

Preface

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Countries and companies can be competitive only if they develop, attract and retain the best talent, both male and female. While governments have an important role to play in creating the right policy framework for improving women's access and opportunities, it is also the imperative of companies to create workplaces where the best talent can flourish. Civil society, educators and media also have an important role to play in both empowering women and engaging men in the process.

To mobilize various stakeholders and to keep track of progress, it is important that there are quantitative benchmarks widely available. Since 2006, through the *Global Gender Gap Report* series, the World Economic Forum has been quantifying the magnitude of gender-based disparities and tracking their progress over time. By providing a comprehensive framework for benchmarking global gender gaps, the *Report* identifies countries that are role models in dividing their resources equitably between women and men, regardless of the overall resource level.

No single measure can capture the complete situation of half of the world's population. The Global Gender Gap Index seeks to measure one important aspect of gender equality: the relative gaps between women and men, across a large set of countries and across four key areas: health, education, economics and politics. To complement this information, the Country Profiles contain a comprehensive set of supporting information that provides the broader context on gender parity laws, social norms, policies and outcomes within a country.

The *Report* has been widely used by numerous universities, NGOs, researchers, media organizations, businesses, governments and individuals as a tool for their work. Additionally, it has been at the core of much of the World Economic Forum's subsequent work on gender parity. In 2008, based on the findings of the *Report*, we launched the Global Gender Parity Group, a multi-stakeholder community of highly influential leaders—50% women and 50% men—who have together committed to strategies towards improving the engagement and integration of women within all sectors of global society. In March 2012, based on the work of this group and to complement the gap analysis in the *Report*, we released an online repository of information highlighting company best practices that can help close economic gender gaps. Over the course of 2012, using the data from the *Report* to provide the context, we also launched pilot Gender

Parity Task Forces in three countries—Mexico, Turkey and Japan—to foster public-private collaboration on closing the gender gaps in economic participation in each country for a three-year period. Based on initial successes with these Task Forces, other countries are now seeking to adopt this model.

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We are proud of the initiatives undertaken at the World Economic Forum and elsewhere on the basis of this *Report* since its first publication in 2006. Yet, much more needs to be done to address an issue that is relevant to our collective social and economic progress. There is not one path to parity, but many. Cash transfer programmes, equal access to credit and financial services, parental leave, affordable childcare facilities, innovative hiring process, redesigned career paths and meaningful mentoring programmes are but a few of the types of changes that must be made.

To engage in change initiatives, countries, companies and other stakeholders must be able to understand the context, assess the starting point and track progress through tools such as this *Report*. It is our hope that this latest edition will continue to inspire further research, policy changes and new projects by businesses, governments, civil society and universities, and will serve as a call to action to transform the pace of change on a fundamental issue of our time.