Over the past 10 years, IFC’s Banking on Women (BOW) business has provided finance and expertise to financial institutions in 75 countries through 260 projects to finance women-owned SMEs.

Housing Finance
FIG’s cumulative financing for women’s mortgages reached $1 billion in FY24.

Insurance
IFC’s SHEforShield report identified a $1.7 trillion women’s insurance market globally by 2030.

Microfinance
IFC has a long history of financing women microentrepreneurs through investment vehicles, and more recently through platforms such as the Base of the Pyramid Facility. At end-January 2024, IFC committed 54 BOP projects totaling $865 million, out of which $509 million with a gender lens.

Capital Markets
The BOW business has launched and invested in seven gender bonds in six countries for over $1.4 billion.

Trade & Supply Chain Finance
The 3-year BOW-GTFP Initiative has guaranteed more than $260 million in trade finance for women entrepreneurs.

Fintech
In FY24, IFC invested in digital finance transactions that target women customers and women-led businesses.

Gender-Inclusive Climate Finance
In FY24, IFC invested in innovative, gender-inclusive climate transactions to finance women to purchase energy-efficient vehicles and equipment.

Industry Context
Financing women is critical to accelerating sustainable private sector growth. Women, and especially women entrepreneurs, face barriers in accessing capital and other financial services and are under-served at all levels of the financial system. While women-owned micro, small and medium enterprises (WMSMEs) represent about one-third of all MSME businesses in developing countries, they face an estimated financing gap of $1.9 trillion (SME Finance Forum). In addition, women comprise the majority of the world’s unbanked population, with 730 million adult women in developing economies without a bank or mobile money account (Global Findex Database). However, the financial sector is increasingly recognizing that women form a valuable, large and growing market that presents significant economic opportunities:

• Some studies estimate economic gains in the order of $5-6 trillion if women started and scaled new businesses at the same rate men do (World Bank 2023).
• Closing the gender employment gap could raise long-term GDP per capita by nearly 20% on average across countries (World Bank 2023).
• Integrating more women into business operations can increase companies’ profitability and environmental sustainability. Research has correlated higher net profit margins and lower CO2 emissions for firms with more women in decision-making roles (World Bank 2023).
• Women are valuable banking customers: they have lower non-performing loan ratios, they are an important source of deposits, and they are more likely than men to increase financial institutions’ brand and footprint metrics such as net promoter scores (IFC 2024).
**Project Examples**

**SUSTAINABILITY FINANCE THROUGH GENDER BONDS IN BRAZIL**

IFC invested $200 million in a Gender Bond issued by Itaú Unibanco to support the bank’s lending program to women-owned small and medium enterprises in Brazil. The project represents the first Gender Bond issued by a private bank in Brazil. Gender Bonds aim to promote positive economic outcomes by being exclusively dedicated to help achieve gender equality.

**GENDER-INCLUSIVE CLIMATE FINANCE IN ROMANIA**

IFC committed a senior loan of EUR 20 million (~ US$21.7 million) to Motoractive IFN S.A. (also known as Garanti BBVA Leasing Romania). The proceeds from the loan will be used for on-lending to SMEs, including at least 20% to women-owned SMEs, in the form of financial leases, with the proceeds targeted to climate-related projects, including electric vehicles (EVs) and hybrids, renewable energy (solar photovoltaic installation), and biomass and biogas as well as energy-efficient technologies for upgrades in manufacturing and other economic sectors.

**EXPANDING FINANCIAL SERVICES FOR WOMEN-OWNED BUSINESSES IN AFRICA**

Supported by the Base of the Pyramid platform, IFC provided $47.5 million in debt to the Baobab Group as part of a multi-country facility to scale-up financing to women-owned micro and small enterprises in Burkina Faso, Cote d’Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Madagascar, Mali, and Senegal.

**WOMEN’S MSME FINANCE IN EUROPE**

IFC invested EUR 50 million in the European Fund of Southeast Europe SA. SICAV-SIF (EFSE), a structured debt vehicle which channels long-term capital for on-lending to MSMEs through qualified banks, MFIs, and other NBFIs in 15 countries in the region. The proceeds from IFC’s investment will support the fund’s on-lending to MSMEs, including 40% to women-owned MSMEs.

**WOMEN’S HOUSING FINANCE IN CHILE**

IFC committed a senior loan of $200 million to Santander Chile to support the expansion of the bank’s mortgage portfolio, with 100% of the proceeds to be used for women’s housing finance. The financing aims to address Chile’s housing finance gap by enhancing access to housing loans for women, addressing the housing deficit, inadequate living conditions, and gender disparities in financial access.