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‘We have to spark a gender equality revolution’

UN Global Compact CEO Lise Kingo tells Terry Slavin why SDG5 should be on all companies’ radar

As head of the UN Global Compact, Lise Kingo travels the world urging companies to align their business strategies with achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, which she describes as “the biggest transformation challenge the world has ever faced”.

And that was her message when she was in London this month speaking at Ethical Corporation’s Responsible Business Summit Europe, highlighting the \$12trn in new market value that is awaiting to be unlocked by companies committed to achieving the Global Goals, according to research by the [Business and Sustainable Development Commission \(BSDC\)](#).

And while companies can not be expected to contribute to all 17 goals, there is one that Kingo believes should be firmly on every company’s radar: Goal 5 on gender equality.

In an interview ahead of the conference, Kingo, a Dane who is an [International Gender Champion](#), said she is shocked by the fact that the gender pay gap is actually widening rather than narrowing around the world.

‘It will take 100 years to close the gender pay gap. Gender equality is not an evolutionary process’

Diversity and inclusion will be key components at the **Responsible Business Summit West 2018**

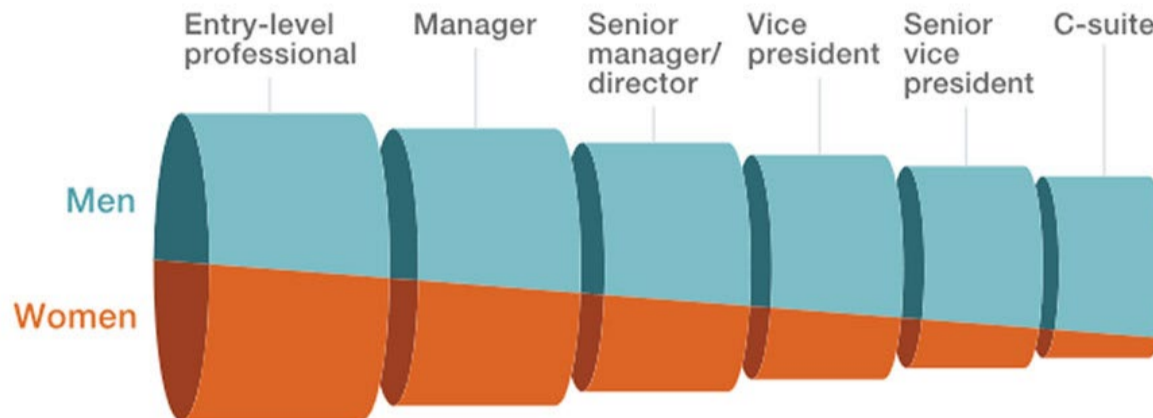


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Women are underrepresented at every level of the corporate pipeline.

Corporate-talent pipeline by gender



Women in the pipeline, %

Year	Entry-level professional	Manager	Senior manager/director	Vice president	Senior vice president	C-suite
2012	42	33	28	23	20	16
2015	45	37	32	27	23	17

The World Economic Forum’s latest annual gender gap report found that it will take 100 years to close the gender gap at the current rate of progress, compared with 83 years previously. “Gender equality is not an evolutionary process,” she said. “We have to spark a gender equality revolution.”

Of course, it is not all down to companies. In some parts of the world there are huge cultural factors barring women’s progress. “In many regions of the world not enough is being done to remove legislation that is preventing women from owning land or starting their own businesses. These are fundamental barriers to creating gender equality,” Kingo says.

Worryingly, there is also little progress in parts of the world where there are no such barriers, despite the increased media attention to women’s rights being garnered by movements such as #MeToo. “You have the number of women sitting on boards moving backwards. We are seeing the number of women in executive management moving backwards. And I think that is very sad. ... Companies really need to reflect their customers and their markets.”

There is a solid business case for companies to redress the gender balance. The BSDC’s WomenRising2030 initiative, launched this year, quotes research from McKinsey Global Institute showing that if women were to participate in the economy identically to men, they could add as much as \$28trn to global annual gross domestic product by 2025. In McKinsey’s “best in region”

Companies with women in senior positions are more focused on long-term growth than short-term profits





scenario, where all countries match the progress toward gender parity of the fastest-improving country in their region, this would add as much as \$12trn in annual 2025 GDP.

The [WomenRising2030](#) report cites evidence that businesses that have more women in senior positions are better able to shift their focus from short-term profit maximization to longer-term growth, with one international study finding that companies with gender-balanced boards were more likely to offer goods and services to communities with limited or no access to financial products. They also tend to prioritize environmental issues and to invest in renewable power, low-carbon products, and energy efficiency. (See [Why women can lead the way on achieving the Global Goals](#))

“The WomenRising2030 report makes good observations about how a female mindset is perfect for driving [progress towards attaining] the Goals, which are so interconnected and systemic and complex,” said Kingo.

Having spent 13 years as the only woman in the executive management team of Danish pharmaceuticals

company Novo Nordisk prior to joining the Global Compact in 2015, King speaks from experience. “More holistic, long-term oriented and nuanced decisions are made when you have women around the table.”

In 2010 the UN Global Compact, in partnership with UN Women, launched the Women’s Empowerment Principles, a seven-point guideline for how companies can promote gender equality in the workplace. To date, more than 1,800 CEOs from around the world have pledged to uphold the principles, which include appointing women to corporate leadership roles, and promoting education and training for women.

Last year, the UN Global Compact provided more guidance in the form of a Women’s Empowerment Principles Gap Analysis Tool, a series of multiple-choice questions allowing companies to assess their own performance on women’s empowerment and gender equality. The UN Global Compact recently published a [trends report](#) aggregating data from 100 companies that have used the tool in the first year.



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The greatest opportunity for women is in supply chains.

Latin American companies are most enthusiastic about implementing the Women’s Empowerment Principles





Nadim Kassar, deputy chairman and general manager BLC Bank in the Lebanon, who is on the WEP's leadership group, said had BLC had access to the tool in 2012, when it launched its initiative to help Lebanon's female entrepreneurs gain access to financial services, "our implementation time would have been shorter and more impactful".

But the report illustrates how early companies are in the journey to women's empowerment, with fewer than 15% of businesses in the "achiever" or "leader" categories.

Kingo points out that one of the biggest surprises for the 100 companies was how poorly they scored on female empowerment in their supply chains, with only 5% setting procurement and/or percentage spend targets with women-owned businesses, and 12% including gender equality criteria in supply chain management tools.

"Many have come back to us and said it was a real eye-opener," said Kingo. "It's really important that companies focus on female empowerment not only in their own companies, but in society and their supply chains, because ultimately that's what will drive economic opportunities for women." (See [Why supply chains are key to boosting women](#))

Latin American companies have been most enthusiastic in using the Women's Empowerment Principles gap analysis tool, accounting for 42% of take-up, almost twice as many as companies in Europe (23%), and far ahead of North America (10%) and Asia (7%). And that is just as well. According to the McKinsey report, Latin America as a whole could enjoy a 14% increase in GDP under its "best in region" scenario for greater gender parity, second only to India, with 16%.

Kingo said the importance of Goal 5 is magnified by how closely it is connected to attaining other key goals, such as Goal 1 (no poverty) and Goal 8 (decent work and economic growth).

"In my mind it would be impossible to make the Goals by 2030 if we don't manage to empower women across the world." ■



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Lise Kingo: 'We won't achieve the Goals if we fail to empower women'.



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MONKEY BUSINESS IMAGES
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The US firms opening their doors to greater diversity

Diana Rojas reports on the coalition of 400 CEOs, led by PwC, who are trying to tackle America's race divisions in their organizations and reaping business benefits

While rising through the ranks in the information technology industry, Heather Brunner avoided drawing attention to the fact that she was a woman. She didn't talk about her husband, and when she started her family, she didn't talk about her kids. She wanted to be judged on her merits alone.

But, speaking at a conference to kick off a discussion on diversity and inclusion 10 years ago, Brunner – who recently celebrated her fifth year as CEO of tech firm WP Engine, based in Austin, Texas – said that she finally “came out” as a woman.

“I realized that as I became a mother of two daughters, I was making a huge mistake not talking about the fact that I am a woman, I am a mother, and that I can also kick ass in a high-performing organization,” said Brunner.

As a CEO, Brunner is a rarity: almost 70% of board seats in Fortune 500 (and more in the broad Fortune 1000) companies are held by white men.

But she is one of more than 400 CEOs who have signed on to [CEO Action for Diversity & Inclusion](#), whose signatories pledge to advance the issue in the

‘What’s the business case for homogeneity? And still we haven’t been able to crack the code to change it’

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30 SECOND READ

- Events such as the #MeToo movement and Starbucks' ejection of two black men have brought worldwide focus to the issue of corporate diversity and inclusion.
- Almost 70% of board seats in Fortune 500 companies are held by white men. [CEO Action for Diversity & Inclusion](#), with more than 400 CEOs on board, has pledged to promote open conversations, expand unconscious bias training, and share best practices.
- The top 25% of companies for racial and ethnic diversity are 33% more likely to have better returns than industry averages. For gender diversity, the increase is 21%.
- PwC has funded a project with Harvard University called [Outsmarting Human Minds](#) to help uncover unconscious bias. Companies such as WP Engine and Johnson & Johnson run unconscious bias programmes to aid equal opportunities.
- Ensuring a steady pipeline of recruits from diverse backgrounds can be a challenge. KeyBank has successfully expanded its pipeline via a programme of employee referrals and strengthening relationships with diverse communities.

workplace by promoting open and often difficult conversation, implementing an expanding unconscious bias training, and sharing best – and failed – practices.

After the police shooting in Louisiana of Alton Sterling, an unarmed man, the then newly installed CEO of PwC, Tim Ryan, opened up difficult firm-wide conversations about race. That led to external conversations and collaboration to create the CEO Action coalition last June. There are no financial commitments, no metrics or compliance. The group marked its first anniversary on 12 June.

“We have to keep talking about it so that the next generation – my daughters – won't be having as many diversity inclusion panels,” Brunner said.

In the year since the coalition's launch, the US bore witness to a violent white-supremacist march on Charlottesville, Virginia, last summer; the explosion of the #MeToo movement in the fall, and, most recently, the ejection of two black men from a Starbucks that led to a much publicized franchise-wide afternoon shutdown for employee unconscious bias training in late spring – an event that brought worldwide focus to the issue of corporate diversity and inclusion.

“Will all of [Starbucks'] employees get it right? No, probably not. But that's why we have to keep the conversation going. And that conversation is: how can we work together so that it doesn't happen more often?” said Shannon Schuyler, responsible business leader and chief purpose officer with PwC, who volunteers her efforts with CEO Action.

Early this month, the issue was again brought to prominence when Google employees partnered with investors to push a proposal at its parent company's shareholder meeting to link executive pay to diversity and inclusion metrics. (See [Investors turn up pressure on Google](#))

“When I see people who are like me, who are thriving and getting promoted, I want to be a part of that”





It's not just that society increasingly expects business to act – and react – to social injustice. There is a business imperative for tackling diversity too. A January report from McKinsey Global Institute on diversity said that the top 25% of companies for racial and ethnic diversity are 33% more likely to have better returns than industry averages. For gender diversity, that returns increase is 21%. The report noted that companies in the lowest 25% for both ethnic/racial and gender diversity underperform financially.

“What’s the business case for homogeneity? And still we haven’t been able to crack the code to change it,” said Schuyler.

In the US, women account for just 16% of executive team members; 4% are black, Hispanics 4% and Asians 5%. In May, Fortune magazine reported that fewer than 5% of Fortune 500 CEOs are women. “The topic around diversity and inclusion was not at the same level of consciousness a year ago that it is today,” said Brunner.

At PwC, where CEO Action had its beginnings, women represent 19% of the partnership, and this year, 50% of campus hires and 45% of experienced-level hires globally. To facilitate professional connections and mentoring in-house, the firm promotes circles – forums that connect employees and promote opportunities for minorities, women, parents, LGBT and the disabled.

Unconscious bias

Last year, PwC funded a project with Harvard University called [Outsmarting Human Minds](#), which offers the public short videos and podcasts to uncover unconscious biases and figure out ways to overcome them.

Schuyler said that at PwC, candidates cannot interview or advance without taking unconscious bias training.

While many companies start out relatively diverse, the pipeline isn’t diverse enough to replace minority/female hires that aren’t retained.

“You may be the best person for the job if no one is put up next to you,” she said. “But in order to know that, a candidate needs to be put alongside other people, of all types ... The conversation is that we’re not looking at the full complement of candidates.”

Brunner, of WP Engine, noted that women comprise 40% of the company’s executive team and 22% of its non-executive management. Non-whites account for 30% of its employees, and some 35% of employees across four

‘Having a much wider aperture of what talent is has been dramatically powerful for our business’



WP ENGINE

WP Engine CEO, Heather Brunner.





offices do not have college degrees. And importantly, she noted, 27% of employees got a promotion last year.

New tech-support employees get seven weeks of training before serving customers to allow those who have never worked in tech before to become proficient; leadership and management training is offered, and they've even created an app called Lunchmeet that allows employees to meet up with and get to know others from different sectors of the company. Going forward, Brunner said that the company will be investing more in employee-wide unconscious bias and diversity training. And she noted that they are looking to improve their support of mothers re-entering the workforce, and of families.

But the most important element to diversifying the employee pool has come from within: some 40% of employees were referred by another employee.

"Diversity attracts diversity," says Brunner. "When I see people who are like me across the company, who are thriving and getting promoted, I want to be a part of that."

Cleveland-based KeyBank, which was the first Top 20 US bank to name a woman, Beth Mooney, as CEO in 2011, redoubled efforts to improve diversity several years ago, according to Kim Manigault, chief diversity and inclusion officer. The bank focused on providing education and resources for leaders and recruiters, expanding awareness of the company among diverse groups, and strengthening relationships with campus, community and professional organizations.

Internal efforts to boost diversity include company-sponsored employee resource groups, called Key Business Impact and Networking Groups, for African-American, Asian, disabled, Latino, women, LGBT, military, Jewish and young professionals.

In total 66% of KeyBank's 19,000 employees and 44% of its board of directors are minorities or women, said Manigault.

Last year, KeyBank launched an unconscious bias programme that was sponsored by the head of the retail branch network and attracted 98% participation of employees. Later, the programme was transformed into one for 1,800 leaders and managers, and then an enterprise-wide e-learning course. A total of 16,000 employees have now had unconscious bias training.



A KATZ/SHUTTERSTOCK

LGBT leaders have praised companies for supporting gay marriage.

'The urgency has less to do with the political context than the fact that fostering a more inclusive culture benefits the company'





“When I think about a sense of urgency on this topic, it’s about how we can be proactive every day, regardless of what is happening on a broader scale,” said Manigault. KeyBank’s CEO Mooney has signed on to CEO Action, and Manigault sees it as an opportunity to amplify the work being done in corporate America. “We are as powerful as our voices ... Our voice can be even more powerful when it is a collective voice.”

Wanda Bryant Hope, chief diversity and inclusion officer at Johnson & Johnson (J&J), said customers expect the company to play a role on societal issues, which is why joining coalitions is important. She noted how J&J signed an amicus brief for the landmark 2015 civil rights case *Obergefell v Hodges*, which eventually brought marriage equality to all states, and how LGBT leaders have credited the power of companies banding together in moving public opinion.

“We take a deliberate approach to determine where, when and how we will take a stand and make an impact,” said Hope.

But the real reason to diversify the workforce is a business imperative: in order to succeed, the company must understand the needs and wants of an increasingly diverse, worldwide customer base, she said.

Three years ago, J&J rolled out an unconscious-bias training programme for all of its employees but Hope points out that “building an inclusive culture ... takes more than a single training effort”. The company depends on metrics, including an inclusion index in its employee engagement survey, to hone and prioritize the culture. In addition, by using artificial intelligence technology to root out gender bias from job descriptions, the company has seen an uptick in more diverse applicants for those positions.

“The urgency has less to do with today’s political climate than the fact that our internal and external research consistently shows that creating and fostering an inclusive culture provides benefits not only for our employees, but for the organization as a whole,” said Hope.

Schuyler said that while every topic can have players who do things for show, fears of “greenwashing” in diversity and inclusion don’t worry her too much because even if a company throws a woman or a minority on the board “to shut people up”, that one person can have a positive impact.

“One person does make a difference and that difference can be seen and felt,” said Schuyler. ■



CEO Action for Diversity & Inclusion has grown to over 400 CEOs.

CEO ACTION FOR DIVERSITY & INCLUSION



Diana Rojas is a freelance writer based in Washington, DC and a regular contributor to the Ethical Corporation, focusing on environmental policy and sustainability issues. Diana is fluent in Spanish and Portuguese.





Investors turn up pressure on Google over gender and diversity

Google is widely praised for its leadership in [championing sustainable energy](#), but the internet giant has had brickbats rather than bouquets lobbed at it in the past year in another area of responsible business: addressing gender and diversity issues among its employees.

In January, Google fired engineer James Damore, months after he circulated a memo accusing the company of discriminating against white, male and conservative employees. Then it was sued by another engineer, who said he was wrongfully terminated after his response to Damore's memo criticized Google's diversity efforts. Other pending lawsuits allege harassment and hiring bias, while the Department of Labor is looking into complaints that the company has been underpaying women.

This month, at its annual general meeting in Mountain View, California, Google's parent company Alphabet rejected a proposal asking for executive compensation to be tied to diversity and inclusion metrics, saying that the company was already committed to incorporating and promoting those values in its business.

Software engineer Irene Knapp, who introduced the proposal, which was backed by other employees, investors and socially responsible investment firm Zevin Asset Management, told the meeting: "The lack of clear, communicated policies and actions to advance diversity and inclusion with concrete accountability and leadership from senior executives has left many of us feeling unsafe and unable to do our work."

In their proposal, the filers noted that the company has only one person of colour and four women among its top 31 executives. Google's internal data shows only a one percentage increase in female employees (from 30% to 31%) and in under-represented minorities (from 9% to 10%) in the past four years.

"It is our belief as investors, as engineers and as tech professionals that a lack of executive leadership around sustainability, diversity and inclusion fundamentally hurts the quality of products Alphabet can deliver to users," Knapp added.





The proposal had been expected to be voted down, as Alphabet's two co-founders hold outsized control in the dual-voting structure. Shareholders also voted down another proposal, brought by Arjuna Capital, requesting that Alphabet report on "the risks to the company associated with emerging public policies on the gender pay gap". Google called a proposal redundant as it has [published an analysis on pay equity](#) earlier this year.

The US tech sector is one of the poorest performers in diversity and inclusion metrics, and Google is by no means the worst when it comes to gender parity. With females making up 31% of its workforce, it lags behind leaders Pandora and Groupon (48% and 47%, respectively) but ahead of Microsoft and Intel (26% and 25%), according to 2016 numbers by data visualization company [Information is Beautiful](#), which put female representation in America's top 50 companies at 54%.

But it fares far worse with regards to diversity. Although blacks and Latinos each make up about 12% of the US population, they account for only 2% and 3%, respectively, of Google's employees. Amazon leads, with 21% of employees who are black and 13% Latino, while Dell's numbers are 10% and 11%, according to Information is Beautiful.

Pat Miguel Tomaino, director of socially responsible investing at Zevin, said the firm reached out to several large tech companies last summer to flag up their lack of progress in diversity and inclusion, including, Alphabet and Citrix Systems.

He said Citrix had responded positively to its proposal to tie diversity and inclusion efforts into executive pay, while Zevin had a "pretty constructive meeting" with senior executives at Alphabet last fall. "Alphabet understands itself to be at a transition point," he believes, and is looking toward more top-driven initiatives. He noted that Google's new chief diversity and inclusion officer, Danielle Mastrangel Brown, hired last June, came from Intel, which ties executive compensation to diversity and inclusion goals.

Tomaino said the firm is planning a follow-up meeting with Alphabet and looking towards other like-minded investment firms to keep pressing the company for change.

Diana Rojas



FIRED FOR TRUTH

James Damore claimed he was fired from Google after circulating a memo accusing it of discriminating against white employees.





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Why supply chains are key to boosting women – and the global economy

Claire Manuel reports on how companies like Mondelez, Marks & Spencer and Walmart are sharing knowledge on how to unleash the power of women throughout their businesses

While many companies are looking to address gender equality in their own operations, far fewer are looking at how they can boost the economic prospects of women in their supply chains, despite the fact that by doing so they could have a far bigger impact.

McKinsey Global Institute estimated in 2015 that if women were to participate in the economy identically to men, they could add as much as \$28trn to global annual gross domestic product by 2025, roughly equivalent to the size of the combined Chinese and US economies.

It identified the creation of economic opportunities for women as a key intervention required to bridge the gender gap, and called for the private sector to play a more active role, in concert with governments and NGOs.

At the end of last year, the University of Oxford heeded the call by getting together with nine of the world's largest companies to formalize the [Global Business Coalition for Women's Economic Empowerment](#). The members of the group, who have been meeting since 2014, share knowledge and best

The coalition is focused on highlighting the potential commercial benefits of promoting women in their supply chains

Diversity and inclusion will be key components at the **Responsible Business Summit West 2018**



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practice, with the aim of finding out how better to promote women in their entire value chains.

The initiative was founded by Linda Scott, who is best known as creator of the concept of the **Double X Economy**, a perspective that describes the global economy of women and their roles not only as consumers, but as investors, donors and workers.

The nine members of the coalition include Coca-Cola, ExxonMobil, Goldman Sachs, Mondelez International, PricewaterhouseCoopers, Marks & Spencer, Mastercard Center for Inclusive Growth, Qualcomm and Walmart.

The coalition is focused on highlighting the potential commercial benefits of promoting women in their supply chains, says Angie Rozas, senior director of social impact at Coca-Cola. These include product and supply improvements, market expansion, recruitment and retention of key talent, building brand reputation, supporting work relationships with governments and improving financial performance.

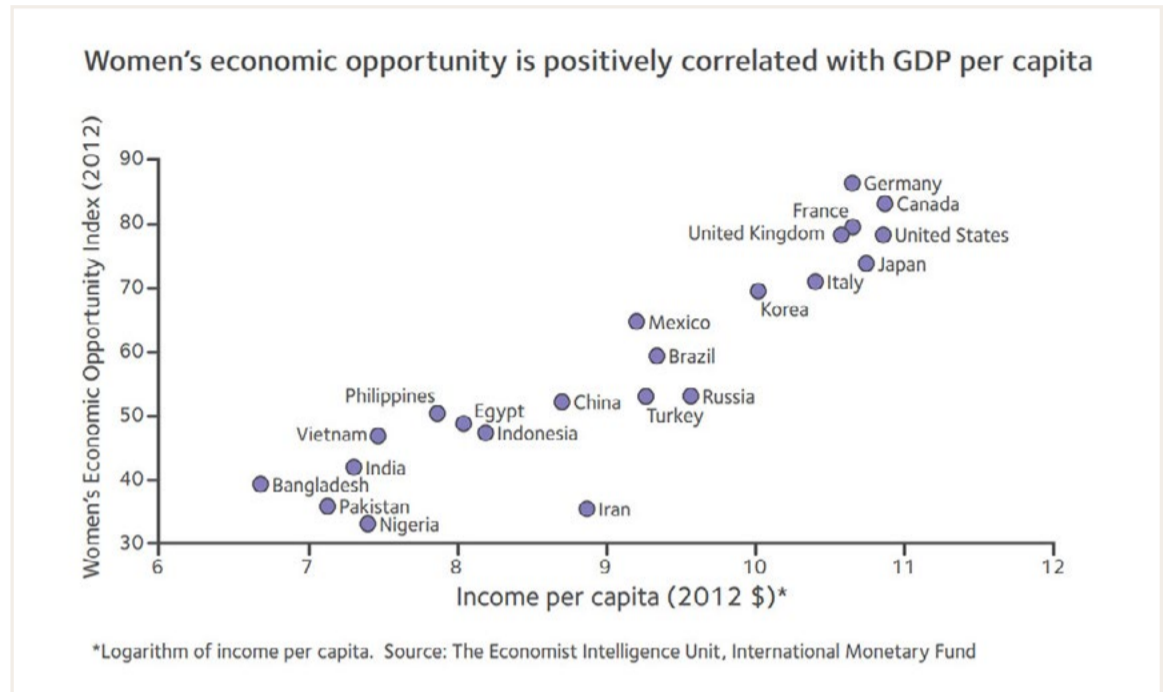
Rozas says Coca-Cola, which aims to enable the economic empowerment of 5 million women entrepreneurs across its global value chain by 2020 through its **5by20** initiative, has a long-term commitment to the coalition and has found great value in working with it.

“The opportunity to meet other pioneering companies, who also already have significant experience in this important area, provides a huge opportunity for us all to share learning, as well as work together to overcome common barriers,” says Rozas.

One area where it is proving most useful, she said, is in the complex area of measuring the economic and social impact of empowering women.

Another member of the coalition is Marks & Spencer, which has made a number of ambitious commitments in its **Plan A** sustainability programme around women’s empowerment. It has recently partnered with the Department for International Environment on its Work and Opportunities for Women programme.

Hazel Culley, sustainability manager for foods at the UK retailer, points out that M&S relies on resilient global supply chains, and a large majority of those



How creating economic opportunities for women adds to global wealth.

‘This coalition gives M&S a great forum to explore the issues, learn from others and ultimately scale what we are doing’





working in the supply chains are women. “This coalition gives us a great forum to explore the issues, learn from others and ultimately scale what we are doing,” she says.

Christine Montenegro McGrath, who is chief of sustainability at Mondelēz, said the company incorporated what it had learned through the coalition into the design of Cocoa Life, its signature sustainability programme, in which women’s empowerment is a cross-cutting theme. She said women play a critical role in both cocoa farming and community transformation. “Measuring the impact of our interventions is critical to our success and we’ve strengthened our approach with learning from the coalition members.”

While business plays a critical role in achieving women’s economic empowerment, Scott says an ecosystem approach is necessary, with governments, NGOs and the private sector working together.

“They [the coalition] simply want the public-sector players to recognize that business is taking, and must take, a fully integrated, substantive role in the team of players working on this problem,” she says.

She points to Marks & Spencer’s gender action learning system workshops as a good example of an ecosystem approach. The workshops were delivered to 500 male and female smallholder coffee growers in Peru, who have been heavily affected by climate change. Analysis by M&S concluded that increasing women’s income and leadership would be essential to salvaging the situation, so the workshops help communities develop new visions for women and men to relate to each other as equals.

The programme is still in its early stages, but the results so far are encouraging: there has been an increase in female co-operative members, an increase in women selling in the local market, and more women taking leadership positions in the community.

While the coalition represents a welcome step towards the goal of women’s economic empowerment, it is still just nine companies out of millions. To truly make an impact, there needs to be a change in the way all businesses think and act, Scott says. A gender equality approach needs to be recognized and embedded as a key ingredient to any company’s commercial success – and the coalition needs to be a club that every company aspires to join. ■



M&S

Hazel Culley, M&S sustainability manager for foods, visiting women tea-pickers in the retailer’s Plan A programme.



Claire Manuel has been an editor and journalist for more than two decades, specialising in international development, sustainability and climate change. She is also editorial director at Witan Media. claire.manuel@witanmedia.com





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