



**The Business Case for
Women's Economic
Empowerment:
An Integrated Approach**

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Growing momentum

In recent years, amidst increased awareness that empowering women yields a 'high return on investment'¹, a growing number of companies have collectively invested more than \$300 million² and launched dozens of programs to support women's economic empowerment.

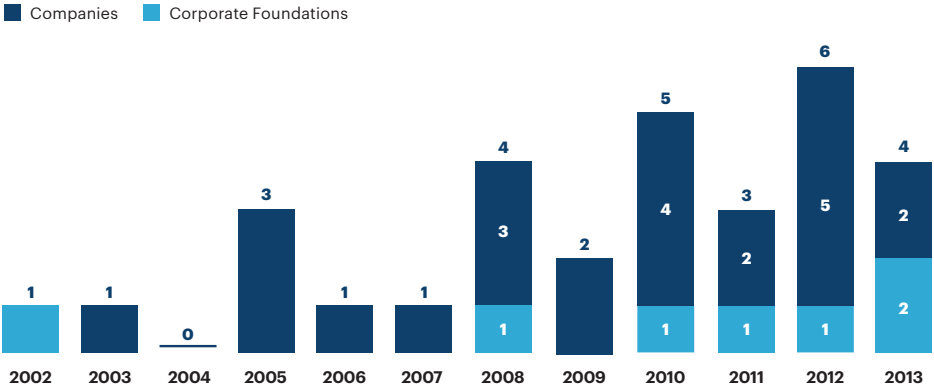
The majority of these programs aim to expand women's employment opportunities, training and access to finance. However, for a woman to be economically empowered, she needs both the ability to succeed economically and the power to act on economic decisions.

Oak Foundation hence commissioned Dalberg Global Development Advisors (Dalberg) and the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), integrating findings from communications research by WITTER ventures, to understand in more detail corporate-funded women's economic empowerment programs.

Headlines from the research include:

- While there are a lot of corporations investing in women's economic empowerment, there is little available data about what's working and what's not. More data could help improve program outcomes and increase return on investment.
- Most programs focus on access to education, financial support, training and employment opportunities rather than a more integrated approach based on a human rights framework that delivers the broader conditions necessary for women to thrive.
- There is an opportunity and desire to increase collaboration and improve communications between the women's rights sector and corporations working in women's economic empowerment programs.

Programs included in this study by launch year³



¹ La Pietra Coalition, 2011; McKinsey, "The Business of Empowering Women," 2010.

² ICRW and Dalberg analysis of 31 corporate-funded programs. Based on publicly available data.

Represents current pool of funding including multi-year projects. Not all programs provided investment data.

³ Dalberg and ICRW analysis of 31 corporate-funded programs.

The Evidence

The evidence base for this report consists of a representative sample of 31 of the largest corporate-funded women’s economic empowerment programs run by 28 companies and corporate foundations. The table below lists the 28 companies and corporate foundations

analyzed in this study. This analysis reviewed each of the companies engagement with the eight building blocks. The majority of programs studied utilized three or four of the eight building blocks. Only three company’s completed full, rigorous impact evaluations.

Primary areas of focus for corporate-funded programs

Company	Suppliers	Employees	Customers	Communities	General Impact
Coca-Cola	●	●	●	●	●
DANONE	●				
Diageo	●	●	●	●	●
Gap Inc.	●	●			
Kellogg	●				
MAS Holdings	●	●			
McDonalds		●			
Nestlé	●				
Vodafone	●			●	
Walmart	●	●			
Bank of America	●				
Calvert Foundation					●
Chevron					●
Credit Suisse					●
DKNY	●				●
ExxonMobil					●
General Mills					●
Goldman Sachs					●
H&M Conscious Foundation					●
HSBC					●
Intel					●
Kraft					●
Levi-Strauss Foundation	●	●			
MetLife Foundation					●
MTN Foundation	●		●		●
Nike Foundation					●
Nokia			●		●
Qualcomm			●		

Strategic Benefits of an Integrated Approach

Why an integrated approach?

An integrated approach delivers higher return on investment (ROI) across the corporate value chain, as well as bringing social returns. It is also an opportunity for a company to demonstrate leadership in the growing women's economic empowerment movement and to contribute to larger efforts for the improvement of women's status globally.

What is an integrated approach?

An integrated approach addresses the underlying structural barriers to women's economic empowerment. It utilizes all of a company's potential levers to create impact: people, investments, brand, customers, purchasing power and partnerships.

How can companies implement an integrated approach?

Companies can put this approach into action by implementing eight building blocks for achieving women's economic empowerment.

Eight Building Blocks for an Integrated Approach⁴



Sustainable, Impactful Economic Empowerment for Women



⁴ These building blocks are based in a human-rights framework developed from interviews with various rights experts and review of relevant literature including: "A Rights-based Approach to Development." (AWID, 2002), "Introduction to a Rights-based Approach" (Replace Campaign), "Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights: Implementing the United Nations' Protect, Respect and Remedy Framework" (UN OHCHR, 2011).

The Opportunity

More than ever before, business leaders are stepping forward to advance women's economic empowerment. Their efforts position them as a very powerful ally in the broader effort to ensure that all women can fully participate in and benefit from rising global prosperity.

Business leaders are now in a unique position to drive even greater impact and stronger growth for their firms — by adopting an integrated approach in their efforts to support women's economic empowerment.

Applying business levers for more effective change

Companies and corporate foundations can apply an integrated approach by:

1. Funding or creating integrated programs themselves;
2. Asking funding recipients or their implementing partners to adopt an integrated approach; or
3. Partnering with women's rights organizations or women's funds.

In all cases, companies and corporate foundations should consider leveraging the wide range of business assets available to them.

The business case framework: leveraging all business assets

People

Companies can empower female staff, leaders, and board members by making internal policies, systems, norms, and beliefs more gender equitable.

Employees can provide expertise or act as volunteers for external programs.

Investments

Companies can use their investments, CSR programs, and/or grant-making to support women at every stage of the value chain in which they operate.

Brands

Companies can use their reputation and relationships with peers and customers to influence policy in the communities where they operate.

Partners

Companies can work with NGOs, governments, foundations, advocacy groups, and businesses to address specific barriers and to advance women's rights.

Programs can leverage external knowledge and experience to incorporate best practices.

Purchasing power

Companies can source inputs from businesses that directly empower women as suppliers, contractors, and distributors and establish policies encouraging this practice.

An Integrated Approach Across the Corporate Value Chain

Building blocks and activities for an integrated approach to women's economic empowerment

Roles of Women in the Corporate Value Chain

Building Blocks for Women's Economic Empowerment

	Women as suppliers, contractors/distributors	Women as employees	Women as consumers	Women as members of communities
1 Access to equitable and safe employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pursue and expand business with women-owned suppliers (e.g. Danone Egypt's MCC Project) Encourage industry to pursue business with women suppliers, contractors, and distributors Contract only with businesses using non-discriminatory policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actively recruit and retain women within company (e.g. McDonald's Global Women's Initiative) Enact and enforce corporate policies for right to equal work, equal pay (e.g. Diageo's Plan W) Enact and enforce corporate policies for maternal and paternal leave Ensure safe work environments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use packaging, marketing, and brand materials that represent women as valued employees Provide information on employment opportunities at sales touch points 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Train local leaders and institutions on value of recruiting and retaining women employees Support right to equal pay for equal work Support right to equal employment opportunities Advocate for stronger laws and enforcement for safe workplaces for women
2 Education and training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support programs that train women as suppliers, contractors, and distributors (e.g. Nestlé's work with women in Cocoa Supply Chain, Gap's P.A.C.E. initiative) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure equal access to education and vocational training programs Provide equal opportunities for continued higher education (e.g. scholarships, part-time work and study) Provide equal opportunities for networking and mentorship, especially with women leaders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer communications products tailored to women Offer education financing products tailored to women Provide information on schools, education, training, and connectivity programs at sales points 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create or support education, training, and connectivity programs tailored to women (e.g. Intel's She Will Connect) Support entrepreneurial skill programs for women (e.g. Coca-Cola's 5by20) Create or support programs to recruit and retain women educators Support rights to primary and secondary school
3 Access to and control over economic resources and opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contract with businesses who support financial literacy and financial stability among women employees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide financial literacy programs for women employees Provide women-tailored financial advisory services Assist female employees to obtain asset documentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer financial products tailored to women (e.g. ExxonMobil's Business Women) Provide information on women's rights to credit, capital, land and property at sales points 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support programs offering financial services, advising, and training tailored to women (e.g. HERFinance, Qualcomm's Mentoring Women in Business) Provide credit or capital to female-run businesses (e.g. Goldman Sachs's 10,000 Women) Support women's right to credit, capital, land and property
4 Voice in society and influencing policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contract with businesses who have and promote women leaders Contract with businesses with equal promotion rules and gender-friendly leadership cultures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enact and enforce corporate policies for equal promotion Provide equal access to management training and leadership skill development Encourage women to seek out leadership positions inside and outside company 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use packaging, marketing and brand materials that respect and empower women and promote female leadership Provide information on women's rights to promotion, leadership, and decision-making at sales points 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support programs that promote women leaders (e.g. Bank of America's Mentoring Women in Business) Support right to equal promotion rules & rates Support right to equal participation in discussions and decision-making (e.g. H&M Conscious initiative)

An Integrated Approach Across the Corporate Value Chain

Building blocks and activities for an integrated approach to women's economic empowerment

Roles of Women in the Corporate Value Chain

Building Blocks for Women's Economic Empowerment

	Women as suppliers, contractors/distributors	Women as employees	Women as consumers	Women as members of communities
5 Freedom from the risk of violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contract with businesses who enforce policies against harassment and gender-based violence Contract with businesses who enforce policies for workplace safety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enact and enforce corporate policies against harassment and violence, integrating the needs of women Publicly support women employees who come forward as victims of violence Educate men within company against gender-based violence Ensure no business activities directly or indirectly support exploitative trades 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide information on anti-violence support programs and rights at sales points 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create or support programs reducing exploitative trades (e.g. sex trafficking), harassment and gender-based violence (e.g. Diageo's Plan W) Support prosecution of harassment or gender-based violence in customer communities Support right to protection against harassment and gender-based violence
6 Freedom of movement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contract with businesses who ensure safe transport for women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure safe transport options exist to and from company locations Support equal study and work abroad programs Provide, support or subsidize drivers training programs for women employees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide information on women's transport rights and support programs at sales points 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create or support programs improving availability and safety of transport options for women Support right to move freely inside and outside national borders Support right to seek education and employment freely inside and outside home country
7 Access to and control over reproductive health and family formation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contract with businesses who offer women-sensitive healthcare policies Contract with businesses who enforce policies for equal rights to healthcare and health-related absences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enact and enforce corporate policies for equal right to healthcare and health-related absences Provide health insurance that meets needs of women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer products tailored to women's health and wellness Provide information specific to women's health and family formation rights in relevant products and packaging 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support women's right to make decisions regarding family formation Create or support healthcare and family formation programs tailored to women (e.g. Nike's Girl Effect) Invest in programs and infrastructure focused on women, maternal, and child health
8 Social protection and childcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contract with businesses who provide equal access to long term savings, insurance, or other social protection mechanisms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide education to women employees on long term saving Support risk sharing or insurance mechanisms tailored to women Work to ensure women employees have adequate childcare via their own economic capabilities or partnerships with qualified caretakers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer social security and risk sharing products tailored to women (e.g. MetLife Foundation's Safety Net Programs) Provide information on social security and risk sharing programs at sales touch points 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create or support programs facilitating risk-sharing for women Support right to equal investment and financial management opportunities

Applying an integrated approach across the corporate value chain can improve business outcomes.

This graphic shows the various roles women can play across the corporate value chain.

Women as suppliers, contractors and distributors

Women are present all along a corporation's upstream supply chain, from mining raw materials to distributing final products.

Women as employees

Women are often an integral part of a corporation's workforce and leadership.

Women as customers

Accounting for more than half of the world's population, women represent an enormous potential market for companies.

Women as members of communities in which companies work

Women play important roles in communities where companies have influence and impact local conditions. These include communities where companies conduct research, source inputs, manufacture, employ, and sell their products.

Given each company or foundation's unique interests and skills, each program will have different targets and methods. Women's rights organizations and women's funds are well positioned to partner with companies on

an integrated approach. These organizations can identify and design suitable activities to ensure all eight building blocks are addressed, and can assist companies in finding expert implementation partners.

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