



Society for International Development
Washington Chapter

The Business Role in Women's Empowerment: Accelerating Inclusive Growth



EVENT SUMMARY

Where: SID-Washington | 1129 20th Street NW, Washington, D.C.

When: Friday, March 8, 2019 | 10:00 AM - 11:30 AM

Moderator

[Shamarukh Mohiuddin](#) | *Principal Associate, Nathan Associates*

Speakers

[Maria Luisa Boyce](#) | *Director, Global Public Affairs, UPS*

[Ira Hersh](#) | *Director of Partnerships, Gap Inc and Gap Foundation*

[Sarah Glass](#) | *Acting Director, Center for Transformational Partnerships, USAID*

To see event photos, please click [here](#)



Society for International Development, Washington Chapter
1129 20th Street NW, Suite 500, Washington, D.C.



Event Description

How are global companies aligning their business strategy and social impact efforts with the Sustainable Development Goals, especially Goal 5 (Gender Equality)? Where can partnerships accelerate impact and how can the donor community work with business? The panel will share best practices in supporting women and girls, leveraging business tools to support the SDGs, partnering for broader impact, and the best areas of collective investment in the next 5 years.

Key Takeaways

1 Why invest in women?

Ira Hersh (Gap Inc.) began by saying that Gap Inc. believes in a need for more equality, and in the importance of building gender equality into the “DNA” of the work culture. Maria Luisa Boyce (UPS) stated that it’s important for companies to identify how to work women. Maria also gave the audience some statistics found by UPS of why it is important to invest in women. Namely, only 1 out of 5 businesses that export are led by women, and women exporters are 1.2x more productive than male exporting firms. Sarah Glass (USAID) added that USAID understands that it is vital to fully maximize the talents that women can bring to the workplace. Sarah noted that it’s important to invest in women by including them in leadership roles in civil society, government, and businesses.

2 The barriers of women-led businesses

Maria Luisa stated that women-owned businesses are not able to tap into international markets for many reasons: cultural barriers, lack of IT skills, lack of resources and information, and the difference between services versus goods. Sarah Glass added that women face barriers that men do not have to face. For example, USAID is aware that when supporting women, the correct technical assistance will differ in unique ways. Sarah stated that in some territories, it is much harder for women to secure a loan, due to the fact that women have less collateral than men. Thus, even though a woman-owned business may be a better investment, women would not be able to get a loan because they do not have the collateral.

3 Focus on personal advancement

Ira Hersh stated that it is vital to not only focus on work advancement, but to also focus on personal advancement in the workplace. In 2007, Gap Inc. launched the Personal Advancement & Career Enhancement (P.A.C.E) program to support women in the global apparel industry. P.A.C.E is an innovative educational learning program that positively impacts women by providing them with foundational skills and support that will help them advance both at work and in their personal lives. Gap Inc.’s program wanted to help their workers be both productive at work, and navigate their lives at home. P.A.C.E focuses on communication, time and stress management, and problem-solving skills to assist in providing agency and a voice for their beneficiaries. Ira stated that without these three skills, it would be much harder for someone to advocate for themselves.

4 Investing in women-owned small businesses is vital

Maria Luisa Boyce believes that helping small businesses is important to women’s empowerment. UPS has assisted with women-owned small businesses by providing workshops and webinars about supply chain processes, customs regulations, and export opportunities. Additionally, UPS investigates existing regulatory barriers that hinder women exporters through information reports and policy dialogues with lawmakers. Sarah Glass agreed, adding that USAID has another PACE program that focuses on small businesses that need support. USAID learned that small business women entrepreneurs succeeded 1.5x more than male counterparts, however they were not having the same success at getting access to capital. Through the USAID PACE program, USAID works with more than 50 private sector partners to help create technical assistance and resources so that these small businesses receive the support that they need.