



24 Gender equality beyond workplace

Innovative women-led businesses creating positive impact across Latin America’s entrepreneurial scene

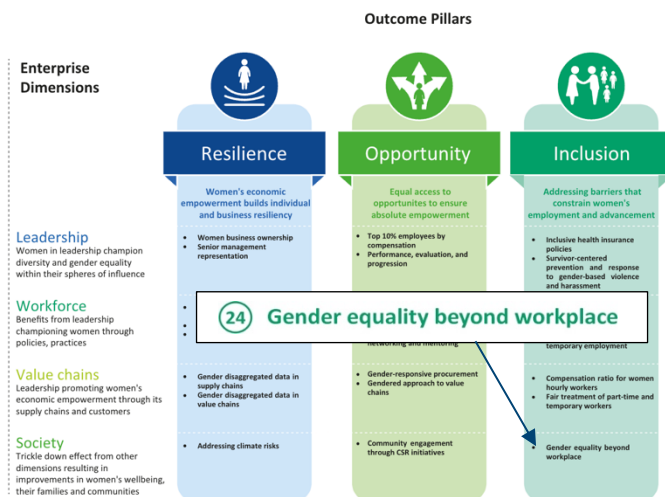
While the current state of gender equality inspires mixed emotions, a growing community of women and men are challenging outdated norms and practices through committed leadership in start-ups, large organisations, boardrooms and beyond. The ripple effects are noticeable, and potentially transformational.

Seasoned observers note that most social and political change takes years – yet when it occurs, it seemingly happens overnight. Major examples include the Arab Spring, Occupy Wall Street, the #MeToo movement and #BlackLivesMatter, where groundswells of anger, frustration and distress coalesced to topple dictators, directors, bureaucrats and other influential figures. Public awareness, in some case the status quo, changed dramatically.

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Bestselling book *Cascades: How to Create a Movement that Drives Transformational Change* is a granular exploration of transformation, from community and organisational levels to counterterrorism and political regime change. Author and innovation specialist, Mr Greg Satell, says when people see something’s working, they want to be involved, and they bring in others who can bring in others still.

“One of the most important things I learned about change while researching... *Cascades* is that it is non-linear and transmitted socially through networks,” Mr Satell wrote in *The Harvard Business Review* in 2023. “That’s why it’s so important to proceed carefully in the beginning, protecting an idea that is unproven and vulnerable, because failure of an initiative will proliferate and discredit the idea of change itself. Yet it also means that success can lead to even greater success, widening and deepening through those unseen connections in the ecosystem.”



When it comes to gender equality, transformation can seem far-off. The World Economic Forum warned last year that, at the current rate of progress, the overall gender gap would take 131 years to close.

On the ground, however, the picture is more nuanced and encouraging, with growing awareness among policymakers, leaders and investors of the compelling business case to prioritise women at work and beyond. Conversations might still be fragmented, but those unseen

connections are now occurring across ecosystems everywhere.



For Sweef Capital's Head of Impact Measurement and Management (IMM), Ms Brianna Losoya-Evora, it's vital that leaders understand the root causes of gender equality so they can take effective action to unlock women's

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broad potential. The complex nature of inequality mean solutions generally demand high levels of collaboration and collective commitment.

“Gendered social norms are deeply ingrained in attitudes, values, norms and beliefs that perpetuate harmful behaviours and create barriers for women and girls to realise their full potential,” Ms Losoya-Evora says. “Organisations can be powerful agents of change in their industry or community by walking the talk and advocating gender equality beyond the workplace. We need courageous leaders to use the evidence we already have about the benefits of supporting women and make the case more broadly, and publicly.”

Across the world, gender advocates are calling for urgent action on issues facing women such as uneven access to education, poor job quality, occupational segregation, lack of legal protections and bodily autonomy, and poor medical care. Addressing such problems, they say, delivers profound positive effects for men and boys as well as women and girls.

The Covid-19 pandemic, which disproportionately affected women, has paradoxically focused leaders' attention on new ways to drive sustainable economic growth, including funding innovative women-led businesses. Intersecting this trend is sharper shareholder attention on climate change impacts. Women are increasingly seen as effective climate stewards whose businesses tend to deliver social and environmental as well as commercial benefits.

That's a proposition embraced by venture capital firm Amplifica Capital, which invests seed capital in technology-based companies across Spanish-speaking Latin America that are founded by women or offer goods or services that improve women's lives (see breakout).

“In Latin America we see a lot of well-intentioned work focusing on vulnerable communities, which is important and women are often part of that,” says Amplifica Founder and CEO, Ms Anna Raptis. “Our narrative is very different. We're positioning ourselves to show women as creators of value, of wealth, rather than as beneficiaries. This is not philanthropy – we're looking at value creation.”

Ms Raptis says the impetus behind setting up Amplifica was to encourage women to invest in the change they wanted to see instead of delegating their financial decision-making to someone else, often a male financial adviser or partner. Amplifica's focus on investing in technology-driven companies, too, has been deliberate.

“When you're developing new technologies, who is making those investment decisions has a big impact on who receives the money,” Ms Raptis says. “So if women aren't at the table... their views, their vision, their voices, won't be heard. As women, we want to see companies with women CEOs or board members or that are actually meeting the needs of women. We want to invest in that.”

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Ms Raptis' background includes time in the energy sector and with the United Nations and the World Bank. Based in Mexico City, she sees huge opportunities for leapfrogging innovation because of digitisation and the region's high smart phone penetration.

As part of its outreach activities, Amplifica participates with catalytic innovation hubs such as Mexico's Tecnologico de Monterrey and champions storytelling that celebrates the diverse experiences of women entrepreneurs to counter narrow portrayals of success in a part of the world still plagued by male sexism and gender-based violence.

"I believe we can have a better world – and a better society – for everyone if we engage women more in the decision-making process," Ms Raptis says. "Women cannot just be on the sideline and not participating. How do we make that happen?"#

About the contributors



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Sign up [here](#) to Sweef Capital's Gender ROI™ Insight Series. An online forum on April 22nd will provide more information about the inclusion pillar and its dimensions. Register [here](#) – places are limited. Follow us on [LinkedIn](#) to keep in touch.



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Amplifica Capital – backing women’s ingenuity in tech businesses

Colombian-born entrepreneur Ms Martha Montoya knows how to think big and deliver.

Ms Montoya established agriculture and food supply chain data company Agtools in 2017 with the vision of becoming “the Bloomberg of produce”.

Harnessing machine learning and artificial intelligence, the platform collects and packages real-time government and institutional data on crops and commodities to enable better decision-making by farmers, traders, insurers and retailers along the supply chain. This improves performance and efficiency and reduces food waste and climate impacts.



Listed in business magazine *Forbes*’ 50 over 50: Innovation roll of honour, Ms Montoya exemplifies the calibre of Latin American women entrepreneurs whose potential Amplifica Capital invests in and celebrates.

For Amplifica’s Head of Impact and ESG, Andrea Ojeda, showcasing the experiences of accomplished women from diverse backgrounds is central to their work as a gender lens investor intent on system-level change.

“We actively work on it so that other funds, other entrepreneurs see there are lots of women who have been very successful in what they do,” Ms Ojeda says. “It helps change perceptions and the whole experience of women coming into the (investment) industry.”

Amplifica focuses on five investment areas: agtech, fintech, edtech, cleantech and women’s health. Its portfolio demonstrates the range of practical businesses women are developing to address critical local issues, such as Minus’ sustainable coffee alternative and Kolors’ accessible transportation solution. For Amplifica, a rising tide eventually lifts all boats.

“We want to celebrate women’s successes, their stories, because there are lots of people doing amazing things beyond what we invest in,” Ms Ojeda says. “I’m from Mexico City – I love Latin America. We have so much potential to show the world. We also have lots of problems, but problems that can be fixed. The impact of that will be amazing as we continue growing.”#

For more about Amplifica Capital, visit: <https://amplifica.capital/>. Check out Agtools at: <https://www.agtechttools.com/>