

IFC & Gender

At a Glance

Women working as entrepreneurs, employees, suppliers and leaders are an engine of economic growth and opportunity. For example, it is estimated that the GDP of India could increase by about [25 percent](#) if both genders were fully engaged in the workforce. By strengthening women's roles in the private sector, IFC, a member of the World Bank Group, develops gender-smart solutions that help to transform local and global markets.

- **Women as leaders:** Gender-diverse corporate boards promote competitiveness. A recent McKinsey report shows that teams that have a [40 to 60 percent ratio](#) of men to women produce stronger results than those of less gender-diverse teams.
- **Women as entrepreneurs:** Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) with female ownership represent 30 to 37 percent (8–10 million) of all SMEs in emerging markets. These businesses have unmet financial needs of up to [\\$300 billion](#)—their biggest barrier to growth and development.
- **Women as employees:** Women make up 40 percent of the global workforce, although the percentage of the world's women who are entering the labor force has [fallen by 2 percent](#) in the past two decades. Many of the sectors that are critical for economic growth in some of the poorest countries, such as agriculture, textiles, and tourism, rely heavily on women's employment.¹
- **Women as consumers:** The financial power of women is expanding, much of it in emerging markets. Women make [80 percent of buying decisions](#) on consumer goods.

There has been some progress in closing the gender gap in education and health, but widespread gender disparities in economic opportunities continue:

- Of 143 countries examined by 2014 [World Bank Group research](#), 79 limit the kind of work women can do. Twenty-eight have 10 or more legal differences between the genders, which can hinder women's economic opportunities.²
- Shouldering more family responsibilities—household chores, caring for children and aging parents—women often [risk their jobs](#) by taking time away from paid employment.

What IFC is Doing

IFC provides investment and advisory services to promote business opportunities for women:

- Increasing **access to finance** through its [Banking on Women](#) (BoW) initiative. As of February 2015, IFC has invested in 29 BoW projects, in nearly 20 countries, with commitments totaling \$798 million, of which \$390 million was mobilized from other lenders
- Reducing **gender-based barriers** in the business environment, working with the World Bank Group
- Creating partnerships, such as [SheWorks](#), with IFC clients to enhance **working conditions** for women, including sponsorship programs, flexible schedules, and gender-diverse management
- Supporting **business skills training** for women business owners
- Defining the women's market, their potential roles as employees, and the **business case** for increasing women's participation in the insurance industry
- Improving corporate governance—including clients' appointments of women to their boards
- Working with clients to advance women in their [supply chains](#)

Examples

- **Access to Finance: IFC works with financial institutions** to reach the women's market.
 - IFC's [Banking on Women](#) strategy focuses on regions and countries with good conditions for SMEs and large numbers of female entrepreneurs. BoW develops innovative approaches, such as the release of a first Women's Bond in 2013 and the first [internet-based gender-finance](#) program in China, launched with Ant Financial Services Group, an affiliate of the internet marketplace Alibaba.
 - In January 2015, IFC announced that [IFC is providing](#) Ant Credit a loan of RMB500 million, to enable the Group to expand its lending to women entrepreneurs, who often face difficulties

¹ *Gender at Work*, http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/Gender/GenderAtWork_web.pdf

² *Women, Business, and the Law 2014*, <http://wbl.worldbank.org/>.

in obtaining loans. Many of Ant Credit's clients are women who run businesses on Alibaba's online marketplaces.

- **Analysis and research:** Drawing on the information gathered by [WINvest](#), a partnership to promote women's employment in the private sector, IFC is addressing a lack of gender-disaggregated data on gender in the workplace.
 - **The [Women, Business and the Law](#) report**—a World Bank Group research publication—evaluates laws and regulations that limit women's economic enfranchisement. The report informs policy discussions, legislative decisions, and initiatives to empower women economically.
- **Partnerships:** IFC was a founding member of the [Global Banking Alliance for Women](#), which brings together 41 financial institutions committed to reaching and extending the women's market for capital in 135 countries.
- **Business Skills Training for women entrepreneurs:** Strengthening the management skills of owners, managers, and staff of SMEs, *Business Edge*—a training system backed by IFC and delivered by certified local trainers—sets a new standard. Since the beginning of the program, about one-third of the total 81,000 people trained were women. Last year alone, the program trained 3,880 women.
- **Employment:** Launched at the Clinton Global Initiative 2014 Annual Meeting, [SheWorks](#) is a global, private-sector program focused on women's employment. A partnership with ILO, Global Compact, EDGE Certified Foundation, and more than 13 leading companies, *SheWorks* has the goal of enhancing quality employment opportunities for more than 300,000 women worldwide.
- **Board Diversity:** IFC promotes diversity on boards and, through its programs on corporate governance, supports training for women executives and board members. IFC aims to increase the share of women candidates it nominates to boards to at least 30 percent by the end of FY 2015.
- **Policy and Standards:** Gender is addressed in IFC's 2012 [Performance Standards](#), which call for evaluating the gender-differentiated impact of IFC projects and promoting an inclusive consultation processes.
- **Internal Diversity:** In February 2015, IFC signed a new [Diversity and Inclusion Compact](#) that sets targets for internal gender and ethnic diversity over the next three years. IFC leadership believes that variety of thought, perspective, and experience promote better decision-making and innovation among employees.

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For more information: www.ifc.org/gender

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