



Toolkit: Taking Action for Women's Leadership



In Canada and abroad, certain prejudices against women still persist today. These prejudices question—or outright deny—women's business skills or the role they play in developing and implementing climate change solutions.

**The facts and data are clear:
women's contributions are essential
and transformative.**



This toolkit guides you in becoming a true ally of women's leadership, even on a small scale, to contribute to a global impact.

This toolkit offers you contents regarding:

What to say

to deconstruct five stereotypes
and foster constructive discussions

What to do

through 15 tangible and accessible
actions you can take in your daily
life to support female leadership

What to say?

Myth or reality?

Women aren't cut out to lead.

⊗ Myth!

Reality:

Women hold only 24.9% of management positions in large companies in Montreal. They only earn 87 cents for every dollar earned by men.

In many countries, access to credit and financing remains limited: in Côte d'Ivoire and the Philippines, for example, the amounts lent to women entrepreneurs are often lower than those granted to men.

Arguments:

While different data sets show that obstacles vary depending on the context, the conclusion is the same: women face systemic barriers that limit their economic and decision-making power. Yet when women lead, the results are transformative!

✓ Companies with diverse leadership are **25% more likely** to outperform their competitors.

✓ Women entrepreneurs **reinvest up to 90%** of their income in their families and communities.

Did you know?

- In 1990, Dorimène Desjardins co-founded the first credit union in Quebec.
- Today, in Benin, women's groups are creating savings and credit unions that finance sustainable agriculture and small businesses.

Two eras, two continents, one reality: women's leadership builds inclusive economies.

Inspiring story SENEGAL

Khady, 18, became a mechanic after completing a training program for young women to pursue non-traditional careers. In her workshop, she is gaining independence and inspiring other young women to pursue their dreams while challenging social norms.

It's not a tool.

It's economic independence.



Myth or reality?

Climate change affects everyone equally.

⊗ Myth!

Reality:

In Bolivia and the Philippines, women are the hardest hit by droughts, floods, and typhoons. They have to travel greater distances to secure water and food, which increases their vulnerability.

In Canada, women are more exposed to the economic impacts of climate disasters because they are more likely to hold precarious jobs and are often responsible for family care.

Arguments:

Women suffer disproportionately from the impacts of climate change, but they are also key players in local solutions. Sustainable agriculture, renewable energy, awareness campaigns: their leadership strengthens collective resilience.

✓ Communities where women **participate in environmental decision-making** develop more **sustainable adaptation** strategies.

The fight against climate change requires women's expertise and leadership, from Quebec to the Amazon.

Did you know?

- In Quebec, women farmers are increasingly organizing themselves into cooperatives to promote environmentally friendly practices.
- In Côte d'Ivoire, women's groups are developing agroforestry projects to protect soils and diversify incomes.

Inspiring story **BOLIVIA**

Indigenous women make and sell eco-friendly soaps. By controlling the entire production chain, they are strengthening their autonomy, protecting their environment, and ensuring a stable income for their community.

It's not a soap.

It's women's leadership.



Myth or reality?

Equality has been achieved, so there's no need to talk about it.

⊗ Myth!

Reality:

To achieve gender equality by 2030, the UN estimates that an additional \$360 billion per year would need to be invested. Furthermore, Sustainable Development Goal #5 (gender equality) is among the least advanced globally.

In Quebec, women earn an average of 87 cents for every dollar earned by men and remain underrepresented in decision-making positions.

Violence against women remains widespread: one in three women worldwide will experience gender-based violence (GBV) during her lifetime.

Arguments:

- ✓ Gender equality is not just a matter of social justice, it is also a driver of economic prosperity: countries that invest in women's empowerment see their **economic growth accelerate..**
- ✓ Women's participation in decision-making positions **improves organizational performance:** financially diversified companies, more inclusive governance, better strategic decisions.
- ✓ **Equality strengthens community stability:** access to education, financing, and protection from violence enables women to contribute fully to society and the local economy.
- Every action, even at the local level, has a global impact: initiatives promoting women's leadership in one country inspire and reinforce efforts elsewhere, creating a virtuous circle of social and economic transformation.**

Did you know?

- In Rwanda, post-genocide reforms placed women at the heart of political reconstruction, and they now hold more than 60% of parliamentary seats, a world record.
- In Quebec, the struggles of the 1970s paved the way for women's massive entry into the labor market.

Inspiring story GUATEMALA

María transforms recycled materials into colourful bags. With greater independence after having received support as a survivor of gender-based violence, she walks with her head held high and is ensuring her future. She is an example to those around her and, in turn, is helping to create a circle of support for other women.

It's not a bag.

It's
empowerment.



Myth or reality?

In business, women have the same opportunities as men.

⊗ Myth!

Reality:

On average, women entrepreneurs receive less financial support than their male counterparts and continue to shoulder a disproportionate burden of domestic work.

In some countries, such as Côte d'Ivoire, women still need their husband's permission to access a loan. Even when they are eligible, the amounts are lower.

Arguments:

Despite these obstacles, women entrepreneurs create strong businesses, reinvest in their communities, and strengthen collective resilience.

✓ **Equitable access to financing** is essential to unlocking women's full economic potential.

✓ By reducing inequalities, economies become more **inclusive and successful**.

Did you know?

- In Quebec, investment funds specifically dedicated to women entrepreneurs are beginning to emerge.
- In the Philippines, microcredit programs specifically support women in order to support local development.

Inspiring story BOLIVIA

In Bolivia, a local women entrepreneur transforms cocoa beans into fine chocolate. By accessing new markets, she demonstrates that economic independence is built step by step, while inspiring her community ... and that it can taste delicious.

It's not chocolate.

It's women's leadership.



Myth or reality?

Women have no networks or influence in business.

⊗ Myth!

Reality:

Professional networks remain predominantly male-dominated around the world, but more and more women leaders are creating inclusive, supportive, and strategic spaces to share knowledge, experiences, and resources.

For example, women's groups in Benin, Senegal, and the Philippines are building strong networks that offer financing, mentoring, market access, and new opportunities for collaboration.

Women use these advocacy networks to influence economic and political decisions, negotiate fair terms, and increase their power to act in sectors traditionally dominated by men.

Arguments:

- ✓ **Women create and mobilize strong networks** that generate quantifiable economic and social benefits.
- ✓ Participation in these advocacy networks **increases women's visibility** and influence in their sectors and among decision-makers.
- ✓ Projects led by women directly benefit their communities by creating **new opportunities, generating income, and inspiring other women.**
- ✓ Women-led businesses have access to more **innovative and sustainable long-term collaborations.**

Investing in these networks is a strategic lever for building inclusive and successful economies.

Did you know?

- In Canada, networks such as Femmessor, the Réseau des femmes d'affaires du Québec (RFAQ), and CECI are increasing mentoring and support opportunities for women entrepreneurs. These networks enable women to support and expand the impact of local projects, through entrepreneurship, social innovation, and community initiatives.

Inspiring story BENIN

Aïssatou, a farmer and member of a women's collective, uses her network to launch sustainable agriculture projects and savings cooperatives. Her leadership strengthens the resilience of the entire community and inspires other women to get involved, creating a virtuous circle of collaboration and prosperity.

It's not a tomato.

It's economic
equality.



What to do?

The facts are clear: investing in women's leadership means investing in strong economies, a sustainable future, and a more just planet.

You have the power to act. Commit to taking action to support women's leadership in business and in the fight against climate change.

✓ Five tangible actions for individuals

1. Support women-led businesses and share their work within your networks.
2. Highlight women's contributions in your conversations and meetings.
3. Encourage a girl or young woman to pursue her projects or passions.
4. Use your privileges to promote equality and value the achievements of women around you.
5. Read or listen to content created by women and share it.

✓ Five tangible actions for organizations

1. Highlight projects led by women in internal and external communications.
2. Organize meetings or events where women are actively invited to share their expertise.
3. Support women's professional development through tailored training or programs.
4. Use your influence to improve organizational practices for equality in your organization.
5. Develop mentoring, strategic pairing, or exchange group initiatives to support female leadership.

Go beyond

Become a volunteer and support organizations committed to women's rights and leadership, in Canada or abroad.



Start or join a network that promotes women leaders and entrepreneurs.



Make a donation or design a fundraising initiative for the development of women entrepreneurs.



Promote equality and become an active ally.



Become a global ally

Being an ally is more than a one-time gesture: **it's a mindset.**

- **Listen and learn:** take the time to understand that every woman experiences inequality differently, depending on her context, environment, and background.
- **Use your privilege:** amplify the voices that are less heard, share ideas and initiatives led by women in your professional or personal network.
- **Connect the struggles:** recognize that the challenges faced by women in different sectors or communities are connected and that mutual support strengthens the cause.
- **Act over the long term:** Turn one-off actions into ongoing commitments, for example by mentoring, supporting local initiatives, or influencing inclusive practices in your organization.

Every action counts.

Encourage, listen, share, support: your actions, even simple ones, advance equality and strengthen women's leadership, here and elsewhere.

