev** launched a multi-year [#NoExcuse campaign](#) to change society's views and tolerance of GBV in South Africa. It expanded the #NoExcuses campaign to include a dedicated WhatsApp line for women and men to use to discreetly report GBV and to seek assistance.

## RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY

Some companies engage in activities to support and influence whole sectors (and their enabling environments) through the production of research and toolkits and by hosting learning events and conferences.



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- **Research and Knowledge Sharing Example:** **Mastercard** seeks to shape the debate around improving women's access to the formal financial system by publishing research, sharing best practices across the financial and mobile telecommunications industries, and advocating for a positive regulatory environment.

Companies can individually or collectively seek to influence governments and policymakers to shift the regulatory environment to enable progress on increasing women's participation. Recent areas of activity include land rights issues,<sup>clxxxviii</sup> supply chain due diligence,<sup>clxxxix</sup> and GBV.

- **Industry Specific Advocacy Example:** **Diageo** tackled systemic change to empower women in the entertainment industry by organizing women beer promoters, developing and operationalizing a code of conduct among beer sellers, and influencing the government to include entertainment workers in anti-harassment laws.

## PARTNERING

Companies aiming to improve women's equitable participation in their workforce and leadership may need to partner with other public or private sector organizations to bring expertise and influence in areas that are necessary for achieving their goals. Smaller companies lacking the resources to invest in activities such as pipeline development may need intensive support.

- **Workforce Diversity Partnering Example:** **USAID's Engendering Industries** promotes workforce diversity and leadership in industries dominated by men by providing partner companies with tools and resources to implement gender equality interventions across the employee life cycle. This effort includes leadership training and coaching.

Companies are also working with their supply chain partners to co-design and invest in initiatives, based on multiple partners' expertise, to create access for women to economic resources, such as business financing, jobs, and markets.

- **Supply Chain Partnering Example:** **Microsoft Airband** is working with USAID and local supply chain partners to address the gender digital divide by creating accessible products and services that increase equity in internet connectivity. These products enable women to participate in increasingly digitizing industrial sectors.

Companies have unique strengths with regard to increasing women’s participation in their supply chains. They, however, may lack expertise and access, particularly where supply chains are geographically diverse, and the challenges faced are systemic.<sup>cxv</sup>

- Land and Resource Rights Partnering Example: **USAID’s LandLinks** works with companies to strengthen land and resource rights by engaging actors to transform law and policy, land registration processes, and social norms. It is also helping companies gather and disseminate best practices, including gender mainstreaming within supply chains.

Implementing partners who can leverage expertise and on-the-ground resources are critical for the delivery of gender diversity goals. Implementers may be international or community-based non-governmental organizations or private sector organizations.<sup>cxvi</sup>

## 5. NINE GAPS IN EVIDENCE

The source review was based on publicly available information in the English language and relied heavily on material published by companies, for which sharing such information can be very resource intensive and highly sensitive, and whose objective is to show the company in a positive light. The evidence came predominantly from industries with complex global supply chains, such as the food and beverage sector, and from industries where women are currently underserved as a client base, such as the financial services sector. These companies are highly exposed to scrutiny from governments, investors, employees, and consumers.

Even where companies share detailed information about their policies, practices, and programs, this information is not typically based on the rigorous standards for evidence required to be able to ascertain their impact on increasing women's equitable participation or empowering women economically (see [Table 1](#)). Where the landscaping study was able to draw on rigorously produced evidence, it found that most research documented the negative impacts of policies, practices, and programs on women's participation, rather than the positive impacts of programs designed to increase participation, a subtle difference that has a significant impact on the analysis.

Based on the quality and type of material available as well as the key informant interviews, the following key gaps in evidence were identified:

### 5.1 GAPS: THE BUSINESS CASE

1. There is limited evidence regarding specific aspects of the business case for women's equitable participation, such as reputation, talent attraction, compliance, and supply chain resilience.
2. There is virtually no evidence regarding the extent to which specific policies, practices, and programs to increase women's equitable participation impact business performance.

### 5.2 GAPS: INDUSTRIES AND BUSINESS TYPES

1. There is little evidence of activity around increasing women's participation from sectors and companies that have limited exposure to public and media scrutiny.
2. Lack of evidence from some industries, such as tourism and transportation, is particularly concerning because of the barriers faced by women in these industries and the opportunities they present for increasing women's participation.
3. There is limited evidence from small- and medium-sized companies that may not have the resources to invest in studying and communicating about their activities or may not engage in any activities to increase women's participation.
4. Evidence from American companies made up the bulk of the sources included, making it challenging to understand how women's participation is being addressed in other parts of the world.

### 5.3 GAPS: POLICIES, PRACTICES, AND PROGRAMS

1. The extent to which specific policies, practices, and programs—or a combination of policies, practices, and programs—result in increasing women's equitable participation is unclear.
2. Linking increased equitable participation with WEE impacts, which are vaguer and more diffuse, is not possible with the available data.

- Where outcomes are measured, the analysis does not typically consider intersectionality, which is an important dynamic for understanding and determining business investment priorities.

## 6. EIGHTEEN RECOMMENDATIONS

Table 6 contains 18 high-level recommendations based on the evidence presented in the landscaping study to support companies to increase women's equitable participation in leadership, operations, and supply chains. The recommendations can be used by companies, governments, or development partners.

**TABLE 6: KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

KEY FINDING	RECOMMENDATIONS
THE BUSINESS CASE	
The business case may be similar for companies within industry groups, but it must be customized to the unique circumstances of individual companies.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Conduct in-depth analysis of the company, its supply chain, and its operating environment(s), factoring in risks and opportunities related to the participation of women in leadership, operations, and supply chains.</li> <li>2. Consider the data needs and communication preferences of the full range of internal and external corporate stakeholders, from functional leadership, to employees, to investors, to partners and customers.</li> <li>3. Frame the business case positively in terms of opportunities to increase creativity, innovation, resilience, and profitability, rather than focusing on risks or the negative impacts of inaction on gender diversity.</li> </ol>
While there is good data supporting the impact of increasing women's participation on overall business performance, there is more limited data on drivers, such as compliance, regulation, and resilience.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Adapt research focus to understand a more comprehensive and nuanced business case for increasing women's participation, to enable stronger, more customized cases for individual companies.</li> <li>5. Integrate metrics relevant to increasing women's participation into existing programs, such as a company's reputation and brand health tracking.</li> </ol>
INDUSTRIES AND BUSINESS TYPES	
Some industries, such as "legacy industries," tourism, and transportation, have the potential to significantly improve women's equitable participation, but there is limited evidence of relevant policies, practices, and programs.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. Conduct primary research to develop the business case, as well as understand the policies, practices, and programs to increase women's equitable participation in these industries.</li> </ol>



Despite a strong business case, companies do not always have the resources to invest in policies, practices, and programs to increase women's equitable participation.

7. Support a gender-equal ecosystem, for example, by developing the workforce to support the entry of women into non-traditional roles in companies.
8. Partner with businesses to offer resources, including coaching and advisory support, to enable them to create policies, practices, and programs to increase women's equitable participation.
9. Support research (including small pilot programs and innovations) to build an evidence base for what works, and engage to share knowledge, resources, and solve problems at the systemic level.

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#### POLICIES, PRACTICES, AND PROGRAMS

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There is limited evidence of which company activities work to increase women's equitable participation in leadership, operations, and supply chains.

10. Encourage gender equality in existing activities and change company norms. Carry out gender-based analyses, such as pay gap analyses, as the foundation for understanding, recognizing, and valuing women's participation.
11. Conduct high-quality studies of policies, practices, and programs—and combinations of policies, practices, and programs—to help companies make decisions about the best way to increase women's participation.

Policies, practices, and programs that support shifting norms and systems have the potential for much greater impact than approaches that focus on training women to advance within the current system.

12. Make gender diversity a company initiative that is prioritized through high-level, positively-framed commitments to inclusivity, and continually demonstrate support for increasing women's participation and leadership.
13. Address day-to-day business practices to ensure inclusivity and introduce gender-neutral or women-positive criteria to pipeline development, recruitment, hiring, and performance management.
14. Highlight role models, particularly where men and women are fulfilling non-traditional roles, to shift norms and stereotypes in leadership, operations, and supply chains.
15. Adapt products and services—and how they are advertised and marketed—to meet the needs of women clients and consumers and to challenge harmful norms and stereotypes.

Even small companies can choose to spend their money with suppliers in a way that reflects their own values and increases women's equitable participation.

16. Commit to increasing the proportion of women-owned or women-led businesses in the company supply chain and utilize procurement, partnerships, and investments to nudge others to increase women's participation.

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Investment in direct engagement with supply chain workers and producers as well as women entrepreneurs can have significant impacts on women's access to markets, income, and economic power.

17. Provide education and skills training, including financial literacy training, to help women advance their businesses in supply chains, increase their income, manage their finances, and advocate for themselves.
  18. Integrate gender sensitization into workplace and community programs to support shifting cultural norms and amplify the impact of investments in women.
-

## ANNEX: KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

**Business operations.** Business operations refer to activities and sets of activities (“functions”) that businesses engage in daily to increase the value of the enterprise. They vary across industries, and they are structured according to the requirements of specific industries.<sup>cxcii</sup>

**Business policies.** A set of documented guidelines that establish standards in areas such as proper procedures and employee behavior.<sup>cxciii</sup>

**Business practices.** The essential features of processes needed to effect standard operating procedures in a consistent manner.<sup>cxciv</sup> Business practices can refer to a wide range of activities, from accounting to performance management to communication approaches.<sup>cxcv</sup>

**Business programs.** A company-led plan of action to accomplish specific goals, including an activity or a set of activities, procedures, practices, budgets, and timeframes to be followed.<sup>cxcvi</sup>

**Company.** A legal entity formed to engage in and operate a business enterprise. A company structure can range from a partnership to a proprietorship, or even a corporation. Companies may be either public or private and are generally organized to earn a profit from business activities.<sup>cxcvii</sup>

**Company assets.** An asset is an item of value owned by a company. Assets span many categories. They can be physical, tangible goods, such as vehicles, real estate, computers, office furniture, and other fixtures, or intangible items, such as intellectual property.<sup>cxcviii</sup>

**Corporate citizenship.** Involves the social responsibility of businesses and the extent to which they meet legal, ethical, and economic responsibilities, as established by shareholders and balanced with the needs of the community and environment in the surrounding area.<sup>cxcix</sup>

**Corporate investment.** In the context of this landscaping study, the allocation of company resources to increasing women’s equitable participation in leadership, operations, and supply chains.

**Diversity training.** Program designed to increase diversity and inclusion in the workplace, often with components to reduce bias and overcome stereotypes, facilitate positive intergroup interaction, reduce prejudice and discrimination, and generally teach individuals who are different from others how to work together effectively.<sup>cc</sup>

**Equitable participation.** Gender equity is the process of being fair to women and men by compensating for historical and social disadvantages that prevent women and men from otherwise operating on a level playing field.<sup>cci</sup> In the context of this landscaping study, equity requires going beyond achieving balanced participation between men and women to ensure that women are able to fully participate in—and receive the full benefits of participating in—leadership, operations, and supply chains.

**Environmental, social, and governance (ESG).** ESG criteria are a set of standards for a company’s operations. Environmental criteria relate to company performance as a steward of nature; social criteria relate to employees, suppliers, customers, and communities; and governance criteria relate to leadership, executive pay, audits, internal controls, and shareholder rights.<sup>ccii</sup>

**Gender-based violence (GBV).** An umbrella term for any harmful threat or act directed at an individual or group based on actual or perceived biological sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, or lack of adherence to socially constructed norms around masculinity and femininity.<sup>cciii</sup>

**Gender digital divide.** The inequalities between men and women in technology access and use. It is the distinction between those who have Internet and/or mobile phone access and can make use of digital communications services, and those who are excluded from these services.<sup>cciv</sup>

**Gender diversity.** The representation of people of different genders at all functions and levels of an organization. It most commonly refers to pursuing an equal ratio of men and women but may also include nonbinary representation.

**Gender equality.** Refers to fundamental social transformation achieved by working with men and boys, women, and girls, to bring about changes in attitudes, behaviors, roles and responsibilities relating to home, the workplace, and the community. Genuine equality means expanding freedoms and improving overall quality of life so that equality is achieved without sacrificing gains for either person regardless of their gender.<sup>ccv</sup>

**Gender equity.** Process of being fair to women and men, and boys and girls, by ensuring that measures are taken to compensate for cumulative economic, social, and political disadvantages that prevent women and men, and boys and girls, from enjoying a level playing field.<sup>ccvi</sup>

**Gender gap.** The difference between women and men as reflected in social, political, intellectual, cultural, or economic attainments or attitudes. For example, the gap in economics is the difference between the salaries of men and women, the number of men and women in leadership positions, and the number of men and women participating in the workplace.<sup>ccvii</sup>

**Gender-lens investing (GLI).** An impact investment strategy which deliberately integrates gender analysis into investment analysis and decision-making. It involves investing in organizations that are women-owned/led, promoting workplace equity, or offering products or services that improve the lives of women.<sup>ccviii</sup>

**Gender norms.** Expectations and perceived rules are based on an individual's biological sex and social perceptions of their gender. A concept that is socially constructed, based on collective beliefs about appropriate behaviors for women and men and the relations between them.<sup>ccix</sup>

**Industry.** An industry is a group of companies that are related based on their primary business activities. In modern economies, there are dozens of industry classifications. Industry classifications are typically grouped into larger categories called sectors.<sup>ccx</sup>

**Legacy industries.** Examples include energy, industrials, materials, utilities and waste services, and specific consumer products sectors. Industries where men represent a larger percentage of the workforce and a higher number of leadership positions. <sup>ccxi</sup>

**Materiality.** A concept that defines why and how certain issues are important for a company, industry, or sector. A material issue can have a major impact on the financial, economic, reputational, and legal aspects of a company as well as on the system of internal and external stakeholders of that company.<sup>ccxii</sup>

**Mentoring.** Mentorship programs are designed to connect a mentor to guide the professional growth of a mentee, which may include navigating challenges at the intersection of personal and professional challenges. Mentors are not in a formal role to the mentee, such as a supervisor, but instead serve as partners that offer feedback and advice based on their experience.

**Social norms.** Shared rules of action that define what is considered normal and acceptable behavior for members of a group. The rules are maintained by empirical and normative expectations and enforced by social sanctions, guiding how individuals interact in society, the economy, and within the household.<sup>ccxiii</sup>

**Sponsorship.** Whereas mentorship focuses on help that a mentor can provide directly, such as guidance, advice, feedback on skills, and coaching, sponsorship entails external-facing support, such as advocacy, visibility, promotion, and connections.<sup>ccxiv</sup>

**Supply chain.** A network between a company and its suppliers to produce and distribute a specific product to the final buyer. This includes different activities, people, entities, information, and resources, and represents the steps it takes to get the product or service from its original state to the customer.<sup>ccxv</sup>

**Unconscious bias training.** Programs that aim to go beyond increasing awareness of bias and its impact, and instead teach participants how to manage their biases and change their behaviors. <sup>ccxvi</sup>

## ENDNOTES

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