

Preface

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The key for the future of any country and any institution is the capability to develop, retain and attract the best talent. Women make up one half of the world's human capital. Empowering and educating girls and women and leveraging their talent and leadership fully in the global economy, politics and society are thus fundamental elements of succeeding and prospering in an ever more competitive world. In particular, with talent shortages projected to become more severe in much of the developed and developing world, maximizing access to female talent is a strategic imperative for business. The World Economic Forum has been among the institutions at the forefront of engaging leaders to close global gender gaps as a key element of our mission to improve the state of the world.

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* reveals those countries that are role models in dividing their resources equitably between women and men, regardless of the overall level of those resources. 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— that have together committed to strategies to improve the use of female talent. 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 on company best practices that can help close economic participation gaps. Over the course of this year, using the data from the *Report* to provide the context, we also launched three pilot Gender Parity Taskforces in Mexico, Turkey and Japan to foster public-private collaboration on closing the economic participation gender gap by up to 10% in each country. Outside of the World Economic Forum, the *Report* is used widely by numerous universities, schools, researchers, media entities, businesses, governments and individuals as a tool for their work.

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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. It is our hope that this latest edition will continue to inspire further research, policy changes and new projects by business, governments, civil society and universities, and serve as a call to action to transform the pace of change on an issue that is fundamental to the growth and stability of the global economy and society.