

AFRICAN WOMEN'S ECONOMIC SUMMIT: INVESTING DIFFERENTLY IN WOMEN

18-20 March 2010

The Windsor Hotel, Nairobi, Kenya

In the words of a Chinese proverb, "Women hold up half the sky," yet their faces and voices in shaping the destiny of the African continent are neither seen nor heard. The African Development Bank (AfDB) and the New Faces New Voices (NFNV) network will host an African Women's Economic Summit in 2010 as a platform upon which to engage with key stakeholders to ensure that women contribute to the decisions that are shaping the overhaul of the global financial system.

Taking advantage of the global financial crisis, the time is right for women to take centre stage in defining policies that are more inclusive of female participation in the financial sector. Why does this matter?

According to a new study by the Boston Consulting Group, most new income growth in the post-recession world will come from women. This represents an estimated \$5 trillion in new female earning power in the coming years. That is twice the size of the emerging markets of China and India combined.

Women tend to save more than men and spend more of their money on education, health, and the welfare of their families. A recent study demonstrated that poor women, given an opportunity to save, are able to improve their means of economic livelihood and the well-being of their families. It is also a known fact that businesses run by women, or corporations with a higher number of women in senior and executive position, are better performers.

The developmental impact of harnessing the economic power of women can yield significant benefits for emerging economies. African women are ready and able to take on this challenge. A demographic transition is already underway in Africa that is leading to lower birth rates, higher life expectancy rates and improved educational standards and literacy for women.

There are now more women entering the labour force, and the share of household spending controlled by women in Africa is increasing, in line with global trends. As a result, African women are demanding more of a say in how their resources are used which, in turn, is propelling women to take up leadership positions in the political and economic sphere to better shape their own destiny.

The paradigm of the global financial landscape has shifted and it is opportune for new faces and voices to make the world realize that women are integral to the revival of the global economy. It is time to amplify women's voices and multiply their faces in re-shaping the global financial system.

African countries must pursue inclusive financial sector policies, which are accessible and therefore enable the participation of greater numbers of women. At the same time, there is a need to elevate women to be decision-makers in processes that govern the workings of financial institutions at the local, national, regional and international levels. We also need to harness the economic potential of women by ensuring their access to appropriate, affordable and sustainable financial services, at all income levels.

The Summit will bring together African leaders in the financial sector, policy makers, regulators and key decision makers TO FORMULATE ACTIONABLE AND MEASURABLE INTERVENTIONS TO SHAPE Africa's financial system so that women are made an integral part of its architecture. The summit aims to inspire action with innovation and commitment from participants and be more than just a mere 'talk shop'. It will recognize women as a new emerging market and call for new ways to tap into their potential.

Summit objectives and outcomes:

The Africa Women's Economic Summit will:

- Identify the issues that limit women's access to financial products and services
- Explore the business opportunities and innovations to expand the reach and scale of financial services to women at all income levels.
- Cultivate the leadership required to introduce new ways of thinking, and build an African financial system that is more inclusive of women.
- Identify measures that will ensure women take their rightful place as decision makers within the governance and management structures of national, regional, continental and global financial institutions.

The following are the expected immediate outcomes of the summit:

1. Build consensus amongst all attendees

Consensus will be built on how to invest differently in women, to move them from the margins to centre stage, both as decision-makers within financial institutions and as consumers of financial products.

2. Set goals for change

While acknowledging that barriers still exist that limit the participation of women in the financial sector, areas where change and innovation are needed and have proven to be successful will be identified. Key players in the financial sector will have to outline concrete goals to be achieved, and actions to be taken to significantly boost women's participation. The crafting of these goals and actions will be a shared process so that all stakeholders take ownership and support the intended outcomes.

3. Make concrete pledges

Institutions will be called upon to make pledges on concrete and practical actions they will take towards achieving the Summit goals and desired outcomes. These pledges will be time bound, and they will be specific to the different stakeholder groups within the financial sector: namely Regulators and Policy Makers, Financial Institutions, and Development Institutions, and business and professional bodies. New Faces New Voices and the African Development Bank will coordinate follow-up to the Summit, and ensure that these "drivers of change" report on their achievements at the next Summit in 2012.

4. Strengthen the voice of African women in reshaping African and global financial systems

Concrete steps to build on existing women's networks to create more leverage for women to shape the agenda and participate in decision-making in the economic sphere will be defined. We need to identify ways to amplify the voices of women in shaping the discussions in international bodies on creating a more sustainable global financial system. Expanding the reach and membership of NFNV, as well as refining its function and operations are key outcomes of the Summit.

New Faces New Voices

New Faces New Voices (NFNV) is an association of African professional women in Finance and Business across the continent. Under the patronage of the African Women's Foresight Network, the group is committed to seeing women in Africa assuming key roles in the financial sector and contributing to the decisions that shape the African continent. In the words of founder, Grace Machel, "nothing about us – without us". NFNV advocates for the empowerment of women because of their significant positive socio-economic impact on Africa in all sectors. The financial crisis has provided an opportunity for the group to push for measures that will harness and open the road for women to be key players in building a robust global financial system. Inefficiency breeds opportunity so we should take advantage of the global financial crisis to reshape the financial system and invest differently in women.

The African Development Bank

The African Development Bank (AfDB) has a strong commitment and vast experience in promoting the economic empowerment of African women. The AfDB, as the leading development finance institution in Africa, can guide Central Banks and Ministries of Finance to adopt more progressive ways of responding to the global financial crisis. The Bank can use its leverage to ensure that more women are integrated into the financial sector in meaningful ways. Through its interaction with international financial institutions, such as the World Bank and the IMF, the AfDB is also able to lobby for the greater inclusion of African perspectives in international bodies that regulate global and African markets. Mr. Kaberuka, the President of the AfDB has committed his institution's support to NFNV; to finding new and innovative approaches for promoting economic equality and women's full participation in the shaping of Africa's future economic and financial architecture; and to making their voices heard in creating a diverse, vibrant, stable and sustainable financial system throughout the continent.

Themes

The Summit will focus on five key themes:

1. Reshaping Africa's financial sector: the business case for a gender framework

The facts on women's participation in the financial sector will be presented from the perspective of women as users of financial services and decision makers within the financial system. The evidence will seek to demonstrate the barriers that women face, measures to address these, and the value in tapping into the potential of women as key players in the financial sector.

Key focus areas:

Under this theme we want to provide credible data that demonstrates:

- The current role women play in the financial sector and trends on how women are influencing the development of the financial system.
- The gaps in their participation in the financial sector.
- The characteristics of women's access to financial services in terms of scale, depth, and quality of the services and products, as well as the opportunities that this market represents.

2. Overcoming the challenges to harnessing the economic power of women

Are social values, religious norms, cultural heritage and institutional practices an impediment to harnessing the economic power of women? Under this theme we want to delve into societal values and cultural practices that constrain women's access to finance and lead to their marginalization as decision-makers. We also need to identify institutional barriers that fail to address their needs and contribution.

Key focus areas:

- What is the influence of culture and values in determining women's participation in the financial sector.
- How can the removal of cultural and institutional barriers help to harness the economic potential of women.
- How do we create an environment that supports and respects gender parity and women's aspirations.

3. The role of women in reshaping the global financial system.

The global financial crisis has caused a paradigm shift in shaping the global financial architecture. African women need to make their voices heard in discussions on making markets work better for less developed countries and the poor. The discussion will focus on how safe and robust financial systems can be built while expanding and deepening their reach to all segments of society.

Key focus areas:

- Identify the trends in regulatory reform in the global financial sector and discuss the impact these reforms will have on access of women in Africa across all income brackets.
- What regulatory and policy responses are needed to build a financial system that is more inclusive of women.

- How do we develop coordinated strategies to amplify the voices of African women in this debate.

4. Financial services – Innovations to tap into the women’s market segment.

The global trend to tighten financial regulations may stifle innovation and reduce competition in the financial sector to the detriment of women, low income households, and small enterprises. The discussion will focus on innovative strategies and services targeted at women as a distinct and growing market segment. Responses from both the financial services providers and policy makers in supporting this innovation will be identified.

Key focus areas:

- Characteristics of demand for financial services, i.e. what do women want, and whether women should be viewed as a distinct market segment.
- Examples of recent innovations, e.g. m-pesa, and what this has meant for women.
- How to expand the scale of outreach of financial services to women.

5. Fast tracking women’s leadership in the financial sector

Recognizing that women are important economic and social agents of change and growth, this topic will discuss the challenges women face in assuming leadership positions in the financial sector and how to attract and sustain their participation within corporations, regulatory agencies and policy institutions. It will also discuss the support structures required to facilitate greater access of women to financial services such as consumer financial literacy and business development programmes.

Key focus areas:

- Initiatives required to increase the participation of women in the financial sector in significant numbers.
- Strategies to attract and promote women in leadership positions.
- Cultivating the leadership required to introduce new ways of thinking to develop financial systems that are more inclusive of women.

Participants

Participation will be by invitation only. African and global leaders that can influence change in their respective jurisdictions will be invited from the following stakeholder categories:

- ◇ Financial Service Providers
- ◇ Regulatory Bodies

- ◇ Development Institutions
- ◇ Think Tanks and Advocacy Groups
- ◇ Government
- ◇ Prominent men and women in business and professional organizations