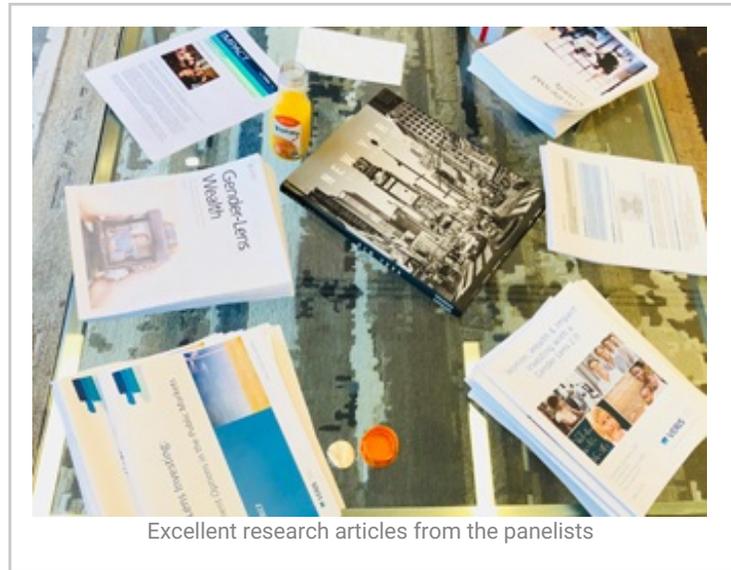


Sustainable Investing with a Gender Lens: Uncovering Investment Opportunities and Building on the Momentum

fwa.org/spotlight/sustainable-investing-with-a-gender-lens-uncovering-investment-opportunities-and-building-on-the-momentum/

Thursday evening, May 17, the Impact Investing Committee with the generous support of BMO Capital Markets hosted a high-level panel focused on **gender lens investing**. Representing private wealth management, institutional asset management and academia, the panel challenged the audience to:

- Drive gender equality by transferring capital to investments that improve the economic status and well-being of women and girls worldwide.
- Influence the capital markets to devise products that benefit women and girls
- Ask for Gender Equity products in 401Ks and personal investment holdings
- Review your investments and be active shareholders: use your equity power: vote YES on corporate resolutions that encourage more women on boards and the C-suite;
- Communicate with corporations accused of gender bias and voice your concerns;
- Encourage workplace diversity and the advancement of women in the workplace.



The panelists noted that investors and clients are requesting more investment products that align with their value system. In the “Gender Equity” investment space, since 2013 there has been an acceleration of public and private fund raising. In 2017, at least 7 products were launched in the public sphere, and 21 in private equity. The key investment strategies focus on leadership, inclusion, equality, parity, and diversity. Health, education, environmental issues, and technological solutions are also applied when screening for gender investments. Academic research too is showing that millennials and women want to invest in line with their values!

The panel delved into the barriers and challenges to improving the economic well-being of women. One panelist noted a non-profit’s Investment Policy Statement mandated that investment products should address the root causes of gender violence. They included in their portfolio a promissory note targeting clean energy for disadvantaged women. The investment provided women with clean cooking fuel and transmission of electricity to homes, allowing children to do homework at night. Another investment product they added provides

capital and training to agricultural businesses to enhance rural prosperity and targets women in agriculture. Gender violence and the role of the capital markets on creating justice, peace, and equality to combat this was also discussed.

The panelists highlighted the risks of not improving women's well-being. For example, sexual harassment too is becoming more widely appreciated as an investment risk. So now investors are looking at "culture" as an investment consideration.

The acceleration of academic and industry research available is proving that there is a positive correlation between gender diversity and measures of profitability; however, one panelist noted that if you take a closer look at this investment set, things can get blurry. The challenge now is can investing in public equities improve the lives of women? The academic voice noted "Yes..... but."

TO BE CONTINUED! The committee is planning to launch a half day event focused on Gender Equity Investing. We are gathering more research to help us identify the total number of women who can read globally; who work in corporations globally; who have access to any financing and who are on the 'Bottom of the Pyramid' globally, with no access to education or jobs. We continue on our journey.....

Comments from attendees:

My only regret is that the event had to end when it did; the discussion could have gone on for hours.

Congratulations for putting together a very compelling session on sustainable investing with a gender lens.

I learned a lot on the subject and really appreciated the tips we can all take to become active investors via our 401Ks.

Highlights



Guests mingling before the event



Audience enjoying the program and conversation



Moderator Manju Seal, setting the tone for a fabulous conversation



(l-r): Panelists – Sandra Hunt, Luisamaria Carlile, Eve Ellis, Manju Seal, and Stephen Freedman



(l-r): Manju Seal, Moderator; , Stacy Musi, FWA President, Nelun de S. Wijeyeratne , Impact Investing Committee Co-chair



Celebrating – Impact Investing committee members with panelists