

**BUSINESS FIGHTS POVERTY: REBUILD BETTER**

## THREE INSIGHTS

# WOMEN AND THE NET-ZERO ECONOMY: BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES IN SUPPLY CHAINS

DATE: **THURSDAY 23/09**

THEME: **CLIMATE**

FORMAT: **WEBINAR**

### SPEAKERS

- **Cristina Bortes**, Director, Sustainability and International Development, PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP
- **Megha Desai**, Senior Coordinator, Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA)
- **Sheetal Nischal**, Sustainability Projects Manager, Primark

- **Sunita Pitamber**, Associate Director, Gender Mainstreaming and Access to Services, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development

- **Alison Ward**, CEO, CottonConnect

**Moderator:**

Alice Allan, Collaboration Director, Business Fights Poverty

**EVENT  
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IN THIS WEBINAR HOSTED WITH WORK AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN AND THE UK FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE, OUR PANELLISTS DISCUSSED THE CRUCIAL PLACE OF WOMEN IN CLIMATE RESILIENCE SOLUTIONS, HOW PARTNERSHIPS ARE VITAL FOR THE PROMOTION OF EQUALITY AND SUSTAINABILITY, AND WHY STRUCTURAL CHANGE IS POSSIBLE.

FINALLY, OUR SPEAKERS TOUCHED ON TOPICS RELATED TO INCLUSIVITY, ADVOCACY, AND TRAINING PROGRAMMES FOR WOMEN, AS WELL AS THE ROLE OF COMPANIES IN FOSTERING COOPERATION.

### KEY INSIGHTS

#### **1 MAKE WOMEN THE CENTRE OF CLIMATE RESILIENCE SOLUTIONS**

Cristina Bortes explained that not only are women overrepresented in the informal economy while shouldering a disproportionate share of the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, but 80% of people displaced by climate change are women. She reminded us that companies that are more sustainable and diverse deliver higher profits. Therefore, governments, companies, and other organisations need to recognise that putting women at the centre of their sustainability and inclusivity strategies will, in fact, benefit everyone. Businesses that take the profile of their workforce seriously, engage in upskilling

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programmes focused on women, and adopt equitable standards for procurement policies are investing in a better future.

## **2 PARTNERSHIPS ARE POWERFUL INSTRUMENTS TO PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY AND SUSTAINABILITY**

Our speakers emphasised the importance of partnerships to train women farmers in sustainable practices, give women a seat at the decision table, and overcome financial challenges. Alison Ward spoke of partnerships that aim to empower

**PROMOTING EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES  
FOR WOMEN DEPENDS ON LONG-TERM  
INVESTMENTS THAT ALLOW REALITY  
ON THE GROUND TO CHANGE.**

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THAT INVOLVES COMPANIES,  
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women by offering them business training and helping them open bank accounts so they have more agency over their incomes. On this topic, Megha Desai gave testimony on how a collaborative initiative between SEWA, CottonConnect, and Primark made a real difference for her enterprise. Through the partnership, she learned how to use less pesticides and fertilisers on her farm while increasing profits. Additionally, due to the partnership's network that connects different villages, Megha was able to share her best practices with other farmers who then began to benefit from higher profitability as well.

## **3 STRUCTURAL CHANGES TAKE TIME, BUT THEY ARE NOT IMPOSSIBLE**

According to Sheetal Nischal, one of the main challenges in enhancing gender equality throughout supply chains is changing social norms. Promoting equal opportunities for women depends on long-term investments that allow reality on the ground to change. It takes a collective effort that involves companies, governments, international institutions, and civil society organisations—and top leadership in the private and public sectors must also be onboard. As Sunita Pitamber pointed out, the business case for gender equality and environmental sustainability is established and well known. More than ever, companies need supply chains that are resilient. The business community must advocate for structural changes that make societies fairer and greener if we truly want to rebuild better.

### **RESOURCES**

- [PwC: International Development](#)
- [PwC Commits to Net Zero by 2030, Globally](#)
- [Self-Employed Women's Association](#)
- [Primark Cares: Planet](#)
- [The EBRD at 30: The Bank Steps Up Its Climate Ambition](#)
- [FCDO's Work and Opportunities for Women Programme](#)
- [Women and the Net Zero Economy: A Briefing on Changes in Garment, Agriculture and Energy Supply Chains](#)
- [Workforce of the Future: The Green World in 2030](#)
- [EBRD Green Cities](#)
- [EBRD Women in Business](#)
- [Primark Partnership with CottonConnect and The Self-Employed Women's Association Announces Third Year Programme Results](#)