



## SUMMARY NOTE - ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

### **INVESTING IN WOMEN'S ECONOMIC RESILIENCE AND SOCIAL WELLBEING: RETHINKING THE ROLE OF PRIVATE SECTOR DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA**

This discussion event took place on Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2014

**An overview: understanding the development impact of business in supporting women to build their productive capacity, resilience and social wellbeing** was the first in a series of six FPC roundtable discussions supported by Nestlé. This opening session aimed to explore the opportunities and challenges of private sector development in transforming the lives, livelihoods and enterprise of women across Africa.

#### **SUMMARY OF ISSUES EXPLORED**

- The importance of initiatives and policy interventions which target **adolescent girls**.
- Women represent a significant proportion of the rural economy therefore **structural transformation in agriculture is critical**.
- **Improving market access through public procurement** is important for developing the competitiveness of women's businesses and enterprise.
- **The role of technology in driving change** to support women to achieve greater productivity and efficiency.
- **Financial sector development** is required to develop new ways to provide financial products and services to support business and enterprise expansion.
- **Preparing enterprise and business for growth** through coaching and mentoring.
- Supporting increasing numbers of women in leadership roles to help shape **corporate governance and accountability mechanisms** to, help combat discrimination against women and sexual exploitation (among other things).
- **Promoting diverse partnerships** to develop female business and enterprise.
- **Driving women's empowerment** to improve women's control and access to resources as well as providing greater voice and choice.
- **Robust evidence and politics matters** to help inform the development of policies and initiatives that address inequalities disproportionately affecting girls and women.

#### **The importance of adolescent girls**

Women are at the centre of trade and development. They are critical in making development transformation more inclusive and sustainable. For this reason initiatives and policy interventions need to target adolescent girls (10 -19yrs) too. They represent the next generation of change-makers. Beyond their role as beneficiaries, they are potential learners, earners, savers, investors, distributors, producers, etc. How can their potential be unleashed (e.g. developing entrepreneurship and business skills as a core part of education curricula) and what are the best ways in which private sector development might support this?

#### **Structural transformation in agriculture**

Women represent a significant number of farmers and agriculturalists and agriculture is a major economic sector on the continent. It can be greatly enhanced to support the diversity of female enterprise and business, be it in the workplace, in the marketplace or across communities. Promoting rural development through female entrepreneurship - beyond cash crop production (coffee, cocoa, etc.) is important. The growing demand for staple food production (e.g. cassava) can support the structural change required to improve farming productivity through the skilling-up (access to finance, safety standards, equipment use, product knowledge) of women which supports the development of diverse rural communities. Understanding the vital role women play in food production, from sourcing to processing and marketing to distribution, provides invaluable opportunities to increase women's incomes and revenue streams. Staple food production can also offer women more equitable access to resources and provides women with greater power and influence, thus helping them to improve their competitiveness.



Example - Kenya 2020 strategy to modernise agriculture. Coca-Cola is currently working with local producers who have become integrated into Coca-Cola's supply and distribution chains. Hand-in-Hand International (a development NGO focused on employment and enterprise) provides skills and development training (staff management, business planning, cash flow management, etc.) to local producers allowing them to maximise the business opportunities available to them through Coca-Cola's value chain networks.

### **Improving market access**

Micro, small and medium sized enterprises (MSMEs) boast a strong concentration of women who face unprecedented business challenges. Supporting and enhancing entrepreneurship through public procurement enables women to add value to their entrepreneurial activity through building greater business links, improving their competitiveness and developing a greater understanding of market demands.

Women-owned and women-run businesses play a significant role in global export value chains across Africa. Yet how can women be supported to move up the value chain to become more competitive? This could allow women to secure improvements in the quality of their work and outputs (without burdening them with even more work) as well as increase their revenues/incomes. This requires greater value chain participation by women entrepreneurs and requires businesses procuring services to diversify their supply and distribution chains. How can businesses develop a greater understanding of how best to work with a cross section of female-run/owned businesses and enterprises across value chains and distribution networks? Given the diversity of the private sector (informal/formal, small/large, diverse sectors, domestic/international), the critical question is how to build an appropriate business case which demonstrates that inclusive business is commercially viable, worth investing in, becomes a core business model and can be expanded.

Example - Nestlé Cocoa Plan <http://www.nestlecocoaplan.com/>

### **The role of technology in driving change**

The use of innovation and technology can transform women's enterprises, improving their competitiveness and productivity. There have been massive advances in mobile phone technologies across Africa. Mobile phones are increasingly considered a business tool, particularly in rural areas. They provide women with a safe and secure way to transmit cash payments and transfers. Rural users are able to avoid the complexity and risks associated with lengthy and often awkward trips to banks in urban areas. This can involve costly transport, security challenges associated with conducting cash transactions and the loss of working hours/days due to the need to physically transport and bank cash. Might technology also play a role in the expansion and delivery of training (e.g. financial education, business training and enterprise skills development), as well as providing a mechanism to monitor and evaluate the impact of such programmes for women?

### **Financial sector development**

How best can business financing be secured by women? What are the best forms of emerging financial intermediaries/alternative ways of accessing capital which can provide new ways of achieving the best outcomes to grow women's businesses? In essence, how can financial sector development support the '3Cs' (a term coined by the Cherie Blair Foundation) which build women's: confidence, capacity and capital? Entrepreneurial confidence works on building self belief, aspiration and inspires women to drive for change to improve their economic and social wellbeing. With respect to capacity and education, examples include skills associated with managing balance sheets, budgets, cash flow management as well as stock control. In addition, accessing capital examples might include: providing ways to support women to meet collateral requirements, crowd funding platforms, providing bridging loans at key stages of the business cycle (e.g. when the enterprise has won a tender), angel investors and venture capital. It is worth noting that business registration represents an important factor in accessing finance and supporting the transition from informality to the formal business sector.

Example - Cherie Blair Foundation in partnership with Nokia and Vodafone, developed mobile phone services specifically tailored to women entrepreneurs.



## **Preparing enterprise and business for growth**

'Growth ready' enterprises require incubation through business coaching and mentoring to expand. Such support improves business prospects for women as well as provides a helpful platform to transition from the informal to the formal sector. Women's business associations and fellowships provide important networking fora to access support, information, learning and economic opportunities. Example – Vital Voices (a global partnership which trains and empowers emerging women leaders and social entrepreneurs) provides this support (with partners such as Bank of America and Citi) by working with women whose businesses have already experienced a period of growth – having passed the initial start-up phase. It is also worth noting that supporting investor readiness is equally important. The role of diaspora networks which can develop platforms to support investors to measure the impact of their investment, access a range of potential investment opportunities and identify how investors might support improved returns on their capital.

## **Corporate governance and accountability**

There is a need to improve accountability structures across businesses in order to combat discrimination against women and sexual exploitation. Women should continue to be encouraged and supported to assume more leadership roles, including on company boards in order to help shape corporate governance.

## **Promoting diverse partnerships to drive women's empowerment**

An essential element to supporting co-operation and partnership is to clearly define roles and responsibilities. In addition, identifying and understanding important facilitators which can effectively provide support and have an impact on women's enterprise through public-private partnerships, via sharing knowledge and learning networks. Beyond donors and development NGOs, less well-known catalysts include local business associations and diverse diaspora communities. Example - Homestrings - a diaspora development and investment platform.

The role of media and communications (both factual and fictional broadcasts) can help amplify the voice of women and provide the information women need to inform choice and maximise development impacts which support women to become more competitive and productive (in qualitative terms). In addition, beyond job creation and income generation, it is important to facilitate women moving to more profitable parts of the value chain where they can develop their skills and increase their earnings and revenue. Supporting and promoting workers' rights and the importance of collective bargaining are also important for improving women's positions in the broader labour market.

Opportunities to engage boys and men need to be identified in order to support women's empowerment. Example - Nestlé has developed training programmes in their Cocoa cooperatives which help to challenge the traditional roles of women and also work to combat exploitation (e.g. tackling violence against women, supporting land registration for women, etc.).

## **Evidence and politics matters**

Decision makers need robust data to help inform policy and promote greater transparency. In addition, how best can politically sensitive issues which support women to pursue economic enterprise be addressed? Issues include customary law vis-à-vis land ownership and registration.

## **USEFUL LINKS PROVIDED BY ROUNDTABLE PARTICIPANTS**

The Business Case for Women's Economic Empowerment: An Integrated Approach  
<http://www.oakfnd.org/node/5739>

The Women Effect by Suzanne Biegel  
<http://www.alliancemagazine.org/feature/the-women-effect/>

Empowering Women Entrepreneurs through Information and Communications Technologies. A practical guide (UNCTAD)  
[http://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/dt1stict2013d2\\_en.pdf](http://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/dt1stict2013d2_en.pdf)