

## Press Release

### Sustainable Finance Geneva launches a Gender Lens Initiative for Switzerland

Geneva, 08 March 2021

**International Women's Day** (March 8) is a global day celebrating the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women. The day also marks a call to action for accelerating women's equality. The United Nations began celebrating [International Women's Day](#) in the International Women's Year in 1975. The UN General Assembly then invited member states to proclaim IWD as the UN Day for women's rights in 1977. And among the 17 Sustainable Development Goals adopted by all UN Member States in 2015, SDG 5 sets the ambition to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

Sustainable Finance Geneva ([SFG](#)) is proud to announce the launch of a Gender Lens Initiative for Switzerland ("GLIS"), established as a new working group within SFG, with the following **mission: to enhance the Swiss contribution to SDG5 through public-private partnerships, research, products development and promotion, organizational model assessments, awareness-building events & media coverage.**

The GLIS will have an academic research committee (ARCO) of advisors from various universities, to help design and implement research related to gender lens investing, the gender balance of financial institutions, and women as capital owners and investors in Switzerland. The ARCO members stand as follows: Rajna Gibson Brandon from the Geneva Finance Research Institute (GFRI) of the University of Geneva, Vanina Farber from the IMD in Lausanne, Taeun Kwon from the University of Zurich, and Jessica Espinoza from the University of Siegen in Germany.

The GLIS will also have an investment solutions committee (ISCO) of advisors, to verify the gender impact of any product before it is featured in GLIS activities. The ISCO would seek to collaborate with partners like the [Aurora Project](#) to define the legal terms of Gender Lens Investing, with GenderSmart's Capital Connect program, or with the 2X Collaborative to showcase relevant investment products.

The GLIS will seek to identify relevant organizations in Switzerland and abroad with whom to collaborate, such as the Swiss Development Agency (SDC), ITC SheTrades, Women In Sustainable Finance, Swiss Sustainable Finance, the Swiss Impact Investing Association, as well as banks and asset managers, among other stakeholders.

The GLIS will further aim to strengthen and integrate the conversation about gender lens during the second edition of Building Bridges Week, an annual event dedicated to advancing sustainable finance and set to be held in Geneva at year's end.

**Tim Radjy**, the founder of the [AlphaMundi Group](#) and a Vice-President of Sustainable Finance Geneva, commented: “The launch of this working group is the result of a seminal Gender Lens meeting convened in Geneva on 7 October 2020 by AlphaMundi and Gender Smart Investing. It is a groundbreaking initiative for the Swiss market that showcases Sustainable Finance Geneva’s role as a platform for innovation and partnerships.”

**Suzanne Biegel**, the founder of [Gender Smart Investing](#), declared: “This commitment on gender-smart investing from the sustainable finance industry in Switzerland should be a hallmark for others across the globe. We are so excited to partner with Sustainable Finance Geneva to unlock more gender-smart capital at scale and to foster collaborations and commitments across the industry.”

**Selina Haeny**, Gender Policy Advisor at the [Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation](#), stated: “This working group is an important lever to bring together different stakeholders in the space and push gender smart investing in Switzerland to the next level. There is a great opportunity to build on each other’s know-how for more gender equality.”

**Sabrina Grassi**, Director General of the [Swiss Philanthropy Foundation](#), expressed: “Committed for a long time to sustainable finance, Swiss Philanthropy Foundation supports the creation of the Gender Lens Initiative for Switzerland to promote the Swiss contribution to gender equality.”

**Sabine Döbeli**, CEO of [Swiss Sustainable Finance](#) (SSF), underlined: “Switzerland has a long history and strong track-record in impact investing. SSF welcomes the setup of this workgroup that builds on this experience and aims to grow investments that contribute to more gender equality in the world - which when reached, will contribute to lifting societies out of poverty.”

**Mara Harvey**, the Head of [UBS Global Wealth Management Client Services](#), noted: “Since 2017, UBS has been working to support gender lens investing and SDG5 more broadly by developing gender lens investment solutions, supporting female entrepreneurs, and collaborating with industry partners to bring about change. We are proud to support the establishment of an initiative to continue this important work in Switzerland.”

**Alexandre Roch**, Sustainable Finance Expert at the organization [Swiss Bankers Association](#), commented: “This working group offers the opportunity to strengthen women’s rights and thus this important SDG 5.”

**Jörg Frieden**, Chairman of the [Swiss Investment Fund for Emerging Markets \(SIFEM\)](#), said that: “SIFEM is committed to initiatives which can have a positive impact on women’s economic empowerment in developing countries and emerging markets. Especially in times of crisis, we are faced with real challenges for the implementation of fairer policies and it is crucial to join forces in this direction. Accordingly, SIFEM warmly welcomes the creation of this initiative by SFG and wishes it every success.”

**Jessica Espinoza**, Senior Investment Manager at DEG and [2X Challenge](#) Chair, remarked: “I am thrilled to join the academic research committee (ARCO) and collaborate with the spectrum of

industry players to build the evidence base for gender lens investing in Switzerland and the world”.

**Mirjam Garzon**, Senior Advisor at the [Global Impact Investing Network](#), commented: “It is very encouraging to see new initiatives like this being launched to provide practical means which are crucial to the growth and professionalism of gender-related impact investing. Congratulations to Sustainable Finance Geneva for their commitment toward the achievement of SDG #5. We at the GIIN are ready to contribute with learnings and tools from our global gender lens activities.”

The Global Impact Investing Network (GIIN) is the global champion of impact investing, dedicated to increasing the scale and effectiveness of impact investing around the world. Impact investments are investments made with the intention to generate positive, measurable, social and environmental impact alongside a financial return. Impact investments can be made in both emerging and developed markets and target a range of returns from below market to market rate, depending upon investors’ objectives. The GIIN builds critical infrastructure and supports activities, education, and research that help accelerate the development of a coherent impact investing industry. For more information, please visit [www.thegiin.org](http://www.thegiin.org).

**Adam Bendell**, the CEO of [Toniic](#), a global association of impact investors, noted: “Toniic is proud to endorse this initiative. With the right people coming together to advance investment in gender equity, we look forward to seeing it succeed.”

**Cliff Prior**, CEO of [The Global Steering Group \(GSG\) for Impact Investment](#), remarked: “More women have lost their jobs worldwide due to the COVID-19 crisis than men, and this inequality is expected to have reduced global GDP by \$1 trillion in 2020 alone. The GSG fully supports the Gender Lens impact investing initiative which drives further action towards gender equality, a step that has been shown to have a positive impact not only on economic growth but also in areas including food security, education, health and environmental protection.”

**Jonathan Normand**, Founder & Executive Director of [B Lab Switzerland](#) and [Swiss Triple Impact](#), declared: “Gender is a social construction that assigns value. Counting equity is about whole numbers, but gender is a dynamic concept that defines norms, behaviours, identities and how those are (or are not) valued in a culture. We cannot wait one more decade to make it fully integrated. Gender equity, like impact investment should, seeks to assess how value is constructed and assigned to build an equitable and resilient society.”

**Rajna Gibson Brandon** from the [Geneva Finance Research Institute](#) (GFRI) of the University of Geneva, commented: “I am delighted to be part of this initiative and to contribute on the academic side to enable women to play a stronger role as responsible investors and contributors to the development of a more sustainable economy.”

**Vanina Farber**, Professor at the [elea Center for social innovation](#), IMD Business School, Lausanne, said: “Sustainable investing and the gender-lens initiative go hand-in-hand towards speeding the development of social innovations that are piloted and scaled throughout the spectrum of capital. Greater diversity in investment decisions will ensure that the most innovative and promising ideas tackling grand challenges are funded and scaled.”

**Taeun Kwon**, from the University of Zurich and the [Center for Sustainable Finance and Private Wealth \(CSP\)](#), expressed: “There are many layers and nuances to gender-lens investing and I’m excited to engage as a researcher because I believe an academic angle helps disentangle some of the complexities and provides answers. Being part of it also drives me to explore topics that hold real world relevance that go beyond being intellectual exercises.”

**David Uzsoki**, Sustainable Finance Lead and Senior Advisor at the [International Institute for Sustainable Development \(IISD\)](#), noted: “GLIS’ efforts to promote the integration of gender considerations in financial products and services is crucial. IISD is excited to support this valuable initiative by leveraging its global expertise in sustainable finance to advance gender-lens investing.”

**Edith Aldewereld**, Founder of [Women in Sustainable Finance](#), commented: “By leveraging the two powerful forces of feminine energy and capital the SDG5 is a strong support to achieve all other SDG’s. We as WISF fully support this initiative and the powerful cooperation of like-minded people and organisations creates the synergy effect and action that is needed to restore the balances in our personal well-being, planet and society.”

The [Giving Women](#) Association remarked: “Giving Women supports this initiative representing the voice of women at the bottom of the pyramid.”

**Manuela M. Froehlich**, Co-Founder of [Fondsfrauen](#), the largest German speaking network for women in Asset Management and Finance, declared: “Everyone in the gender equality space will nod their heads when I say that a lot of energy, money and time go into making a small step forward. As a result of this slow moving, round-and-round dynamic, many women and men have sadly grown tired of talking about gender equality. Understandably so. What we need is an actionable solution. And real change. This is where GLIS comes in.”

**Vanessa Erogbogbo**, Head of [SheTrades](#) and Chief of Sustainable and Inclusive Value Chains at the [International Trade Centre](#), remarked: “It is a unique opportunity to combine what each partner does best to showcase the role growth capital in gender equal businesses can and must play as a critical strategy to help alleviate global poverty. We must step up our efforts now, this is why we are pleased to join the Gender Lens Initiative for Switzerland.”

**Sarah Bel**, manager of the [UNDP SDG Finance Geneva Summit](#), stated: “The working group is a timely initiative and a great recognition from the Swiss ecosystem of the importance of gender lens investing to support women and girls and achieve gender equality. We fully support the GLIS, as it aligns perfectly on the women-centric approach we adopted to select our Growth Stage Impact Ventures, resulting in two-thirds of the SMEs being led by women, and offering products and services that specifically promote women and girls economic inclusion and well-being. We need to proactively build the markets for gender centric products to achieve greater human development.”

**Cristina Davies**, Executive Director at Switzerland for [UNHCR](#), expressed: “At UNHCR, we acknowledge the importance of gender in our mandate, and we aim to ensure that refugees can enjoy their rights on an equal footing and participate meaningfully in the decisions that affect their lives, families, and communities. Our approach to gender equality has evolved considerably, from perceiving refugee women and girls as vulnerable to promoting their empowerment, from gender equality to an integrated age, gender, and diversity (AGD) approach.”

**Sukhvir Basran**, Senior Legal Director and Co-Head of Impact Financing & Investing [Hogan Lovells](#), said: “At Hogan Lovells, we are committed to using our legal skills to truly mainstream GLI and empowering investors and financial institutions with concrete guidance regarding legal terms and conditions and structures. We are delighted to be working with the 2X Challenge and proud to support the advancement of women’s economic empowerment and gender equality.”

In 2021, the GLIS will organise free webinars in spring and fall to update SFG members and partners on Gender Lens industry trends, news, and standards.

With AlphaMundi’s support, it will publish a chronicle on Switzerland’s contribution to SDG5 in the [AGEFI](#) at the end of March.

In collaboration with the Dutch advisory company [Phenix Capital](#), it will showcase Gender Lens investment products in a free webinar for financial industry professionals at the end of April.

Furthermore, the GLIS will design research programs to generate better Gender Lens data for the Swiss financial industry.

Finally, the GLIS will seek to convene an event on Gender Lens Investing during the [Building Bridges](#) week of Monday 29 November 2021 in Geneva.

**For more information:**

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