



Empowering Women, Impacting Communities

Challenges facing women in the workforce

The United Nations, in its World's Women Report 2015, estimates that women and girls represent half of the poor in the world's developing regions. Women are more active as economic agents in Sub-Saharan Africa than anywhere else in the world, notes the African Development Bank (AfDB) in its Gender Equality Report for 2015. They perform the majority of agricultural activities, own a third of all firms and, in some countries, make up some 70% of employees. Over and above their income-earning activities, they are central to the household economy and the welfare of their families, and play a vital — if sometimes unacknowledged — leadership role in their communities and nations.

However, they are predominantly in low-value-added occupations that generate little economic return. They face an array of barriers that prevent them from moving into more productive pursuits. The AfDB report also notes that, while African women are highly entrepreneurial, it is largely survival-fuelled entrepreneurship in micro-enterprises as they lack formal employment options. Women can drive growth, but they face many hurdles such as lack of basic skills, lack of access to finance and the need to balance business and domestic obligations.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) reports that in sub-Saharan Africa, 74% of women in contrast to 61% of men are more likely to be employed in lower-paying, informal jobs. This leaves women prone to exploitation, low job security, intensive poverty and largely excluded from policy support programs.

Some studies have attributed MENA's low rates of female labor force participation in oil-exporting countries of MENA (the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates) to the nature of the oil industry. It has been argued that the economic structure, social norms, and institutional characteristics of oil-rich economies discourage women from formal sector work. Oil-rich countries tend to have undiversified private sectors characterised by male-dominated employment and large public sectors.

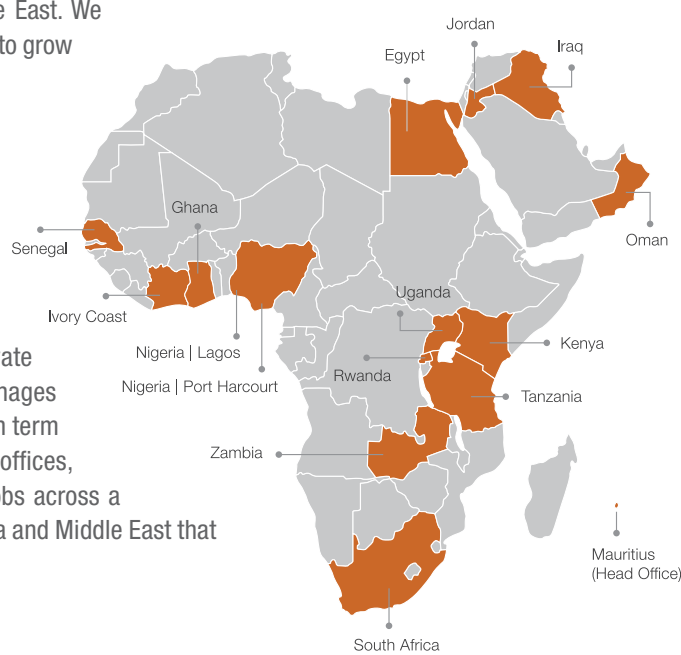
Nevertheless, it is notable that many countries in the region are net oil importers, such as Jordan, but still have rates of female labor force participation as low as those of oil-rich MENA countries.

GroFin, a pioneering development financier

GroFin is a pioneering development financier specialising in financing and supporting small and growing businesses (SGBs) across Africa and the Middle East. We combine medium term loan capital and specialised business support to grow small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in emerging markets.

By generating employment, strengthening value chains and building markets, our investments bring about inclusive economic growth and improved living conditions in the low and middle income countries that we operate in.

As a trusted partner with more than 30 international development finance institutions, development organisations and other private funders, GroFin has raised funding in excess of US\$ 500M that it manages through ten funds and programs. By successfully combining medium term loans and specialised business support delivered through our local offices, we have invested in over 600 SMEs and sustained over 95,000 jobs across a wide spectrum of business activities within the 15 countries in Africa and Middle East that we operate in.



GroFin empowering women across Africa & MENA

Women empowerment forms a core impact objective at GroFin that focuses on small and growing businesses in vital needs sectors such as education, healthcare, agri-business, manufacturing and key services to help women entrepreneurs make a difference to their communities.

GroFin's mission is aligned with the achievement of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goal 5 ('Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls') through its focus on women-led businesses and woman employment. GroFin has supported over 90 women-owned businesses till date and 30% of jobs that we sustain are held by women.

GroFin also joined forces with the Vital Voices Programme to help its women entrepreneurs lead positive change in their communities. In 2016, GroFin sponsored 12 clients for the VV GROW Fellowship, which is a highly competitive one-year accelerator program for women owners of small and medium sized businesses.

Moreover, GroFin's commitment to supporting women entrepreneurs is also echoed by its equal commitment to be a leader in gender equality. Over the last year, the number of employees at GroFin has risen from 135 to 150 and its diverse workforce originates from 19 different countries including the 15 countries across Africa and MENA where GroFin has local offices. The gender ratio of senior management positions is 43% women and is closely related to the total ratio of women employed in the business which is 42%.



GroFin Women Empowerment Outcomes & Impact

As at 31st December 2016



Investment in 93 SMEs owned by Women



175 SMEs with Women involved in senior management



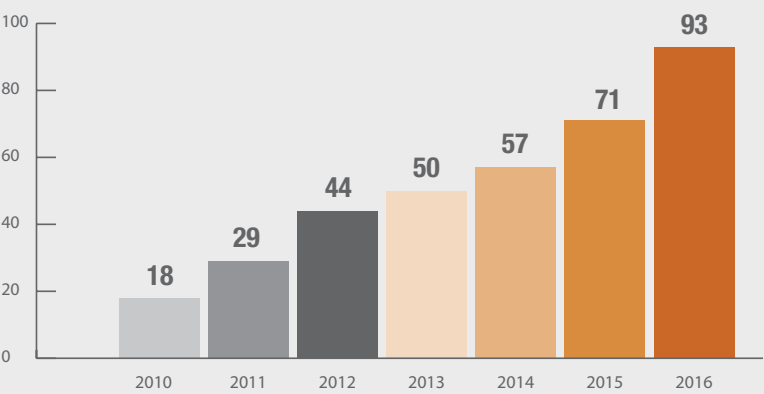
33% increase in Women Jobs post GroFin Investment



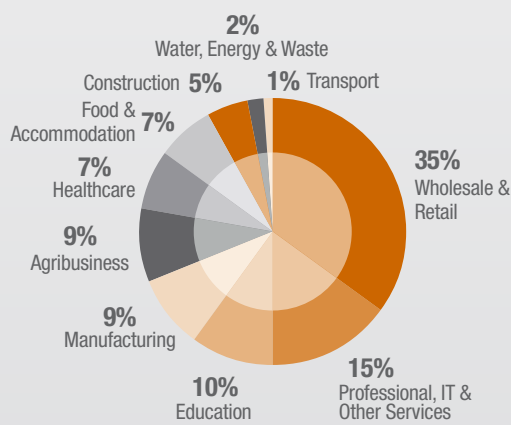
For every 10 jobs that GroFin sustains, 3 jobs are held by women

As at 31st December 2016

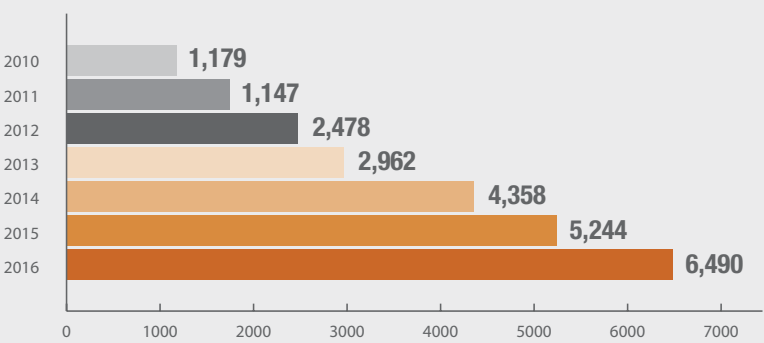
No of Women Owned Businesses Invested In (cumulative)



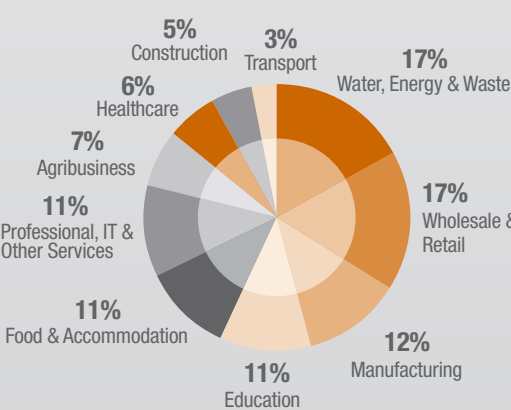
Women Owned Business by Sector



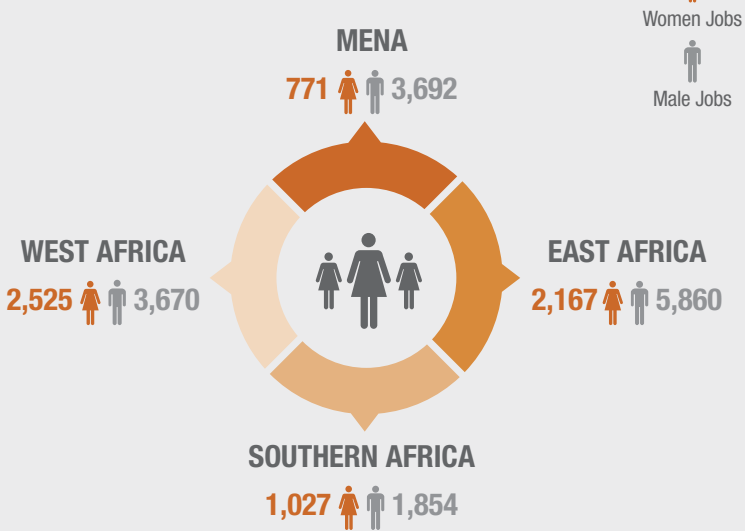
No of Direct Jobs Sustained for Women (cumulative)



Jobs for Women Sustained by Sector

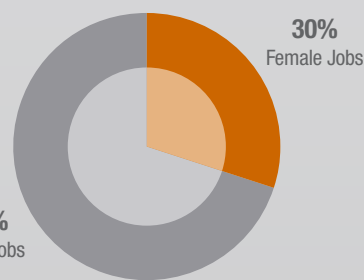


Jobs for Women Sustained by Region



Gender Distribution

Jobs Sustained by GroFin



CLIENT SUCCESS STORIES

➤ Mother of Potatoes: Irene

GAEA Foods, Kenya

Research into entrepreneurial ventures in Africa shows that women have in fact been starting new businesses at double the rate of men, according to a report by the Wall Street Journal. Yet most of these businesses do not grow at the same rate compared to businesses owned by men; most of them remain small.

Going against the tide, Kenyan entrepreneur Irene has done women entrepreneurs across Africa proud by running a successful local potato processing business that supplies to a competitive fast foods segment. Today, Irene's brainchild GAEA Foods processes potatoes for high-end clients such as Innscor that operates several branches in various parts of Nairobi.

Irene also works closely with farmers from the Rift Valley to develop better potato varieties to ensure quality and consistency. With GroFin's intervention, Irene hopes to add 50 more small scale farmers on the supply side, apart from the 50 already supplying to her booming business.

Apart from finance to enhance GAEA Food's production capacity, GroFin also supported the business in formalising its accounting practices and providing expertise on adherence to local Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) practices, as well as market linkages using internal networks and specialised partners such as Netherlands senior experts (PUM).

Finally, Irene promotes woman power in her business by employing a high proportion of female employees - of the 21 staff directly employed by GAEA, more than 50% are women.



37

Jobs Sustained



80%

Semi Skilled/Unskilled Labour



17

Female Jobs



"As soon as I entered the market, farmers approached me and expressed their willingness to supply to a local business. It was then that I realised the true magnitude of what I had embarked on," says Irene.



➤ Teacher of talent: Hiyam

English Talent School, Jordan

In Jordan, where female participation rates in the labor force are among the lowest regionally and globally, entrepreneurship can offer new opportunities for women to generate their own income and to support their families.

Against this backdrop, supporting entrepreneur Hiyam Thaher to run her own school has allowed GroFin to contribute to both women entrepreneurship as well as towards expanding the education landscape in Jordan. The best-in-class International Baccalaureate Certification that the English Talent School offers to its learners further distinguishes it from its counterparts.

Apart from finance to make extensive renovations to the existing premises, GroFin extended robust business support on financial monitoring and alignment of cash flows to allow the school to better meet recurring expenses.

With GroFin's support, the English Talent School hired 6 additional staff in 6 months, taking the number of employees to 108. Today, the English Talent School reaches out to more than 500 students at its expanded premises and makes a significant contribution to the quality of education at Jordan.

Finally, the workforce is 100% Jordanian, of which 81% are female, magnifying the impact of GroFin's investment and support on women participation in the Jordanian workplace.



108

Jobs Sustained



500

Learners Served p.a.



88

Female Jobs



"Our mission was to expand the school's capacity gradually to reach its full potential in a few years' time and touch the lives of more students. In GroFin, we found the perfect partner to help us achieve our mission," says Hiyam.

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