



BUSINESS FIGHTS POVERTY ONLINE 2020: REBUILD BETTER

FIVE INSIGHTS: EXPLORING THE COMPLEXITY OF GENDER INEQUALITY IN 2020

DATE: **THURSDAY 16/07**

THEME: **EQUITY**

FORMAT: **WEBINAR**

SPEAKERS

■ **Sandra Fontano**, Senior
Global Sustainability Manager
- Gender Equality, **Unilever**

■ **Ashika Gunasena**, CEO, **Chrysalis**

■ **Esther Kwaku**, Founder and
CEO, **The Nerve Network**

■ **Hayley Morgan**, Senior Global
Programme Coordinator,
Better Cotton Initiative

■ **Moderator:** Hester Le Roux, Senior
Economic Advisor, Policy and
Advocacy, **CARE International UK**

IN THIS SESSION, HOSTED WITH **CARE INTERNATIONAL UK**, OUR PANELLISTS DISCUSSED THE THEME OF THE DAY, EQUITY, IN RELATION TO THE COMPLEXITIES OF TACKLING GENDER INEQUALITY TODAY. OUR SPEAKERS TOUCHED ON TOPICS RELATED TO SUSTAINABLE BUSINESSES AND THE ROLE OF PARTNERSHIPS IN ADVANCING GENDER EQUALITY, HOW COVID-19 HAS BROUGHT RISKS OF SETBACKS BUT ALSO OPENED UP IMPORTANT OPPORTUNITIES, AND WHY INCLUSION AND EDUCATION REMAIN KEY MECHANISMS OF STRUCTURAL CHANGE.

KEY INSIGHTS

COVID-19 HAS HAD A DISPROPORTIONATE IMPACT ON WOMEN AND HAS EXPOSED DEEP-ROOTED INEQUALITIES IN SOCIETIES AROUND THE WORLD

Research conducted by **CARE International UK** has shown that women have been more exposed to infection, making up the majority of front-line health workers, are in the most vulnerable positions in workforces and value chains, have faced a surge in domestic violence, take on the burden of unpaid care, and have been under-represented in decision-making.

WOMEN HAVE BEEN IN THE FRONT LINE OF TACKLING THE PANDEMIC AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

Women groups in Sri Lanka have given an extremely important contribution to the national effort against COVID-19, particularly in local communities, explained Ashika Gunasena. In many cases, these women were the first help to arrive in marginalised places and identified the needs of the populations in the face of the pandemic. They produced and delivered personal protective equipment, masks, hand sanitizers, and medical uniforms for the most vulnerable based on their entrepreneurship, collective action and thoughtful leadership.

EMPOWERING WOMEN AND GIRLS IS ONE OF THE MOST EFFECTIVE CATALYSTS FOR UNLOCKING ECONOMIC GROWTH.



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EMPOWERING WOMEN IS A CATALYST FOR ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND GROWTH

“Empowering women and girls is one of the most effective catalysts for unlocking economic growth”, argued Sandra Fontano. Thus, along with the moral imperative, there is also an economic motivation that must be taken seriously given the negative shock of COVID-19 on jobs and business activity. It is essential that companies act to enhance diversity and the economic inclusion of women if we really want to rebuild better.

THERE IS A HIDDEN CHALLENGE IN TACKLING GENDER INEQUALITY, WHICH IS THE FACT THAT MOST OF THE SENIOR EXECUTIVE POSITIONS IN COMPANIES ARE OCCUPIED BY MEN.

SUPPORTING WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IS AN IMPORTANT DRIVER FOR WIDER SOCIAL IMPACT

Esther Kwaku gave examples of women in Uganda that became entrepreneurs, inspiration for their peers, and employers after they got someone to listen to them and help with some obstacles that they could not overcome alone. Similarly, there are organisations like **The Nerve Network** that invest in partnerships among businesses and entrepreneurs that are aligned with the promotion of decent work and gender equality in local communities. Support for these sorts of effort need to be stepped up as we rebuild better.

WE MUST ENSURE WOMEN'S VOICES ARE HEARD AT SENIOR LEVELS IN BUSINESS

There is a hidden challenge in tackling gender inequality, which is the fact that most of the senior executive positions in companies are occupied by men. So, it is common that they are the ones responsible for designing strategies to reduce gender inequality, sometimes even without consulting women. In order to correct that, there are some initiatives to train and educate Board members and executives about the importance of truly enabling women's voice and participation.

RESOURCES

- **Seven ways to make a positive impact on gender equality:** <https://www.unilever.com/news/news-and-features/Feature-article/2020/seven-ways-to-make-a-positive-impact-on-gender-equality.html>
- **The Nerve Network:** <https://www.wegotnerve.com>
- **Better Cotton Initiative:** <https://bettercotton.org>
- **CARE International UK:** <https://www.careinternational.org.uk>
- **Chrysalis Catalyzing Change:** <https://www.chrysaliscatalyz.com>