

Global Agenda Council on Women's Empowerment 2011 - 2012

Five Challenges, One Solution: Women

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Five Challenges, One Solution: Women

From unprecedented population ageing to increasing unemployment, from global leadership imbalances to persisting conflicts, from resource scarcity to volatile global food supplies, the world faces a series of interconnected challenges. The Global Agenda Council on Women's Empowerment aims to highlight how women's empowerment is a part of the solutions to these challenges.

This compendium outlines how women's advancement may impact and provide solutions to five specific global challenges:

- Demography
- Leadership
- Food Security and Agriculture
- Sustainability and Resource Scarcity
- Conflict

This report consists of five concise issue descriptions and links each challenge to women's empowerment and gender parity, with an emphasis on action items and recommendations. By shedding light on the link between women's empowerment and a specific challenge, this compendium aims to provide non-experts with a stronger elementary understanding of the impact that empowering women and girls can have on their area of interest.

Demography



Issue Description

Women determine population trends by deciding how many children to have and when to have them. Currently, a majority of married women of reproductive age (55%) have the capacity to plan their pregnancies by using modern contraception. Yet there are still 210 million women who would like to postpone their next pregnancy or stop childbearing altogether but are not using modern contraception. Most of these women either live in low-income countries or belong to the poorer segments of middle-income or high-income countries, and often live in rural areas where their access to services is poor. Providing family planning is a cost-effective means of improving the lives of women and children, especially in poorer countries. Use of contraception to lengthen the interval between births is an effective strategy to reduce maternal mortality and increase child survival.

Having children too early in life, particularly before age 18, is detrimental to both mother and child, not only because of the higher risks associated with adolescent pregnancies but also because early childbearing usually deprives young women of the opportunity to pursue other activities, such as schooling or employment, which are strong determinants of their empowerment. Early childbearing is particularly common in Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and a few countries in Asia, and is often the result of early marriage. In some societies, early childbearing occurs before marriage largely because adolescents who are sexually active face considerable barriers in obtaining information, guidance and services related to contraception. Reducing adolescent fertility is a target in the Millennium Development Goals that will likely not be met by 2015 in several regions.

Normally, girls have higher chances of surviving childhood than boys, yet excess female child mortality has historically been common in societies that value boys more than girls. These disparities have disappeared in most countries with development but they are still present in the population giants, China and India. In addition, the availability of methods to detect the sex of a child in utero has made sex selection possible for important segments of the population of countries where son preference is widespread. As a result, particularly in low-fertility countries where son preference is strong, the ratio of male to female births has increased beyond the biological norm and is leading to major sex imbalances in the population.

Analysis

Women deserve to have control over their reproductive lives

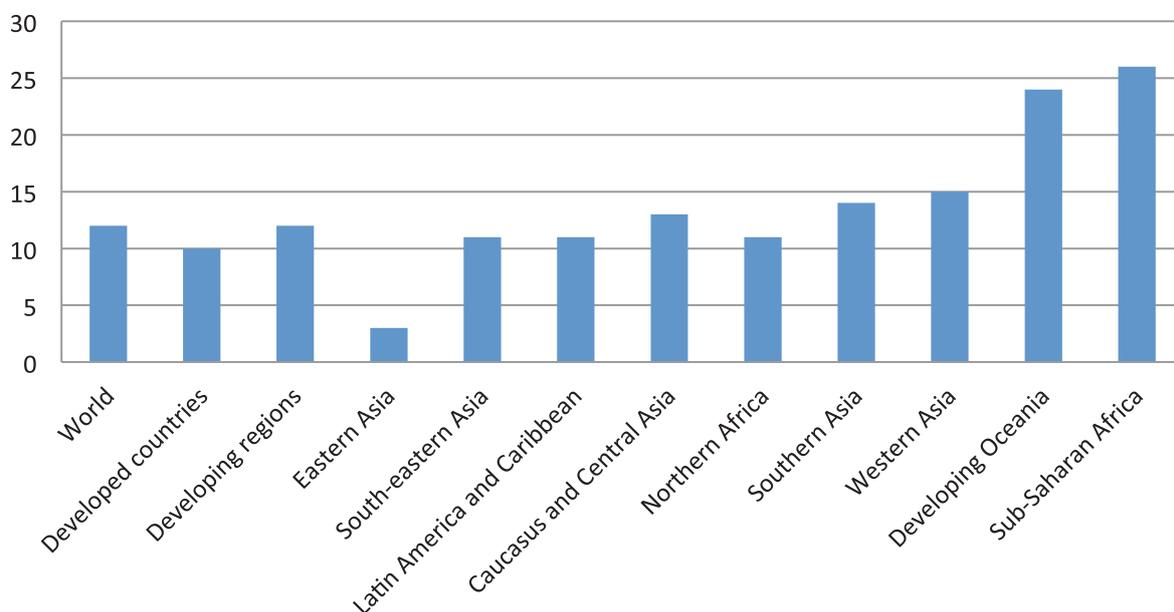
With the development and widespread use of modern contraception that began in the 1960s, increasing numbers of women have been able to choose when to have children and how many to have. As a result, they have been able to improve their capabilities by staying in school longer, getting formal jobs or pursuing careers. Moreover, when women can realize their reproductive choices, they usually have fewer children than they would otherwise have had.

Consequently, in parallel with the expanding use of modern contraception, global fertility has declined markedly. The reduction of fertility has been even steeper in developing countries. Today, 55% of married women aged 15-49 use modern contraception and only 18% of women aged 15-49 live in countries where fertility is still above three children per woman. Such an unprecedented reduction in the number of children that women bear has contributed to improvements in their own health and the health of their children, boosted women's socio-economic status, generated better prospects for their children and slowed population growth.

Although the reduction of fertility has been nearly universal, countries and regions still differ considerably in regard to their fertility levels and their levels of contraceptive use. Eastern Asia has the lowest fertility (1.6 children per woman), followed by developed countries as a group (1.7 children per woman). Eastern Asia also has the highest contraceptive prevalence, with 84% of its married women aged 15-49 using some method of contraception. Developed countries with a contraceptive prevalence of 73% have the second highest level.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, more women have an unmet need for contraception than those who use some method of contraception. Furthermore, approximately one-third of contraceptive users in Sub-Saharan Africa still rely on traditional methods of contraception, whose effectiveness is poor.¹ Overall, 26% of married women aged 15-49 in Sub-Saharan Africa have an unmet need for contraception. Estimated trends in unmet need indicate that, with the exception of Southern Africa, no other region in Sub-Saharan Africa has managed to reduce unmet need significantly since 1990.

Percentage of married women with an unmet need for contraception, 2010



Despite the progress achieved by many countries in expanding access to modern contraceptives, wide disparities persist within countries, with the younger, poorer, less educated and rural segments of the population facing greater barriers to accessing effective methods of family planning.²

An analysis of the distribution of methods used by women in different countries shows frequent concentration of users on one or two methods, suggesting that method selection may be driven more by the services available than by women's choices. In countries where users still rely heavily on methods that have high failure rates or where insufficient access exists to safe long-term methods suitable for preventing further childbearing, women's needs are not being met. Providing access to a wide range of contraceptive methods is especially important to reduce contraceptive discontinuation, which can be high.

Countries that have achieved rapid reductions in fertility have also tended to experience sizable reductions in maternal mortality. Access to modern contraceptives that allow women to prevent mistimed or unintended pregnancies is crucial in this respect. Satisfying the unmet need for contraception is a cost-effective way of reducing maternal mortality and morbidity, improving child health and providing women and their partners with the opportunity to plan their lives and their families.

Childbearing at young ages should be rare

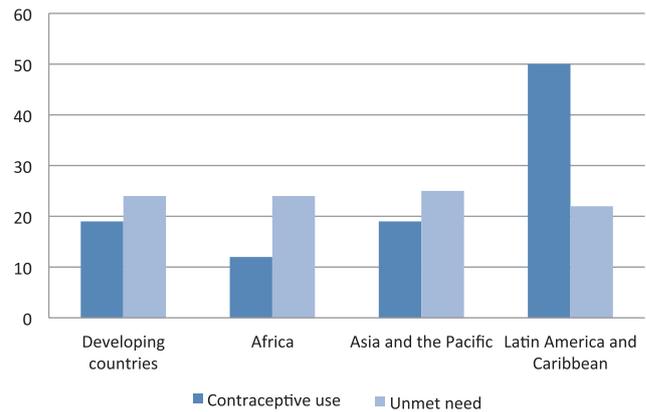
Early childbearing, particularly that occurring before age 18, is detrimental to both mother and child, not only because of the higher risks associated with adolescent pregnancies but also because early childbearing usually deprives young women from the opportunity of pursuing other activities, such as schooling or employment. Early childbearing is particularly common in Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and a few countries in Asia.

Reducing adolescent fertility is one of the targets set by the Millennium Development Goals but progress towards reaching it has been uneven, partly because early marriage continues to be condoned in many societies and because social barriers prevent adolescents from getting access to effective contraception, especially if they are female and unmarried.³

Early marriage is closely linked to higher levels of adolescent fertility. Although most countries have laws establishing a minimum age at marriage, which is usually 18 for women, these laws also generally allow marriage at an earlier age with parental consent. In countries where no minimum age is stipulated for women marrying with parental consent, the percentage of young women married before age 15 varies markedly. This evidence suggests that legislative action is not sufficient to reduce the prevalence of early marriage among women. When parents allow or even promote the early marriage of their young daughters, delaying marriage hinges on changing the views of parents about the acceptability of early marriage and addressing the real or perceived benefits associated with it.

Globally, women are increasingly delaying marriage in part because more of them are staying in school longer. Demand for contraceptives is high among unmarried, sexually active women aged 15-19. Yet, in 30 countries, including 22 in Africa, fewer than half of the sexually active unmarried women aged 15-19 are using contraception.

Percentage of married women aged 15-19 using contraception and percentage having an unmet need for contraception



In sum, many women aged 15-19 are already using contraception to space pregnancies if married and to prevent them if unmarried and sexually active. At the same time, large numbers of young women still have an unmet need for contraception to space births, and significant numbers rely on traditional methods, especially those living in Africa. Furthermore, high proportions of unmarried young women are sexually active but not using contraception. The result is that over 6 million unintended pregnancies occur annually in developing countries, which often end in unsafe abortion. Improving access to family planning for all adolescent and young women who need it is an effective strategy to reduce the number of unintended pregnancies and unsafe abortions.⁴

The son preference that has resulted in sex imbalances and excess mortality among girls needs to be addressed

In a number of countries, mostly in Asia and the Pacific, son preference remains strong even if advances have been made in improving the status of women. With improved access to technology that can detect the sex of a foetus *in utero*, couples who want a son but do not wish to have many children are terminating pregnancies that produce daughters. As a result, the ratio of male to female births in these countries has increased well above the biological norm. In 27 countries the sex ratio at birth is above the norm; two are the most populous countries on Earth, China and India.

In China and India, young girls are also subject to higher risks of death than boys. Such excess mortality among girls is exceptional because normally girls have higher survival chances than boys. Despite the significant reductions of childhood mortality achieved in both China and India since the 1970s, the relative excess in female mortality has been increasing, suggesting that the exceptional disparity detrimental to girls needs to be addressed not only by focusing on health interventions but also by influencing and ultimately changing the social norms and values that favour sons to the detriment of daughters.⁵

The sustained excess of male births compounded with the higher mortality of girls has resulted in a masculinization of the populations of China and India where females constitute 48.1% and 48.3% of the population respectively. Currently China has 13 million more men than women aged 25-49 and India has 16 million. Were sex ratios at birth to remain high, such sex imbalances would increase in the future, especially in China.

So far only one country has experienced both a major increase in the sex ratio at birth and a subsequent decline to nearly normal levels. In the 1980s and 1990s, the Republic of Korea had a high sex ratio at birth that reached almost 116 male births per 100 female births. Yet, by 2007 its sex ratio at birth had returned to 107.

The major changes the Republic of Korea has undergone over those three decades make it difficult to pinpoint a single cause for this decline but it has been suggested that the combined processes of rapid and evenly distributed economic development, the increasing urbanization of the country, the rising participation of women in the workforce and their access to better employment opportunities have all contributed to reduce the high value put on sons.



Recommendations and Action Items

1. To ensure that all women have control over when to have children and how many to have, the priority is to provide family planning services to the estimated 222 million married women aged 15-49 in developing countries who are in need of modern contraceptives. This group includes both women who are currently using the less effective traditional methods of contraception (about one-third) and those who do not wish to become pregnant but are not using any method of contraception (two-thirds). Supplying current users of modern contraception in the developing world with the family planning services they require is estimated to cost US\$ 4 billion annually. Supplying the services needed by the women who have an unmet need for modern contraceptives would cost an additional US\$ 4.1 billion annually.⁶ Given that 73% of the women with an unmet need for modern contraception live in 69 of the poorest countries in the world, and since most low-income countries' governments are faced with competing demands for funding to promote development, international donors and philanthropic organizations are likely to play a key catalytic role, especially by preventing the renewed attention on family planning from waning before universal access to reproductive health can be assured.

Predictable funding is particularly important for countries where family planning services are still underdeveloped and where institutional capacity is weak. Ensuring predictability of funding and adequate supplies of contraceptives to prevent stockouts should be a priority.

To enable women and men to make informed choices, a government's family planning strategy must include access to information in a form that can be understood by contraceptive users and access to a full array of effective contraceptive methods. Unnecessary medical barriers to this access should be eliminated. The strategy should also include explicit plans for reaching the underserved, including young people, low-income women and men, and those living in rural areas.

Noting that existing contraceptive methods are still not as user-friendly as they could be, particularly for women in low-income settings, philanthropic ventures are supporting the development of better forms of contraception. Family planning strategies should incorporate procedures for the introduction of new contraceptives when they become available.

2. To reduce childbearing at young ages in the countries where the adolescent birth rate is still high, a multi-pronged strategy is necessary. At least three intermediate goals require attention: (a) to prevent early marriage; (b) to provide young people with the information and the tools they need to make responsible choices regarding their sexual lives, and (c) to ensure that the adolescents and young people who need contraception can access the information and services to get it.
 - a. To prevent the marriage of adolescent women in countries where that practice is common, it is not sufficient to adopt laws setting higher age limits at marriage. Culturally sensitive strategies and interventions to promote marriage at later ages are also necessary, including those that focus on reducing or modifying the practice of dowry and bride-wealth payments, or that provide incentives for keeping adolescent women in school or give them the option of acquiring work skills.
 - b. Adolescents need to have access to reliable information on human sexuality and to training that empowers them to make responsible decisions regarding their sexual lives, in particular by developing their negotiating skills, addressing gender double standards, developing their capacity to build equitable relations with partners and peers, and building their self-esteem.

Experience has shown that parents also need similar training and that a supportive family environment can be fostered through programmes that separately engage fathers and mothers in training activities to improve their communication skills and make them aware of the emotional needs of their children. The business community could support these efforts by providing the relevant training to employees who are parents of pre-teens.

- c. To ensure that adolescent women have access to contraception when they need it, family planning and information about how to prevent sexually transmitted infections should be an integral part of the minimum healthcare package offered to adolescents and young people under primary care. To reach low-income youth, legal, financial and cultural obstacles that prevent or limit their access to sexual and reproductive healthcare services should be removed.

Special efforts are needed to provide family planning services to young women and men. The business sector can assist by promoting the social distribution of contraceptives and by developing strategies to reach young people through the different activities they engage in, including school, work, sports or entertainment. Community-based programmes with multiple components are useful to diversify the channels and means of reaching young people and to sensitize community leaders and parents about the needs of adolescents. These programmes must be culturally appropriate, sensitive to the expressed needs of adolescents and youth, and built upon the strength of local institutions.



3. The son preference that has resulted in sex imbalances and excess mortality among girls in a number of key countries needs to be addressed. The governments of countries with high sex ratios at birth have taken a number of measures to prevent or reduce sex selection, including laws that prohibit the determination and disclosure of the sex of a foetus (except on medical grounds) and laws that prohibit abortion for sex-selection purposes or that ban the advertisement of prenatal sex determination services. Experience so far shows that, although necessary, these laws are difficult to implement and run the risk of preventing women from getting services that are necessary to maintain their health and that of their offspring. Furthermore, restricting access to technologies and services without addressing the social norms and structures that determine their use may result in greater demand for clandestine procedures, putting the health and even the lives of women in jeopardy.

Because the causes of sex selection lie on gender-based discrimination, combating this discrimination requires changing social norms. Strategies to reduce sex selection should embrace a holistic approach that addresses not only the supply of services for sex determination but, more importantly, the underlying factors that motivate people to have sons.

Governments should enact gender neutral inheritance laws and land rights; work to modify or weaken the institution of dowry; provide incentives for girls and young women to improve their educational attainment and become gainfully employed; and use communication and education campaigns to transmit positive messages about the value of girls and the real and potential contributions of women to their birth families as well as to showcase women's successes. The business community is well placed to assist in this campaign and expand it by using a variety of media and different approaches to make people reassess the usefulness of existing norms and values regarding sons and daughters.

Governments can take steps to develop or expand the social safety net so that it can provide security in old age. Adopting measures that give preferential treatment to girls and women in terms of scholarships, gender-based quotas for employment or financial incentives aimed at improving their economic situation could also be considered. The business community could provide some of these incentives.

Endnotes

¹ United Nations (UN). "World Contraceptive Use 2011". Wall Chart, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, Sales No. E.11.XIII.2, 2011.

² Ortayli, N., Malarcher, S. Equity analysis: Identifying who benefits from family planning programs. *Studies in Family Planning*, 41 (2):101-108, June 2010.

³ United Nations (UN). "Millennium Development Goals Report 2011", 2011.

⁴ Guttmacher Institute and IPPF. "Facts on the sexual and reproductive health of adolescent women in the developing world", 2010.

⁵ United Nations (UN). "Sex Differentials in Childhood Mortality." United Nations publication, ST/ESA/SER.A/314, 2011.

⁶ World Health Organization (WHO). "Preventing gender-biased sex selection", 2011.

Table A: Population Recommendations

Priority Areas	Recommendations and Actions
<p>Increase funding for family planning</p>	<p>National governments should increase budgetary allocation for family planning and seek donor support as necessary. Including the implementation of a family planning strategy in countries' Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) should be considered.</p> <p>Donor governments and philanthropic organizations should prevent the reduction of funding for family planning while universal access to reproductive health has not been reached.</p>
<p>Develop a culturally sensitive family planning strategy and implement it</p>	<p>National governments of countries with a high unmet need for contraception should take the lead in developing a comprehensive strategy to expand family planning that includes community outreach, the mobilization of support from community leaders, the training of service providers and a communication programme aimed at changing norms and empowering people by providing reliable information on contraception and guidance on how to obtain it.</p>
<p>Ensure that the medical community supports the family planning strategy</p>	<p>The medical community should help ensure that service providers are capable of providing accurate and unbiased information on a range of contraceptive options in ways that clients can understand, that clients can have access to a range of contraceptive methods and that unnecessary medical barriers to such access be eliminated. The business community, particularly the pharmaceutical industry, can support these efforts by helping to develop information kits or by training medical personnel in providing reliable information.</p>
<p>Ensure the availability of contraceptive commodities</p>	<p>National governments, donors and manufacturers assisted by international organizations should work together to maintain an adequate flow of commodities covering a range of methods to the countries that need them. National governments and the private sector have the task of ensuring adequate distribution of commodities within countries to avoid stockouts and to reach underserved communities.</p>
<p>Develop more user-friendly contraceptives</p>	<p>Philanthropic organizations and the private sector should collaborate in developing better contraceptives and ensuring their production and distribution.</p>
<p>Reduce the incidence of early marriage</p>	<p>National governments of countries having a high incidence of early marriage among adolescent women should develop culturally sensitive strategies to promote the delay of marriage, including those that focus on reducing or modifying the practice of dowry and bride-wealth payments, providing incentives for keeping adolescent women in school or for acquiring job skills.</p>
<p>Ensure that adolescents and young people have access to sexuality education</p>	<p>National authorities, educators and non-governmental organizations should collaborate to develop courses that provide adolescents with reliable information on human sexuality and empower them to make responsible decisions regarding their sexual lives, in particular by developing their negotiating skills, addressing gender double standards and developing their capacity to build equitable relations with partners and peers.</p>
<p>Engage the medical system in a commitment to provide sexual and reproductive health services to adolescents and young people</p>	<p>National authorities and the medical community should ensure that family planning and information about how to prevent sexually transmitted infections are an integral part of the minimum healthcare package offered to adolescents and young people under primary care and remove legal, financial and cultural obstacles that prevent or limit their access to sexual and reproductive healthcare services.</p>
<p>Reduce son preference by focusing on reducing the root causes of such preference</p>	<p>Governments should enact gender neutral inheritance laws and land rights, work to modify or weaken the dowry system, provide incentives for girls and young women to improve their educational attainment and become gainfully employed, and expand the social safety net so it can provide security in old age.</p>
<p>Conduct a communication campaign in favour of girls</p>	<p>National authorities assisted as appropriate by the private sector and non-governmental organizations should undertake a communications campaign to transmit positive messages about the value of girls and the real and potential contributions of women to their birth families, and to showcase women's successes. The campaign may be accompanied by measures that give preferential treatment to girls and women in terms of scholarships, gender-based quotas for employment or financial incentives directed to their families.</p>

Leadership



Issue Description

The business case for closing gender gaps is palpable. Due to demographic change, the current fertility rates in many developed countries imply that the labour force is shrinking. Competition for talent is stiffer than ever and closing gender gaps in economic opportunity is paramount to replenishing the labour force. In addition, women have reversed the gender gap in education and are now better educated than men in many countries.¹ No organization wants to forego the best-educated talent simply because it happens to be female.

Business leaders are aware of the diversity premium. With an increasingly diverse customer and client base, companies struggle to reflect the world's diversity in their workforce, including in decision-making leadership roles. **Women add value because they bring different perspectives to the table.** Anita Woolley and her collaborators have demonstrated that gender-diverse teams performed better than homogenous ones across a large number of different tasks.²

In several studies, Catalyst and others have found a positive correlation between companies with more women in senior leadership and boards of directors and better than average financial performance^{3,4,5,6} although the evidence is not conclusive.^{7,8,9,10}

A similar correlation has been found with regard to corporate philanthropy – companies with more women board directors are more philanthropic, showing a higher level of contribution and bringing a gender lens to philanthropic decisions.¹¹ Further, benefitting talent development and executive succession, companies with three or more women on their board five years later have more women in senior leadership, including in operating roles.³

Given this increased evidence for the “business case” for women's participation in business leadership, *why is progress so slow? How hard is it for organizations to correct the gender imbalance?*

Analysis

For at least 25 years, women have been entering the professional and managerial ranks of many corporations at about the same rate as men, yet they remain dramatically underrepresented at senior levels. As of 1 June 2012, only 3.6% of Fortune 500 CEOs are women, and women hold about 15% of Fortune 500 board seats and corporate executive positions.^{12,13} Women have fared no better in most other countries. For example, in the United Kingdom, they account for 4% of CEOs and 15% of board seats in the top 100 UK-headquartered companies¹⁴ and, in India, 11% of large-company chief executives are women.¹⁵ Exceptions include countries with a legal mandate for diversity, most notably, Norway, where 40% of board seats in public companies need to be held by women.

Organizations' widespread adoption of policies prohibiting sex discrimination and so-called “family-friendly” practices, while opening many doors to women, has failed to close the gender gap at more senior levels, suggesting that impediments to women's advancement are more complex and elusive than deliberate forms of sex discrimination or family responsibilities.¹⁶

Stereotypes

Research consistently shows that stereotypes rule when evaluating others^{17,18,19} making gender-biased discrimination in hiring, promotion and job assignments difficult to overcome^{20,21} – short of blind evaluation procedures, which have proven to have significant impacts on orchestras. Claudia Goldin and Cecilia Rouse show that blind auditions where a screen separates the candidate from the jury to conceal their identity fostered impartiality in hiring and increased the percentage of women in symphony orchestras.²²

Individuals cannot help but be influenced by stereotypes. “Seeing is believing,” and as long as more women are not in leadership positions, associating leadership with women will continue to be difficult.¹⁹ Indeed, when MBA students are given an otherwise identical case description, they tend to evaluate the CEO named Jane more harshly than the one named John. This has been called the “think-leader-think-male” phenomenon, and it constitutes a serious barrier to women's advancement.²³

Barriers to advancement

Why does this happen? Women with stellar performance records can be held back because they are not seen as having the potential to lead at a senior level. For example, the women CEOs on a global list of top performing chief executives were nearly twice as likely as the men to have been appointed to the job from outside the company: women were less likely to emerge as winners in their own companies' internal CEO tournament.²⁴ Furthermore, even when women are rated more highly than comparable male peers across a range of leadership behaviours, they are also rated lower than men on “envisioning”, the dimension most closely associated with effective leadership at senior levels.²⁵ Senior-level women suffer from this perception when appointments to top leadership positions are made. Catalyst research has found this especially to be true in cultures where vision is a top-rated characteristic of leadership.¹⁸

Exposure to female leaders can affect such stereotypes. An inspiring example of the benefits that women's increased role in leadership can offer comes from India where, in 1993, the constitution was amended to institute gender quotas for village leaders.

Exploiting the random assignment of gender quotas to a third of the villages, Esther Duflo, Rohini Pande and collaborators found that continuing exposure to women leaders eliminated statistical discrimination by male villagers, impacting future generations' leadership aspirations, including teenage girls' educational outcomes and women's electoral gains.²⁶ Women leaders also provided more public goods, in particular, clean water, than their male counterparts.

If this can happen in as large and complex an “organization” as India, then surely today's business leaders can lead the way in the private sector with committed and concrete actions to close gender gaps in business leadership globally.

Women today are still less likely than men to have the line experience required to get the top job. A 2011 McKinsey report showed that 62% of senior women in the largest US corporations were in staff jobs, such as HR and Communications, that rarely lead to a CEO role; in contrast, 65% of men on executive committees held line jobs.²⁷ The World Economic Forum *Corporate Gender Gap Report* asked the top HR person in the largest companies of 20 OECD countries what percentage of the assignments considered to be business critical/important were currently held by women (e.g., key start ups, turnarounds and line roles in key business units of markets).²⁸ The most common answers were “0-10%” or “not measured”.

Mentorship

Women do not move up into strategic roles because they are not sponsored into them. The 2010 *Harvard Business Review* article, “Why Men Still Get More Promotions than Women”, explains this occurrence despite the fact that women report having more mentors than men. Using a Catalyst sample of over 4,000 MBA alumni from 26 top business schools worldwide, Herminia Ibarra, Nancy Carter and Christine Silva found that while women and men had similar rates of mentorship, having a mentor in 2008 predicted getting promoted by 2010 — but only for men.²⁹ Men’s mentors were more likely than women’s to be CEOs or top executives, and they used their power to open doors for their mentees; women’s mentors, often more junior than the men’s, simply helped them to become more self-aware and offered career advice.

Women’s broad informal networks might sometimes compensate for the lack of a heavy-lifting mentor, but they tend to provide fewer career returns than men’s. Everyone has professional contacts and social contacts – think LinkedIn and Facebook – with some degree of overlap between the two groups. Since men still hold most top positions, on average the overlap between play and work tends to be higher for men than it is for women. They can play golf on the weekend with the same manager who will guide them through the corporate labyrinth during the week, to cite the stereotype. The split among the two distinct kinds of networks that is more typical for women means that it takes more time for enough senior colleagues to get to know a woman personally, which makes the sponsor who can vouch for her readiness all the more essential.³⁰

How can society and business best move the needle?

They can make a significant difference by overcoming gender stereotypes in hiring and promotion processes; revamping talent identification processes to eradicate subtle but pervasive gender bias in expectations of what makes a leader; overhauling assignment processes so women get on the path that leads to the top; and re-engineering mentoring programmes so they create sponsors for women in strategic roles.

The gender imbalance in leadership positions in the private sector continues to disappoint and frustrate leaders who have put considerable money and effort behind various initiatives to advance women and yet rarely get breakthrough results for their investments.



Recommendations and Action Items

Given the business case, these leaders are motivated more than ever to include women. Here is what they can do.

1. Adjust hiring and promotion procedures to overcome gender stereotypes. In situations where blind evaluations are impractical or impossible, other approaches are warranted, including:
 - a. Requiring diverse slates. Most management and executive selections are made by considering a slate of qualified candidates whose qualifications and experience more or less match a carefully constructed formal job description. In theory, meritocracy rules and the “best candidate” is chosen. Typically, however, female and minority candidates are perceived as less ready and more risky and thus are subjected to higher standards before being included on the slate. Requiring diverse slates puts the responsibility on hiring managers and human resource professionals to identify a range of candidates and ensure that they are well prepared.²¹ Many companies also mandate diverse selection committees, having found that more perspectives about the suitability of diverse candidates will be included in the decision-making process and thus can result in a “non-traditional” choice. While diverse selection committees make intuitive sense, recent evidence for public sector and academic jobs in Spain suggests that diversity alone might not do the trick and may even backfire as both men and women are affected by gender stereotypes.^{31,32}
 - b. Evaluating multiple candidates simultaneously rather than individually. Gender stereotypes most frequently influence perceptions of task performance for those tasks commonly assumed to be gender-related (such as in math tasks where people tend to expect men to perform better, and verbal tasks where people expect women to do better), including leadership behaviours and characteristics.^{18,19} To counteract implicit unintentional gender bias, interventions need to build on insights into how the human mind works. Because biases are subconscious, just informing people about them will not do the trick. Rather, changing environments is necessary – including changing organizational practices such as hiring, promoting and evaluating – to make it easy for our biased selves to base decisions on performance rather than stereotypes.^{20,21}

Gender equality nudges, a concept developed by Iris Bohnet, Alexandra van Geen and Max Bazerman serve that purpose.³³ An example of such a nudge is evaluating candidates jointly rather than separately. The researchers found that when evaluating candidates separately, evaluators basically disregard information on the candidate’s past performance and almost exclusively base their hiring decision on the candidate’s gender. In contrast, when evaluating several candidates at the same time, gender becomes almost irrelevant and evaluators base their decisions on the candidate’s past performance.

Particularly when hiring at more junior levels, it is common for candidates to be subject to “joint evaluation”. Interviewing various candidates at the entry-level stage (for positions as analysts, programmers or assistant professors, for example), organizations explicitly compare them with one another. By contrast, job assignments and promotion decisions are typically made on an individual basis, or through “separate evaluation”: a manager is evaluated on whether she is ready to work on a more complex project, an attorney is assessed on whether he should be promoted to partner, or a junior faculty member is reviewed on whether she will be granted tenure.

2. Expunge subtle gender biases about what makes a leader from performance management and succession planning processes. How can biases in talent management systems be eliminated? Senior leadership, HR departments, managers and employees must develop and embrace a broader perspective of what makes an effective leader and become proficient in recognizing leadership potential in “non-traditional” candidates. A Catalyst assessment of 110 talent management systems found that companies that fail to guard against gender bias often rely on stereotypically feminine or masculine characteristics in job descriptions and performance appraisals. A more inclusive talent management system should gauge employees on actual results and potential, not simply characteristics subject to biased perspectives.²¹

In Catalyst’s *Pipeline’s Broken Promise*, Anne M. Mulcahy, retired Chairman and CEO of Xerox, suggested that companies should “take the resumes of the last 100 people hired, remove the names, do an assessment of where the hires should be positioned and compare that with where they were placed.”³⁴ When they find disparities that cannot be explained by concrete performance evidence, they should recognize unintended gender bias and rectify the situation.

3. Give women stretch assignments that directly impact the bottom line. In addition to fostering a robust talent pipeline, stretch assignments have been linked by Catalyst research to increased career satisfaction and job commitment.^{35,36,37,21} More stretch assignments constitute a win-win for women and business.

Best practice in leadership development remains the 70-20-10 method: 70% of a person’s development should come from on-the-job training in key assignments, 20% from mentoring and 10% from training. Yet instead of giving women assignments that will allow them to learn and prove themselves, many companies expect women to make it into senior management simply through formal mentoring and self-improvement courses. Women’s assignments must become a top – if not the number one – priority.^{33,38}

4. Redesign mentoring programmes to focus on getting women into strategic business roles. Some companies have recognized the importance of sponsorship and have instituted formal sponsorship programmes for women. Even without a formal programme, senior leaders can take immediate action by looking broadly, deeply and often for talent – and not just select from those already “on the list”. As one male sponsor interviewed by Catalyst put it: “If I’m rewarding performance and showcasing performance and recognizing value contributions, then everyone has a shot at my sponsorship.” Senior leaders should look for high performers who might get passed over by others – talented individuals who are not well represented at the top. And they should expect others to sponsor.³⁵

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Food Security and Agriculture



Issue Description

World trade in agriculture is booming, yet food insecurity is at unprecedented levels. Global food production needs to double by 2050 to feed a projected population of 9 billion.¹

Most recently, the role of the private sector, especially businesses, was highlighted in the G8 meeting at Camp David. The role is highly recognized and crucial to addressing the growing challenge of food security but to date has lacked the full appreciation of the fundamental importance of women's empowerment in finding sustainable solutions.

In developing countries, women and girls form the backbone of smallholder agriculture. They serve as producers, labourers, processors and traders within largely domestic markets. They also dominate household-level food production and preparation. Women are responsible for 60-80% of food production in most developing countries, as well as for half of the world's food production.²

Businesses operating in the agricultural and food security sectors in developing countries can gain from understanding this gender division of labour and in lending their innovation, capital and market knowledge to help overcome gender barriers related to food production. Furthermore, such investments can contribute to development overall by overcoming intergenerational cycles of poverty. Multinational companies, faced with a well-informed consumer base, are increasingly examining ways to engage in socially responsible practices and support international causes in emerging economies where their products are sourced.

Given the increased global corporate attention on the worldwide food crisis, corporations interested in supporting meaningful food security interventions should be made better aware that women's empowerment is a core issue for gainful solutions. Investing in women farmers will bolster agricultural productivity, reduce hunger, promote economic growth and contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.³ The Food and Agriculture Organization estimates that if women had the same access to productive resources as men, they could increase yields on their farms by 20-30%; raise total agricultural output in developing countries by 2.5-4%, and reduce the number of hungry people in the world by 12-17%.¹ Investments in women's capacities to ensure more equitable access to assets and services – land, water, technology, innovation, credit, financial services, markets and training – will strengthen women's rights and potential – a win-win situation.

Analysis

Shortfalls and volatility in global food supplies and costs will likely continue and potentially be exacerbated. This is largely due to the rising demand for food and increasing costs of production connected to fluctuating fuel prices. Land in developing countries is becoming scarcer due to inheritance-based land divisions, environmental degradation, population growth and major land leases or even land-grabbing. At the same time, water availability is increasingly threatened. In some places political unrest and conflict causes displacement and hampers food production and distribution. In addition to more immediate crises, longer-term, intensified climate change poses a major threat to people who rely on agriculture-based livelihoods. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) also warns of new patterns of pests and diseases, the lack of appropriate seeds and planting material and the loss of livestock. Obviously this will affect producers, a large proportion of whom are women. All in all, it is clear that food demands will rise with serious threats to the supply side of the equation.

Traditionally the fundamental role of women and adolescent girls in agriculture and food security and their rights have been sorely neglected. Their potential to change the situation for the better has also been largely neglected. To overcome the obstacles, it is important to realize, as FAO concludes, what characterizes the situation for women and adolescent girls in agriculture when compared to their male counterparts. Thus, women:¹

- Operate smaller farms, keep fewer livestock, typically of smaller breeds, and earn less from the livestock they own
- Have a greater overall workload that includes low productivity activities like fetching water and firewood
- Have less access to innovation and productive assets and services
- Are much less likely to purchase inputs such as fertilizers, seeds and mechanical equipment
- Have weaker property rights and tenure security and reduced incentives to invest in their land
- Are poorly represented in the leadership of rural organizations, particularly at the regional and national levels
- If employed, are more likely to be in part-time, seasonal and low-paying jobs
- Receive lower wages for the same work, even when they have the same experience and qualifications

It is also important to know of bottlenecks and obstacles in the way of increased productivity and to take advantage of existing knowledge on working solutions. The solutions are very often based on innovative and integrated approaches, where partnerships comprising communities, women groups, governments, civil society and the corporate sector are joining forces for winning solutions.

Many food and agriculture companies are turning to the developing world and emerging markets for their future.⁵ Increasing agricultural productivity and improving food security in Africa requires a transformation of the small-scale farming sector, whose potential has remained dormant for a long time. Although Africa has 60% of the world's potentially available arable land, it has failed to contribute significantly to global food demand, largely because of its constrained smallholder farmer. Key to unleashing the potential of small-scale farming is addressing gender barriers that impede women from accessing inputs, markets, technologies and decision-making.

Some corporations are now deliberately connecting smallholder producers in developing countries to their production chains. For example, PepsiCo has linked smallholder chickpea farmers to malt production in Ethiopia. This investment is also bringing new irrigation technologies to lengthen the chickpea production cycle.⁶ Such investments bring markets, income and new technologies to smallholder farmers. Research by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation shows that by increasing women's participation in smallholder sourcing and support programmes, international food companies can improve crop productivity and quality, grow the smallholder supply base and improve access to high-value markets.⁷

Box 1

Landless Women Farmers in Tanzania Profit from Vegetable Exports

The Smallholder Horticultural Outgrower Promotion (SHOP) Project supported by USAID and implemented by ACDI/VOCA in Tanzania illustrates how women farmers who lack basic agricultural production assets can become successful producers. The SHOP project has helped connect a vegetable growers association predominantly staffed and managed by smallholder women farmers (MVG) with one of East Africa's largest vegetable exporters. The produce (mainly French beans and baby corn) is a high value crop exported to the United Kingdom for sale in major supermarkets. Support has included facilitating the leasing of land from farmers to women and the provision of technical assistance. The MVG farmers have been able to earn additional annual household income of US\$ 1,500 and the project has expanded to include more farmers. This is an example of an innovative approach to empower women farmers and improve household income and family food security that could be promoted by both national and multinational businesses.

Source: ACDI/VOCA⁸

Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) in agriculture are providing innovative solutions to some of these complex problems by building on the expertise of businesses, local and international development partners and local governments. The inclusion of comprehensive gender analysis and strategies in PPPs will help ensure greater returns on investment in the form of increased output, productivity and competitiveness.

Land, inputs and assets: lift bottlenecks for women farmers to improve productivity

In developing countries, women own less than 2% of the land and receive a mere 5% of the agricultural extension services. Only 10% of small farmer credit is extended to women, who also have limited access to research and innovation related to food crops.¹ Less than 10% of total official development assistance for agriculture explicitly addresses gender issues.⁹ False assumptions also prevail suggesting that male land ownership equates to men dominating agricultural production and a tendency to neglect and undervalue women's unpaid labour.¹⁰ These factors inhibit women – particularly women-headed households – from accessing and controlling resources.

According to the FAO, closing the gender gap in agriculture would generate significant gains for the agriculture sector and for society at large.¹ Compelling evidence from Burkina Faso and Kenya shows that agricultural productivity could be raised by as much as 20% simply by reallocating existing agricultural assets more equally between men and women.¹¹

The plight and power of rural adolescent girls

Young women and adolescent girls' contribution to agriculture is unrecognized, yet they work alongside their mothers and other family members in fields and gardens, tending livestock, collecting water and doing domestic chores. The increase in female-headed rural households due to male out-migration augments agricultural and domestic work for adolescent girls, creating pressure to drop out of school and marry early. These factors cause intergenerational cycles of poverty and hunger – particularly for girls.

Yet undeniably, tremendous potential remains untapped in empowering and investing in the capacities of roughly 283 million rural adolescent girls⁹ Increased global attention and resources are urgently needed to help support, empower and invest in rural adolescent girls between the ages of 10 and 18.

Box 2

Women's Representation in Farmers' Cooperatives: Giving Women an Equal Voice

A recently completed Plan Pakistan dairy value chain project funded by the European Union in Punjab Province distributed 2,000 goats among 454 vulnerable women and provided enterprise development training. The project made important strides in giving women a voice and decision-making power through their representation on 98 Farmers' Milk Cooperatives and the District Livestock Farmers' Association. An external project found positive financial, health and social impacts for both male and female farmers. Improved milk quality resulted in increased sale prices (from 28 rupees per litre to 45) and household revenues. As incomes rose, children's education improved. Household nutrition levels improved as daily milk intake increased. Finally, women dairy farmers' business and entrepreneurial acumen was enhanced.

Source: Plan International, Pakistan

Promoting women's rights and influence is a smart investment Closing the gender gap in agriculture would place more resources in the hands of women and strengthen their voice within the household and wider society. This has proven to be a successful strategy for enhancing the food security, nutrition, education and health of children. Better fed, healthier children learn better and become more productive citizens. The benefits span generations and would pay large dividends in the future.¹ Equalizing men's and women's access to decision-making and status in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa would reduce the number of malnourished children by 3.4 million and 1.7 million, respectively.¹² Countries with greater gender parity have higher cereal yields. In Kenya, for example, an additional year of education for women farmers would increase maize yields by 24%.⁹

Recommendations and Action Items

Interest in the potential for businesses to make proactive contributions to food security is growing. Market-facing approaches are essential to implementing viable solutions, as is collaboration among farmers, private industry, governments and civil society. Agribusiness and other linked industries (finance, information and communications, transportation, infrastructure, water) have expertise, investment resources and global market reach that, if carefully harnessed, can dramatically accelerate progress in addressing food security issues for women.

Suggested recommendations for agribusiness, financial and risk management actors, as well as companies involved in agriculture-related infrastructure follow.

1. Agribusinesses should:

Pricing and wages

- Ensure gender equitable purchasing prices for smallholder producers and equal pay for equal work for agricultural labourers
- Adopt explicit procurement policies to increase purchases from female smallholder producers
- Where needed, encourage women producers to form cooperatives to enter into supply chains to access inputs, benefit from training and reduce transaction costs for companies and their intermediaries
- Undertake comprehensive gender-based analyses and market research to identify opportunities for women to take on specific segments of the agriculture or livestock value chain
- Invest in niche cash crops for women (saffron, organic farming) as well as traditional women's agricultural activities (honey production, livestock and poultry rearing, vegetable and mushroom production) that increase both household nutritional security and income
- Working in partnership with women's business groups and non-governmental organizations, promote women to take on roles as intermediaries to ensure better terms of trade, and train male intermediaries in gender equality

- Promote gender parity in contracts, services and resources focusing on agriculture

Branding and marketing

- Support training for women's cooperatives in marketing their products and in negotiating prices to ensure better terms of trade for poor women
- Invest in certification processes for products and brands promoting women's empowerment and fair trade
- Through partnerships with information and communications technology (ICT) providers, provide market information tools and systems (especially mobile technology) focused on women's needs, including ICT enabled extension services and price information
- Help agribusinesses introduce voucher and agriculture fairs for easy access to agricultural inputs and the marketing of agricultural produce

Access to inputs

- Provide inputs ahead of time and guarantee price at harvest
- Coordinate the provision of agriculture extension services with the supply of inputs and explicitly target women farmers (e.g. TATA's hub-and-spoke model in India)¹³

Adapted technologies and skills

- Support the recruitment and training of women extension workers (currently only 15% are women)
- Invest in improved labour-saving, low-cost and locally-made technologies to reduce the workload of women smallholders and their family members
- Support government or private-run market-facing vocational training centres that specialize in the promotion of agro-enterprises and agricultural transformation techniques, and help women enter the value chain
- Systematically ensure that new agricultural technologies are pre-tested with women farmers (e.g. the promotion of drought-resistant crop varieties, mechanized farming methods and conservation agriculture)
- Encourage local production and the multiplication of improved seed varieties, own plots or leased plots for women, and promote the involvement of adolescent girls in the marketing of improved seed varieties

2. The financial and risk management sectors should:

Insurance

- Encourage mitigation against disaster and climate change and its differential impact on women's and men's food security through the diversification of livelihoods and investment in safety nets
- Promote innovative weather-indexed insurance for crops and livestock for women farmers based on a gender analysis and its recommendations
- Support low-cost storage facilities controlled by women cooperatives (see Box 2)

Finance

- Support initiatives for adolescent girls and young women to enter in savings and microcredit schemes to further agricultural production
- Promote the pre-financing of female farmers by agribusinesses so they can access needed inputs in a timely manner
- Increase the provision of mobile banking in rural areas and ensure women are trained in the use of mobile banks (savings, ATM, debit) to reduce time and the risks linked to travelling to banks and to increased savings
- Negotiate with commodity traders who deal in agricultural products related to food security to invest a percentage of sales from trading in initiatives that empower poor, rural women farmers worldwide
- Provide start-up funds, loans and support for women-led incubators to enter value chains in agriculture or food security

3. The infrastructure sector should:

Farm to market roads

- Help engineering firms, government and lenders undertake thorough gender analyses prior to designing and investing in farm to market roads, electrification and safe water supplies

Irrigation and water harvesting

- Invest in low-cost, locally-adapted and environmentally-friendly irrigation and water harvesting systems to increase agriculture production and reduce the time it takes to fetch water, since a majority of female farmers depend on rain-fed agriculture and women and girls are responsible for much of the household water collection

Processing and packaging

- Promote low-cost and environmentally-friendly packaging technologies and links to job opportunities for youth (adolescent girls)

4. Transforming structures and policies. Public, private and civil society stakeholders, including women's groups, should coordinate efforts to pursue clear advocacy and policy-change initiatives that address key gender inequalities that underscore food insecurity and agricultural development. Among them:

- Support land coalition partnerships to address bottlenecks to women's access to land
- Promote Public-Private Partnerships and networks that address women's empowerment and gender equality in addressing food security and agriculture, and deepen the gender strategies of existing and new PPPs and networks
- Support female farmer associations' active involvement in national decision-making on access to agriculture and food security matters
- Ensure that gender experts are involved in government food security, agriculture planning and strategy incorporating gender analysis (including value chain analysis) and disaggregated data collection on the access/control of agricultural resources
- Ensure corporate social responsibility standards and certification processes for agricultural products address gender inequalities in a more robust manner
- Support measures to eliminate gender-based violence against women in the agricultural sector
- Encourage government and donors to commit dedicated budget allocations for women in the agricultural sector and to design strategies through which more resources will reach women, including trade and financing policies

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Sustainability and Resource Scarcity



Issue Description

Population growth and improved living standards for a growing portion of the global population as measured, in part, by the use of such resources as energy and water are placing **significant pressures on the global environment**. This is the case both in terms of resource scarcity associated with overuse or the outstripping of local “carrying capacity”, and negative impacts associated with the unintended consequences of the scale of resource use, such as climate change linkages to the combustion of fossil fuels.

These negative impacts are not spread evenly and often disproportionately impact more vulnerable households and communities, such as in the developing world.

With respect to who is best equipped to manage the issue and address sustainability and resource scarcity, an interesting **dichotomy between developed and developing economies** exists. Developed economies are better equipped in terms of time, resources and elements of knowledge, particularly in perceiving the big picture. But they are encumbered by a disconnect between resource acquisition and consumption; few have clear knowledge of the full life cycle of the resources they acquire and consume. Developing economies are better equipped for the very reason developed are not; direct experience acquiring, transporting, utilizing and disposing of resources; in other words an intimate understanding of the full life cycle.

Be it nurture or nature, in all instances it is widely accepted that women are better stewards of resources than men. **Women are an important part of the formula to address sustainable development** in part because they are much closer to the problem (especially in the case of the developing world) and are also closer to the solution. **Women bear most of the responsibility and impacts associated with procuring and using resources**, for example in the energy sector, as illustrated by ENERGIA, an International Network on Gender and Sustainable Energy. The next section considers resource scarcity in this context.

Analysis

To consider the role gender could play in addressing sustainability and resource scarcity issues, an examination of the value chain for producing, consuming and promoting sustainable resources is necessary:

1. Production Phase – *Women as Resource Managers*

Women are good stewards of resources – generally better than men, as they are more greatly affected than men and carry the greater burden of work both in domestic and economic activities; women carry on average 53% of the total work burden in developing countries and 51% in industrial countries.¹ This situation is made worse by fuel scarcity and negative health and safety impacts, such as indoor air pollution, which kills an estimated 1.5 million women and children in the developing world each year.

Women in developing countries spend longer hours working in survival activities, including collecting firewood, hauling water, processing food and cooking. They bear the invisible burden of the human energy crisis – their time and effort in agricultural processing and transport. They need modern and more efficient energy sources to improve their work and quality of life both within and outside the home. In addition, women have less access than men to the credit, extension, land and training necessary to improve energy access and support their livelihoods and income generation from microenterprises.

Therefore it is important to evaluate the entire household fuel cycle and the diverse resources (whether efficient or not) that a woman must pick from to meet her essential household needs to provide for her family.

2. Consumption Phase – *Women as Utility Maximizers*

By better understanding their existing resource inputs and the superior resource alternatives available to them (for example, replacing firewood cooking with biogas, which provides a clean, easily controlled source of renewable energy from organic waste materials), women can make more informed decisions on how to effectively consume those inputs, stemming from fuel substitution and the purchase of stoves and other appliances. These critical decisions play a significant impact in the household across the use of lighting, heating and air conditioning, etc.; the purchase of goods and services; the management of habits (recycling and composting); and the use of household transport and choices.¹

3. Promotion Phase – *Women as Change Agents*

Extensive studies and business models have been applied around women’s capability to organize at the grassroots level, in particular in the developing world. A successful model that builds on this very premise is the creation of the group lending methodology in microfinance adopted across the globe by extending credit to income-generating activities.

Many have claimed that microfinance promotes a woman’s capacity to address social problems in their communities and influence social norms. A study conducted by Paromita Sanyal at Wesleyan University in West Bengal on a group of women in microfinance programmes, with an explicit economic purpose, found that one-third of the research participants increased their engagement in collective action.²

Therefore, the establishment of female-led civic organizations, microenterprises or cooperatives can serve as a powerful vehicle for transferring the adoption of energy-efficient and sustainable practices in the community.

What then is impeding women from doing more of what they do well and from augmenting the positive impact they can have on sustainability and resource scarcity?

The Future

Women possess the knowledge, capabilities and effective networks to drive real solutions in the area of sustainability and resource scarcity. Most importantly, they hold key roles across society that influence how to produce, consume and market sustainable solutions and renewable energy technologies (RETs), from acting as energy consumers, to caretakers, to microentrepreneurs, even to leaders and networkers.

Essential to unlocking women’s potential in this space is education. Education means giving women a voice in the entire development process, it means considering their needs in how they use the natural environment for subsistence and income, and it means providing them with the tools they need to replicate sustainable solutions both in their home and in their surrounding community from a “bottom-up” approach. This will require the business sector’s extensive involvement, ensuring the equitable representation of women, from policy-makers to researchers and suppliers, and venture capital funds. By integrating education in how they interact with women, corporations could potentially transform women from simple household producers to resource managers, from end-consumers to utility maximizers and from community organizers to change agents.

Recommendations and Action Items

Across all development issues, education is seen as a key way to help women overcome barriers and as a source of empowerment. In the areas of sustainability and the environment, education is the transformative tool that allows women to be the change agents who can meet these key challenges, and that ensures their participation in the development process. Both Wakhungu and Cecelski state that the major constraints to involving women effectively at various levels of the energy sector are the lack of education and the lack of participation or consultation of women in energy projects.³ Therefore, a comprehensive educational platform where the business community (i.e. market enablers) plays a pivotal role should be adopted in four essential areas: research and development; capacity building and technical expertise; leadership advancement; and household and child development.

Given the complex nature of the market value chains revolving around sustainability and energy that must take into consideration pricing, suppliers, policy-making and regulation among other factors, creating the necessary partnerships and coalitions at every step of the chain is vital. Across each educational pillar mentioned in Table A, stakeholders are identified: public sector and international development organizations, market enablers and women. Although women appear at the end of the process, their needs, attitudes and approaches must be considered throughout to ensure the successful adoption of the sustainability model.

1. Research and Development.

Extensive anecdotal evidence exists globally on women's essential role in resolving environmental conservation issues, but more conclusive empirical case studies must be spearheaded on women's contributions to sustainability with emphasis on their specific projects across each country context.

*"Energy researchers who leave women out of energy research and analysis will be failing to understand a large part of energy consumption and production."*¹

Both policy-makers and researchers will play a key role by commissioning studies on sustainability and resource alternatives and sharing these findings with companies (i.e. market enablers) that will help them better design, produce and market the RETs or sustainable methods in the appropriate context and with a gender perspective.

2. Capacity Building and Technical Expertise.

Energy and sustainability positions are traditionally dominated by technical experts, engineers, foresters and energy planners, roles that are typically held by men. Thus in many cases a disconnect overpowers the needs of women and their practical knowledge. A series of case studies developed by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) has revealed how women's technical knowledge in food production and processing (for example in water purification in Sudan and soybean processing in Nigeria) has helped them adapt and improve traditional techniques in response to changing conditions. Therefore, women need to be involved in the planning process to help identify solutions to energy or resource scarcity and to adopt new technologies that serve their specific needs.

Initially public sector and development agency stakeholders provide the necessary support (financing and grants) to companies that can introduce the new sustainable alternative technologies (such as solar panels, biogas) that are best suited for women, as they will determine successful adoption at the community level.

When working with women and women-led organizations at the grassroots levels, it is also essential for the distinct market enablers to help identify the community's key resource needs, whether it be solar panels to replace kerosene lamps or a new sustainable crop production technique. This collaborative process should combine both the technologists' scientific expertise and women's intuitive hands-on knowledge to facilitate the product design process.

After providing women with the training necessary to successfully operate the new technology or model in their household activities, a key element is how they can market and administer the new RET across their community through the creation of microenterprises, cooperatives, etc.

3. Leadership Advancement.

Women often establish powerful networks in their communities to drive civic participation, establish microenterprises and voice educational needs and concerns, among other issues. To build on these key assets, educational training led by market enablers is needed on strengthening these female-led organizations at the grassroots level by helping them organize, build teams and manage small businesses to commercialize the sustainable application or run a civil society organization.

A case study cited in the FAO and PISCES report "Small-Scale Bioenergy Initiatives" illustrates a Kenya Afforestation project and Tanzania Sisal case that provided human development support in how to run civil society organizations representing rural people and communities.⁴

4. Household and Child Development.

Women educate and shape their children's future household and resource management habits. During children's early years at the primary school level, special consideration should be given to developing a curriculum of sustainability practices that can profoundly affect both the students and their parents and modify their outlook on how to manage and consume their energy inputs, as well as prompt them in their daily household duties to adopt lessons as simple as recycling to fully assessing their entire fuel cycle of energy needs for lighting, cooking and heating their homes.

Endnotes

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² Sanyal, P. "From Credit to Collective Action: The Role of Microfinance in Promoting Women's Social Capital and Normative Influence". *American Sociological Review*, 74: 529-550, August 2009.

³ Wangalwa Wakhungu, J., Cecelski, E. "A crisis in Power", *Missing Links: Gender Equity in Science and Technology for Development*. Gender Working Group, United Nations Commission on Science and Technology for Development, International Development Research Centre, 1995.

⁴ Practical Action Consulting. "Small-Scale Bioenergy Initiatives: Brief description and preliminary lessons on livelihood impacts from case studies in Asia, Latin America and Africa". Final Report, Prepared for the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and Policy Innovation Systems for Clean Energy Security (PISCES), January 2009.

Table A: Sustainability Stakeholders

Stakeholders	Public Sector and International Development Organizations	Market Enablers	Women
Sample Players	World Bank, OECD, Dept. of Energy, etc.	Companies, Venture Capital Funds	Small-business and Micro-enterprises, Community-led organizations
Key Role	Policy, Grants, Financing	Production/Distribution/Financing	Consumption and Promotion
Research and Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Commission studies from universities and research institutions on sustainability solutions where women can play a role – Provide incentive schemes for R&D around RETs that take into account women’s input for product design 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Integrate the R&D findings into how they design, produce and market the RETs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Be active participants in communicating their needs across different stakeholders
Capacity Building and Technical Expertise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Provide support for programmes through grants, financing, tax incentives or subsidies for market enablers to adopt sustainability and energy technologies best suited to women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>Resource Identification:</i> Conduct a thorough assessment of the applicable sustainability alternatives in the community – <i>Financing:</i> Provide different credit schemes for the community or end-users to acquire the product – <i>Resource Management and Consumption:</i> Provide training around the processing steps and application of the new technology – <i>Marketing/Outreach:</i> Build small-scale female-led businesses/ organizations responsible for promoting the product in the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>Resource Management and Consumption:</i> Adopt and integrate the new sustainable method in their daily household activities – <i>Marketing/Outreach:</i> Both market and train end-users in the community that can adopt the new sustainable model or technology (i.e. schools, clinics, shops)
Leadership Advancement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Promote the creation of female-led sustainable enterprises by supporting venture capital funds that allocate funding and technical assistance to this segment – Engage women in the policy design process by supporting the creation of women’s organizations in sustainability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Provide organizational and team-building development with local grassroots organizations in order to be sustainable in the long run 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Effectively lead and manage local organizations or small-scale enterprises in the community responsible for permeating the new technology in the community
Household and Child Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Assess the possible integration of a sustainability and energy curriculum in the educational system with gender considerations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Develop training materials and programmes to promote and improve public understanding on sustainability and resource management with considerations on how mothers can play a key role 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Apply the educational curriculum to how they run their household and educate their children

Conflict



Issue Description

A majority of displaced persons during and after wars are women and children, who become the targets of atrocious acts. These acts are deliberate instruments of war used by the enemy. In their aftermath they leave women and girls who suffer trauma, have lost their families, their livelihoods, suffer from HIV and AIDS and have no source of income or skills to secure jobs. Yet in post-war situations, it is often the women who show the strength and courage to rebuild their lives, to provide for their families and to uplift their communities.

Astute companies realize that the empowerment of women in post-conflict environments not only leads to maximizing value for their stakeholders but, more importantly, contributes to their so-called “triple bottom line” – a measurement that goes beyond the traditional measures of profits, return on investment and shareholder value to include social and environmental measurements.

Indeed, a clear business case can be made for companies to mainstream women’s empowerment when addressing post-war challenges. Developing women as leaders, entrepreneurs, educators, producers, employees, etc., and understanding them as active consumers and as having an impact on a particular state’s economy should ultimately increase the bottom line of a business and maximize shareholder value.

The political empowerment of women post-war is a key route to improving their status and that of society as a whole as it provides them with a voice within key decision-making processes. This in turn gives them access to resources and to the institutions that shape social norms and attitudes.

Post-war, women often assume a new economic role as they become the primary breadwinners in their families. Developing women as entrepreneurs and teaching them special skills in this new role increases their ability to obtain employment and improve their standard of living, makes them self-sustainable and ultimately provides the country and its economy with the impetus required to recover from the conflict’s devastating economic effects.

Educating women not only empowers them but also contributes to the global competitiveness of their country. The future economic competitiveness of a country will increasingly depend on how well it educates its young women (and less on the magnitude of its natural resources or the ownership of territories).

Analysis

Why big business should mainstream the empowerment of women when developing solutions to post-conflict challenges

1. Enabling the political empowerment of women.

The political empowerment of women is regarded as the main route to improving their status; it provides them with a voice within key decision-making processes. History has shown that strong women leaders have the fortitude to propel countries (and by extension, the businesses that operate within those countries) onto a positive trajectory.

An example of conflict-induced gender inequality is Sierra Leone. This inequality is attributed to a long-standing history of conflict marked by a history of colonialism, heightened by the civil war of 1992. Sierra Leonean women are today among the most marginalized in the world – socially, economically and politically.

However, the country has made progress since the end of the civil war, bolstered by post-conflict reconstruction programmes and donor pressure. Collectively, these efforts are offering new opportunities for women’s progress. Hopes in the area are also inspired by promising developments in neighbouring post-conflict

Liberia (which in 2005 elected Africa’s first female president and recently celebrated its first Nobel Laureate, Leymah Gbowee).

In Rwanda, in the wake of its efforts to rebuild itself following its civil war, key changes in demographics provided women with a crucial opportunity to participate in the country’s political and economic decision-making bodies. More positions became available for women in government and commercial posts. Such circumstances allow women to advance their rights in post-conflict, newly established governments through constitutional revisions and new policies.

In the years leading to the 1994 elections, women in South Africa formed a strong National Women’s Coalition that cut across racial, political and social lines, and was instrumental in creating and sustaining the peace accord and in drafting a democratic Constitution and Bill of Rights. The Coalition also assisted in setting the 30% quota for women in all parties in parliament.

Lessons can also be learned from various other countries that have empowered women to contribute to key decision-making structures, thereby encouraging them to seek solutions to challenges faced by their countries. For example:

- The Netherlands has introduced a programme entitled “Engendering the Peace Process” that encourages Israel and Palestine to appoint more women to negotiating teams and political decision-making posts in the ongoing Middle East peace process.
- In Africa, a “First Ladies for Peace Initiative” developed in early 1997 has hosted conferences on peace and humanitarian issues. The conferences’ resolutions have been presented to African heads of state and their governments.
- Belgium has initiated a joint project with the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) through which a women’s non-governmental organization identifies detained children and negotiates their release from rebel soldiers. Belgium has also supported the use of women mediators in conflict situations and has developed an initiative for peacebuilding between the women of two parties in conflict.
- Georgia has adopted a Plan of Action for Improving Women’s Conditions, which includes a mechanism that ensures the active involvement of women in decision-making in armed conflicts and peace building.
- The United Kingdom has taken steps to ensure that women are included in the peace process in Northern Ireland.
- In several countries, including the United Kingdom and the United States, women occupy such high-level decision-making posts as secretary of state and departmental heads. These posts have important implications for conflict prevention and peace processes.
- In Colombia, pressure from women’s groups during the 1980s and 1990s was pivotal in pressuring the Colombian Government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) to engage in peace talks in 1999. Even after the collapse of peace talks in 2002, women’s groups remained steadfast in their cause to encourage a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

To realize the vision of the political empowerment of women, sustainable advancement depends on alliances whereby better-educated urban women exert pressure for solving the concrete problems of poorer women in exchange for their political support. Although such alliances are difficult, new grassroots women’s organizations have achieved positive initial results, which can be consolidated and expanded by appropriate partnerships with international women non-governmental organizations.

Hence, programming interventions should endeavour to build on these positive aspects by supporting initiatives that take advantage of the shifts in gender power relationships, while remaining aware of potential resentment from men because of women’s positive gains in status.

2. Uplifting the role of women in society through entrepreneurship. The disturbance of established norms can have unintended positive effects on the status and role of women in their societies. New roles hold new opportunities.

For example, women's social and economic responsibilities may increase when they are obliged to take over the responsibility of supporting their households. Often this requires learning new skills that enable women to perform jobs previously held by men or that prepare them for entrepreneurial income-generating activities. This can help women achieve greater financial independence and lead to long-term changes in the gendered division of labour.

However care should be exercised at programme implementation to ensure the women truly see the fruits of their labour. In many African countries, women have taken the lead farming role, but the men pick up the pay check. Basically, the women are doing the work, learning a new skill and feeling empowered but they are not capitalizing on their work financially.

In Somalia, women who had traditionally helped support their families through the sale of agricultural products expanded their sales to include livestock and other products when the men were away fighting in the conflict. When the men returned after the conflict, the women continued to work in these new areas because for various reasons many men were unable to work.

3. Educating women.

Given that women account for more than one-half of the talent pool globally, the future competitiveness of a country will increasingly depend on how well it educates its young women.

Blue Rose Compass, an NGO focused on working solely in conflict regions and on specifically educating women and girl refugees in Africa and the Middle East witnesses how large the gap in education as well as gender parity in the labour force is. While girls have a higher graduation rate from secondary school in the Middle East than in Africa, the Middle East has by far the largest Gender Parity Gap by not creating an enabling environment for women to enter the labour force.

The development of sound educational systems should thus be at the core of any government's strategy to raise the quality of life of all its citizens. That said, in conflict states it is necessary to look at education in relation to the needs of the specific state (i.e. in terms of economic growth and job creation). However, how this can be achieved in particular in war-torn states where day-to-day survival is often the primary priority and education a mere luxury is a difficult question. Financial investment in the education of females is one of the answers but is insufficient.

One of the greatest lessons to be learned from post-apartheid South Africa is that funding alone will not improve educational prospects and opportunities, particularly for young women. Instead, the optimal utilization of funds is key. Examples include:

- Equipping educators with the technical and leadership skills to effect change at schools
- Building systems that make educators accountable for the success of their schools (performance measurement is currently being mooted for principals in South Africa)
- Instilling a culture of teaching and learning within families and communities
- Actively investing in women's adult education by improving the quality, integrity and accessibility of education and training institutions

In particular, countries should focus on developing literacy and numeracy levels, which are at the foundation of ongoing learning and used in studies as an indicative measure of the future economic performance of that individual and by extension the country he/she inhabits. Yet this requires significant investment, most notably in countries where women have been excluded from schooling and, as a result, from participating in the key decision-

making processes of their country. Business can play a key role here, in particular in changing the perspective of men, as in these remaining male-dominated regions men's perspectives are critical to what women are allowed and not allowed to learn and do.

Recommendations and Action Items

How big business should promote the empowerment of women when developing solutions to post-conflict challenges

It is important for business to ensure that the empowerment of women is mainstreamed when developing programmes to uplift women in post-conflict environments. In implementing programmes, an understanding of the culture and the currently prescribed role of women in that particular society is necessary as that will determine best practices and the appropriate means of intervention in order to empower – rather than endanger – women. In some cases, issues such as religion, tradition and legal status among others may present substantial obstacles to programme implementation.

1. Contributing to the education and skills development of women. Education and skills development is one of the most important and sustainable interventions needed to effectively assist women in restoring their lives and positively influencing the future of young girls.

Well established, effective and purposefully-driven skills development programmes will ultimately assist women to not only develop and harness their own skills and enable them to make sound decisions and influence changes within their own communities, but will also have a significant positive impact on some of the most profound issues of our time: population growth, HIV and AIDS, peace and security, and the widening gap between the rich and poor and between men and women.

Practical, community-driven, skills-based programmes should link literacy and the basic education of women with health, economic, social and civic development. In this regard, a number of lessons can be learned from existing global programmes and interventions, to develop more of these interventions and reach out to more women in need.

The organization "Women for Women International (WfWI) works in eight war-torn and post-conflict countries in Africa, the Balkans, the Middle East and South Asia to give women the support and training they need to be economically self-sufficient and become leaders in their communities. WfWI provides a formal programme with various modules aimed at imparting knowledge and equipping women with the skills they need going forward and to return to their communities.

Another exemplary intervention is that of World Education. World Education programmes help girls enrol and stay in school and help women gain access to or create new educational, financial and social resources in their communities. The programme helps girls and women improve their own lives, the lives of their families and the conditions in their communities. For parents, and especially mothers, this means creating conditions that ensure their daughters have equal access to basic education, are able to make informed decisions about their future, and are able to protect themselves from trafficking, sexual exploitation, HIV and AIDS, for example.

2. Developing women as entrepreneurs and mentoring them. Businesses operating internationally have an ethical responsibility to contribute to the empowerment of people, so that they at least live above the breadline. Multinational companies are better positioned to mobilize greater resources in the form of financial aid, proper governance, project management and expertise to bring entrepreneurial programmes to women in conflict or post-conflict regions. However, local companies must also bear some of the responsibility.

Entrepreneurial development cannot be achieved in areas where such basics as food, physical protection, health and education are not assured. Public and private sector partnerships with government can pave the way for companies to dedicate financial resources and skills to physically provide the essentials. Once these are achieved, then entrepreneurial development is possible.

Deloitte, a multinational financial services firm, runs the Succeed Programme in South Africa, which mobilizes professionals within the Deloitte practice and captains of industry from around the country to come together as a cohesive group to identify women entrepreneurs who are either thinking of starting their own businesses or already have fledgling enterprises. The firm then embarks on intensive mentorship programmes to assist the women in starting or incubating their businesses, helping them grow until they are sustainable and employ others in their communities.

One such programme in KwaZulu Natal, South Africa included a public-private partnership with the local municipality. The municipality provided the funding to host women entrepreneurs from rural areas and Deloitte provided the mentors, intellectual property and resources. The municipality used Deloitte's skills transfer expertise at regular contact sessions, advising the women on topics such as interpersonal skills, business skills, regulatory compliance, public tender applications, social media skills, winning business and marketing skills and hosting networking functions, among others. Banks also engaged with the municipality to help the women to access finance.

The success of such programmes culminates in the women themselves becoming mentors to other entrepreneurs and forming their own networks to support each other's growth.

Deloitte took the programme further by inviting female learners to "Take a Girl Child to Work", hosted in conjunction with an international telecommunications company. This provided the participants with an opportunity to understand the corporate world and encouraged them to apply for bursaries, to study and to qualify as professionals. This empowerment was further supported by the "Siyakhula" project, which offered tuition in mathematics and accounting to learners striving for a university education.

Key Lessons

- Businesses have a social responsibility to empower women in conflict areas.
- Public and private sector partnerships are key.
- Entrepreneurial development is achieved through mentorship, structured programmes for skills transfer, access to finance, initiation at the grassroots level.

Endnotes

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