

# WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP ACCELERATOR

## Women's Entrepreneurship Accelerator Publication Establishes the Business Case for Gender-Responsive Procurement

*Evidence-based Advocacy Brief calls on the private sector to adopt gender-responsive procurement strategies and integrate women-owned, led and gender-responsive businesses into value chains as a vehicle for advancing businesses' economic goals and social value in line with the Sustainable Development Goals.*

**NEW YORK** (May 5, 2022) – The Women's Entrepreneurship Accelerator (WEA) today announced the publication of an Advocacy Brief titled "**Procurement's strategic value: Why gender-responsive procurement makes business sense**" which presents compelling evidence of the benefits for strengthening the participation of women in private sector supply chains in realizing inclusive economic growth and sustainable development.

Developed by UN Women and funded by Mary Kay Inc. in support of WEA, the Advocacy Brief highlights the rollback on progress in achieving gender equality as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as how increasing levels of economic insecurity, supply chain interruptions and unprecedented climate and environmental shocks have a disproportionate impact on women given their unequal position in society.

The publication echoes previous studies that show that economies have better opportunities to grow and are more resilient to crises if women and men have equal rights.<sup>1</sup> However, huge challenges remain. Women entrepreneurs continue to face many obstacles including lack of access to capital on both domestic and international markets; fewer entrepreneurship networks compared with men; and policies that discourage female labor market participation.<sup>2</sup> **Globally, while one in three businesses are owned by women,<sup>3</sup> women only win an estimated one percent of the global spend of large corporations.<sup>4</sup>** Unequal gender laws also hinder women's economic opportunity. For instance, nearly 2.4 billion women of working age still do not enjoy the same economic rights as men.<sup>5</sup> Despite these statistics, women entrepreneurs remain a solution for many challenges the world faces today and the evidence shows there is a direct correlation between an increase in women entrepreneurship and economic growth, sustainable development, and more inclusive and resilient societies.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> World Development Report. 2012: Gender Equality and Development: <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/4391>.

<sup>2</sup> European Commission and OECD Policy Brief on Women's Entrepreneurship. 2017: <https://www.oecd.org/cfe/smes/Policy-Brief-on-Women-s-Entrepreneurship.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> World Bank. 2020. Enterprise Surveys, World Bank Gender Data Portal: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/data/datatopics/gender>

<sup>4</sup> Vazquez, E.A. and A.J. Sherman. 2013. Buying for Impact: How to Buy from Women and Change the World. Charleston, USA: Advantage

<sup>5</sup> World Bank Group. 2022.. Women, Business and the Law 2022. Washington, DC: World Bank

<sup>6</sup> UN Women Facts and Figures. Economic Empowerment: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/economic-empowerment/facts-and-figures>



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The data presented in the Advocacy Brief outline how **the adoption of gender-responsive (GRP) policies and practices** through procurement processes is **a strategic lever to mitigate the impact of the structural barriers women face and at the same time improve businesses and strengthen economies**. The Advocacy Brief cautions that failing to adopt GRP is a wasted opportunity. The evidence is clear. Reducing gender inequalities is good for business and is smart economics.

*“Gender-responsive procurement affects corporate profitability, risk mitigation, innovation, and sustainability. When women entrepreneurs are excluded from the procurement pipeline, companies risk leaving a considerable amount of talent, creativity, and expertise on the table. GRP is a winning business strategy as well as a powerful catalyst for change,”* said **Deborah Gibbins**, Chief Operating Officer, Mary Kay, Inc., and inceptor of WEA.

To inform the Advocacy Brief, UN Women engaged over **350 stakeholders in 2021, of which over 150 private sector companies were represented, and incorporated 7 case studies on companies’ procurement journeys** to create an evidence base for why businesses should adopt gender-responsive procurement. Stakeholder engagement took the form of interviews, a survey and a community of practice, which benefitted from dissemination across a wide range of networks, including the membership and networks of UN Global Compact’s (UNGC).

Companies reported that GRP leads to:

- Increased revenue and reduced procurement spend,
- Greater supplier availability and resilience,
- Strengthened brand reputation,
- More innovation and adaptability,
- Improved service delivery due to greater agility, and
- Strengthened markets through local economic development and inclusive growth.

As the Advocacy Brief notes “inclusive and sustainable development is paramount for businesses seeking to both stabilize themselves in a volatile economy and benefit from its future growth. Widening gender inequalities hurt all companies, including women entrepreneurs vital to robust and resilient supply chains and the businesses that rely on them.”

Reflecting the increased focus on environmental, social and governance (ESG) issues by companies, the Advocacy Brief notes how “the implementation of GRP allows companies to practice and institutionalize ESG values and importantly contribute to women’s empowerment and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Through the adoption of GRP principles, businesses can make progress towards multiple goals, including gender equality (SDG 5) and reduced inequalities (SDG 10) in addition to responsible consumption and production (SDG 12), eliminating poverty (SDG 1) and decent work and economic growth (SDG 8).”



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*“Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals is not something that can be done by women alone, or by business alone, or by government alone. The only way for us to be able to really make progress is if all – business included – work together towards a common purpose,”* said **Anita Bhatia**, Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director of UN Women.

Through the release of this report WEA calls on the private sector to adopt GRP strategies and integrate women into global value chains as a vehicle to advance the SDGs. This makes business sense while at the same time advances women’s economic empowerment which benefits economies and societies at large.

The Advocacy Brief is available [here](#).

## **About the Women’s Entrepreneurship Accelerator**

The Women’s Entrepreneurship Accelerator (WEA) is a multi-stakeholder partnership on women’s entrepreneurship established during UNGA 74. It convenes six UN agencies, International Labour Organization (ILO), International Trade Centre (ITC), International Telecommunication Union (ITU), UN Development Programme (UNDP), UN Global Compact (UNGC), UN Women and Mary Kay Inc. to empower 5 million women entrepreneurs by 2030. The ultimate goal of the initiative is to maximize the development impact of women entrepreneurship in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by creating an enabling ecosystem for women entrepreneurs around the world. The Accelerator exemplifies the transformational power of a multi-partnership of unique magnitude to harness the potential of women entrepreneurs. Learn more at [we-accelerate](#). Follow us: Twitter ([We\\_Accelerator](#)), Instagram ([@we\\_accelerator](#)), Facebook ([@womensentrepreneurshipaccelerator](#)), LinkedIn ([@womensentrepreneurshipaccelerator](#))

