



Ready for Business

.....
Organisational Strategy
2023–2026



Cherie Blair
**FOUNDATION
FOR WOMEN**

Dedication

For over a decade, the Cherie Blair Foundation for Women has had the immense privilege of meeting and working with hundreds of thousands of capable, committed and creative women entrepreneurs across the world. It is their insights, power and resilience that drive and guide our work.

This strategy is dedicated to these women, who inspire us daily and enable us to play our small part in supporting them to reach their potential. Together, we will create a fairer, more prosperous, healthier, and more peaceful world for all of us.

Front cover image:
Mampho Sotshongaye,
founder of Golden Rewards
1981, and HerVenture user,
South Africa.

Image: Jenifer Moyo,
founder of the Tree of Life
crèche, and HerVenture user,
South Africa.



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Image: Nakaida Belle-Lindie, Managing Director at HKBL Construction, Road to Growth alumna, Guyana.



Who we are

Our vision

Our vision is for women to enjoy equal economic opportunities so they can live to their full potential.

Our mission

Our mission is to empower women in low and middle income countries to start, sustain and grow successful businesses, and to build fair and inclusive business environments.

Our principles

Our principles represent our values and articulate the best of who we are, how we work today and our aspirations for the future:

- **Women entrepreneurs at our heart**

Without women entrepreneurs we wouldn't exist, so it is vital we put their experiences, perspectives and passions at the heart of what we do and how we do it.

- **Feminist first**

We proudly follow feminist leadership principles, building an inclusive environment where everyone feels they belong.

- **Great to work with**

We care. We are experts. We always seek to deliver high-quality work and results. We are positive and professional, and always operate with integrity.

- **Dynamic and entrepreneurial**

The essence of entrepreneurship is creativity and innovation. We harness this spirit of courage, embracing opportunities and making bold moves to achieve our mission.

- **Powered by knowledge**

We seek data to understand and share. We nurture a culture of enquiry and positive challenge. We look outward and encourage dialogue and exchange.

Our commitment to allyship

The Foundation recognises the urgent need to address issues of structural racism and inequality in the international development sector, rooted in its colonial heritage.

We are committed to learning and changing, to playing our part in supporting the sector to address these challenges as a matter of urgency. Within our own organisation and with our partners we will continue our efforts to understand how Global North power and privilege influences our work. We will grow our actively anti-racist practices to ensure we are not perpetuating unequal and harmful North-South power dynamics, transfer knowledge and power to our partners and further localise our work.

This commitment applies equally to how we design and execute internal policies and practices, support Foundation staff, build capacity and exchange knowledge, and how we listen, respond to and amplify the insights and brilliance of the women and the partners we work with. We approach all our work through an intersectional feminist lens.

Image: An event on women's entrepreneurship convened by the Foundation with DHL, GIBS EDA and other stakeholders at the British High Commission, South Africa. (October 2022)



Ready for business

Women the world over have the appetite, ambition and potential to run their own lives and businesses, and to be leaders in commerce, in their communities and nations. But many are prevented from flourishing while inequality holds them back. That is where we come in.

We work with women entrepreneurs to design and build services that will support them and their businesses to thrive, and to close the gender gap in entrepreneurship. Equal opportunities for women entrepreneurs means:

- They have informed choices and the agency to fulfil their economic potential
- Equal access to pathways into entrepreneurship
- Women-centred entrepreneurial services
- A business environment that specifically addresses their needs as women
- And a society and world around them that recognises their value so they can lead the change

For Chioma Ukonu from Lagos, it means setting up Nigeria's foremost waste recycling and social benefit venture, creating value from people's everyday waste.

For Susi Lawati from West Java, it means being ready to supply supermarkets with her home-made Japanese food within two years of setting up business.

For Jenifer Moyo from Cape Town, it means opening the doors of her crèche to vulnerable children wandering the city streets.



Image: Susi Lawati, founder of Dapur Sakura, and WEAVE alumna, Indonesia

Ready for change

We are deeply passionate about women's economic justice. It is key not only to women's empowerment, but also to that of their families and communities.

“

When you empower a woman, you empower a nation. If I am doing well, then everyone around me from my family to my community will be empowered, especially the women.”

Ngozi Oyewole, founder of Noxie Limited and Cherie Blair Foundation for Women alumna, Nigeria

All over the world, women still earn less than men. They have less access to finance, training, tools, legal advice, property and land than men. They carry out the majority of unpaid care work. They are less likely to be in leadership positions. If they do manage to start a business, it is likely their businesses will remain informal and small, and less resilient to the impacts of economic shocks and the climate crisis.

Women entrepreneurs face countless barriers and discriminations that their male counterparts will not face.

Image: Mercy Manzini, founder of Mercy's Company, and HerVenture User, South Africa.



Even worse, the last few years have been relentlessly harmful to women's opportunities. COVID-19, economic turmoil, conflict, record levels of forced displacement and increasingly regressive government policies have all diminished women's hard-won freedoms. The impacts of the climate crisis further intensify the challenges that women are facing.

These unacceptable inequalities mean millions of women are not thriving. The world is denied the incredible social and economic benefits their potential would bring. We will work with women around the world to change this.

At the time of writing, it will take 151 years⁵ for women to experience economic equality, and there is a significant gender gap across all areas of entrepreneurship. The world is not on track to deliver against the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, including those that most squarely relate to women's entrepreneurship: Goal 8 on Decent Work and Economic Growth and Goal 5 on Gender Equality, where there is "a long road ahead"⁶. This generation of women, their daughters, their granddaughters and their great-granddaughters are set to all live lives muted by inequality.

We are not willing to let that happen.

2.4 billion

Worldwide, 2.4 billion women of working age do not have the same economic opportunities and legal rights as men.¹

\$1.7 trillion

\$1.7 trillion USD is the gender financing gap for women-led SMEs.²

264 million

Women are 16% less likely than men to use mobile internet, which translates into 264 million fewer women having access to critical information through mobile than men in low and middle income countries.³

44%

44% of women entrepreneurs in low and middle income countries surveyed by the Foundation felt that they did not have equal access to formal investment opportunities.⁴



Ready for growth

We will revolutionise business opportunities for women and reach more than a million women entrepreneurs by 2030.

By 2030 we want to have led a revolution in business opportunities for women entrepreneurs. Every woman must have the choice, opportunity, environment, support, and services so she can start, grow and sustain businesses on her terms.

Our ambition is to enable at least one million women to start, sustain or grow successful businesses through accessing our existing and new services. We will also drive progress in the recognition of women entrepreneurs as leaders and continue to advocate for gender equity in business environments.

Since the Foundation's inception in 2008, we have proven our model and expertise in providing high-quality services to women entrepreneurs in low and middle income countries, offering business skills and support, access to finance, networks and markets, and increasing women's confidence and business success.

We have evolved to become vocal advocates for change in women's business environments.

We are proud of this evolution. But now it is time for a revolution to create a world that enables women entrepreneurs to thrive.



Who with?

We will deliver our strategy to support women who:

- Own or lead small and medium enterprises and start-ups
- Own or lead micro, formal and informal enterprises
- Don't yet own a business, but may wish to
- Require bespoke support in priority target sectors or geographical contexts
- Are seeking to respond to chronic global challenges like climate change and displacement

Where?

We deliver our services with partners informed by their experience and a deep understanding of the context.

We will continue to work in over 100 countries across Africa, Asia, Europe, North America, Oceania and South America through our Mentoring Women in Business service, supported by a strong partner network.

Our business training and development services are delivered through our strategic partners in Guyana, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Mexico, Nigeria, South Africa and Vietnam. We will seek to deepen our impact in these countries and work in many more.

Image: Quynh Nguyen, founder of AZCare, and WEAVE alumna, Vietnam.



Ready for action

Our goals to 2030 and targets 2023–2026

To achieve our ambition of revolutionising business opportunities for one million women by 2030, we have set four mutually reinforcing goals:

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1 Power up entrepreneurship opportunities for women

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2 Transform our partnerships to scale and amplify our reach

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3 Galvanise tangible change in business environments for women

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4 Energise our organisation to deliver greater impact

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Goal 1:

Power up entrepreneurship opportunities for women

We will innovate, create and deliver women-centred services and content that powers up the potential of women entrepreneurs

1.1 Boost our digital services to broaden access and opportunity

- We will enhance our digital training platforms to increase access and flexibility to address more tailored and diverse needs.
- We will offer digital services that can be accessed by any woman who wants to build her skills, knowledge and confidence in entrepreneurship.

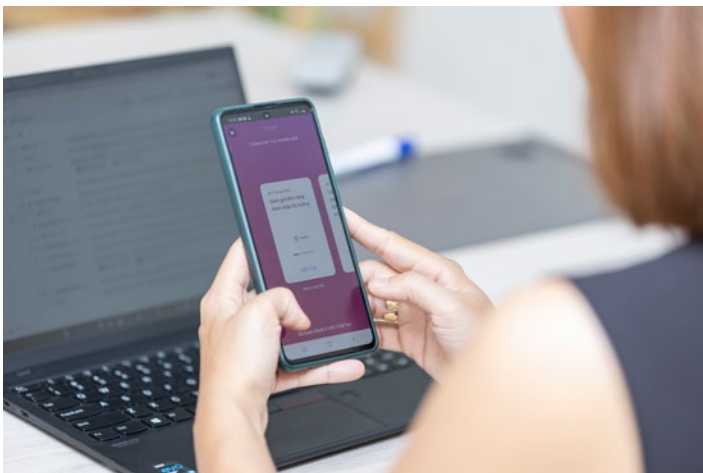


Image: Van Pham, founder of Emmay, HerVenture user, Vietnam.

1.2 Develop and enhance our services so more women report better outcomes for themselves and their businesses

- We will strengthen the leadership components of all our services to make sure all women can access the vital leadership skills and confidence they need to succeed.
- We will ensure our services can support resilience in the face of economic turbulence.
- We will recognise the importance of engaging men in our work. Their role as allies is vital to ensuring equality in business environments and addressing gender stereotypes.
- We will keep in touch with alumni, so women can benefit from our community as long as they want. We will spot opportunities for further support, and we will continue to profile and learn from their success.

Our services



Mentoring Women in Business

Our online, cross-border mentoring service, with gold accreditation. It matches woman entrepreneur mentees with business professionals elsewhere in the world as their mentors for one year.



HerVenture

Our award-winning mobile business skills learning app, offering women entrepreneurs essential business training and support on the go.



Road to Growth

Our intensive business skills and financial literacy service that equips women entrepreneurs with the knowledge, skills and networks needed to achieve business growth.



Road to Finance

Our training supporting women to build their skills and confidence in order to successfully secure finance for their businesses.



Road to Leadership

Our training designed to equip women with the confidence, decision making skills and voice they need to lead their businesses and influence the world around them.



New services in development to meet women's changing needs

1.3 Deliver quality services ourselves through a network of local partners around the world

- Our services will continue to offer women the skills, knowledge and tools they need to start, grow and sustain their businesses.

1.4 Create innovative new content and services

- We will take a women-centred approach to design, deliver and evolve our services, curriculums and training, so they can be 'mixed and matched' to suit more and different groups of women and their specific needs.
- We will offer training and other support to organisations that want to deliver our services, embed feminist principles into their services, and generate content in relevant languages.

1.5 Ensure robust monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning

- We will ensure that all our work meets the changing needs of women entrepreneurs.
- We will work with women entrepreneurs and our partners to measure the growth and impact of their businesses.
- We will disseminate key learning and share best practice with local partners, policy makers and the women's entrepreneurship development community
- We will engage women entrepreneurs in each phase of planning, developing and monitoring our work.



Image: Road to Growth class in session, Nigeria



Our 2023–2026 targets

- ✓ By 2024 we will have transformed our digital platforms to create a streamlined, easy-to-use structure for all our services.
- ✓ By 2025 we will lead the sector as an authority on effective mentoring and skills training for women entrepreneurs.
- ✓ By 2026 we will have created at least three new services in partnership with women entrepreneurs to respond to their highest priority needs.

“

If you want to know about business, HerVenture is there. If you want to know about planning, HerVenture is there. It has an answer or solution for everything.”

Mercy Manzini, founder of Mercy's Company and HerVenture user, South Africa

Image: Jullie Hakim, founder of Bhumi Rasa, and WEAVE alumna, Indonesia.



Goal 2:

Transform our partnerships to scale and amplify our reach

We will develop and grow our partner networks, and diversify our business models and funding to reach more women, more effectively

2.1 Develop and grow our partner network to maximise provision

- We will evolve the way we work with existing partners, new partners, and different types of partners. We will test new ways of working with them. This will increase our reach at the same time as further embedding services with in-country partners. This network will be at the heart of our growing community of expertise.

2.2 Transform our offer to partners and funders

- We will explore how our services can be procured by national governments, corporates, in-country organisations or other potential partners, and use our convening role to connect key ecosystem players and roll out successful delivery models across the countries we work in.
- We will seek to establish regional delivery models for our Mentoring service and other services where relevant to the context.

2.3 Build our donor membership community and engagement to increase income from global philanthropy

- We will expand our fundraising capacity, evolving our membership community to grow engagement and financial support. This will allow us to become a more financially sustainable organisation.

2.4 Grow investment from corporate and funding institutions

- We will enhance our corporate volunteering offer and strengthen how our services can support delivery of corporate environmental, social and governance responsibilities and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.
- We will work with our partners to create strong funding relationships in the countries and regions in which we work in order to build local capacity and make our services more sustainable.

Our 2023–2026 targets

- ✓ Each year we will create and work towards ambitious reach targets to meet our 2030 goal of supporting one million women entrepreneurs.
- ✓ By 2024 we will have established a formal network of delivery partners.
- ✓ We will improve our financial sustainability by:
 - Increasing core income by more than 10% each year.
 - Increasing the proportion of our income from multi-year commitments to 70%.
 - Establishing new sources of income to scale our services by 2025.

“

Given the opportunity, women can not only support their children, but their entire family – especially if we have skills in business. That's why it's so important to support women entrepreneurs.”

Susi Lawati, founder of Dapur Sakura and WEAVE alumna, Indonesia

Image: Gill Ingosi, founder of Brighter Spaces Interiors, Road to Growth alumna, Kenya.



Goal 3:

Galvanise tangible change for women entrepreneurs

We will amplify the voices and experiences of women entrepreneurs to boost their visibility and influence improvements in women's business environments

3.1 Amplify women entrepreneurs' voices to challenge and change perceptions

- By amplifying the voices and experiences of women entrepreneurs to showcase their skills, successes and impact, we will challenge outdated notions of who can be a successful entrepreneur and dismantle the gender stereotypes holding women back.
- We will use strategic advocacy and communications techniques to elevate women's entrepreneurship in the agendas of policy makers and investors.

3.2 Create and share knowledge through a Community of Expertise

- We will enable organisations that work with women entrepreneurs and women themselves to share their experiences, challenges they face and jointly push for change.
- We will share what we learn through research and invite greater discussion about best practice, policy development and future trends.

3.3 Influence global policy and make the case for investment in women entrepreneurs

- Our expertise and expanded evidence base will help us to develop robust positions in target policy areas, challenging gender stereotypes holding women back from business wherever it counts most.
- We will drive engagement with the people and institutions that can best effect change, support policies that will have a positive impact, and make the case for greater investment in women entrepreneurs.

3.4 Build alliances

- We will explore where our voice, expertise and influence can play a role in bolstering global alliances or creating new coalitions or campaigns in order to keep pushing to close the gender gap for women entrepreneurs.

Our 2023–2026 targets

- ✓ Each year we will publish two policy publications that will contribute to global debates on women's economic empowerment.
- ✓ We will amplify the voices of women entrepreneurs through content that platforms women's voices, experiences and ideas.
- ✓ By 2026 we will have made clear contributions to two high-level policy commitments that enshrine greater recognition of women entrepreneurs and how gender stereotypes limit their success.
- ✓ By 2026 we will have proactively established an alliance or campaign on a key policy priority theme relevant to women's entrepreneurship.

“

Over half of working women in [low and middle income countries] view entrepreneurship as a path to economic empowerment, twice as many as in [high income] countries...any development partner committed to expanding gender equality (SDG5) and decent work and economic growth (SDG 8) should be considering how to help women entrepreneurs”⁷

Image: Alana Bunbury Walton, founder of JARS, Road to Growth alumna, Guyana.



Goal 4:

Evolve our organisation to deliver more effective change

Our culture, governance and systems will equip our organisation to build a powerful brand and deliver increased impact and reach

4.1 Motivate our people and strengthen our culture

- We will energise our culture so that our staff are thriving. Our internal approaches will be aligned to our principles and our commitment to play our part in the movement towards an international development sector that is actively anti-racist and breaking down colonial legacies.
- We will deliver a diversity and inclusion plan that honours our mission and creates a community that brings our principles to life.
- We will explore flexible ways of working and innovative benefits to increase productivity and enhance the life quality of our employees.

4.2 Evolve our governance, knowledge, skills and structure

- We will innovate and evolve to bring in the skills and perspectives we need to reflect our growing accountability to women entrepreneurs, our changing way of working through networks, the new services we need to deliver and the influence we want to have.
- Our governance will reflect our mission and principles both through its membership, ways of working and the ethos followed.
- Our staff will be able to access comprehensive options for their own learning and development.

4.3 Overhaul our systems and processes

- We will streamline and adapt our systems and processes to have fewer and more aligned systems to enhance productivity and cross organisational working.
- A relationship focus will be central to our systems and processes.

4.4 Evolve our identity and meaningfully engage our audiences

- We will use audience insight to inform all our communications and marketing in order to effectively reach our diverse stakeholders with high-quality, relevant and accessible content, maximising opportunities for global dialogue and exchange.

Our 2023–2026 targets

- ✓ By 2024 we will have embedded our principles and values into a development framework for staff and integrated them into our performance management systems.
- ✓ By 2025 we will have achieved increased engagement levels with key audiences that are aligned with our identity and vision.
- ✓ By 2026 our governance processes will include accountability to women entrepreneurs.

“

When I belong to Cherie Blair Foundation for Women, I’m proud to say that I am part of a big community of mentors and mentees. I feel I’m proud and honoured to be part of it.”

Odunayo Anyibuofu, owner of Ally Rally Apparel and alumna mentee, Nigeria

Image: Wangari Mwaura, Founder of New Star Organic, and HerVenture user, Kenya.



Our theory of change



Our theory of change describes how, through delivering this strategy, we will move towards our ambition of revolutionising business opportunities for over one million women by 2030.

It is only by working equitably with partners that we will be able to achieve both the direct and indirect results required so that women can enjoy equal economic opportunities and live to their full potential.

Our theory of change is anchored in the evidence of the current inequities facing women entrepreneurs and in our conviction that we not only need to scale and deliver excellent, women-centred services for women entrepreneurs, we also need to change mindsets, institutions and systems.

“

When you support a woman entrepreneur ... you are automatically also supporting her immediate and extended family, the neighbourhood and ultimately the whole community.”

Carlotta John, owner of Children R Us and Road to Growth alumna, Guyana

The future we want for women:

A system that has:

- Women-centred entrepreneurship services for all women
- Gender transformed policies and business environments
- Recognised the value of women entrepreneurs

Women entrepreneurs who have:

- A holistic offer of services
- A safe and supportive environment in which to thrive
- A system invested in her success

Our theory of change: Women at the heart of entrepreneurship



Ready for the future

By 2030 we will know whether we have delivered on the promises we made in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). At the time of writing the world is not on track to deliver on the SDGs, yet it is more imperative than ever that these goals are realised.

“

Being an entrepreneur means that my life is more fulfilled. I can be financially independent, live freely and follow my hobbies and dreams.”

Quynh Nguyen, founder of AZCare and Cherie Blair Foundation for Women alumna, Vietnam

By achieving the targets set out in this strategy, we are working towards our longer term ambition of supporting one million women entrepreneurs by:

- Delivering and partnering on a comprehensive range of women-centred services to enable women's successful entrepreneurship.
- Growing a network of delivery partners, supported through empowering capacity building, delivering our flexible range of services for women entrepreneurs.
- Hosting a thriving community of expertise in women's entrepreneurship, sharing, learning, advocating for change and challenging the barriers facing women.
- Creating knowledge, research, campaigns, and action to close the gender gap in entrepreneurship.
- Creating a membership community committed to funding our work so that women have the opportunities to fulfil their potential as entrepreneurs.
- Running a more innovative organisation, living by its values and contributing to a more equitable international development sector.



With a global community of partners, donors and institutions, we will fight hard to ensure we contribute all we can towards the achievement of Goal 5 on Gender Equality and Goal 8 on Decent Work and Economic Growth.

The resilience, drive and ingenuity of the women we work with inspires us to be unstoppable in our commitment to ensuring the economic rights of women everywhere are fulfilled. With this strategy, we believe we have put ourselves in the strongest possible position to achieve this.

We are ready for business.

Image: Damilola Asaleye, Co-Founder and CEO of Ashdam Solar Company and Road to Growth participant, Nigeria.



Endnotes

1. CDC Group (2020) '[COVID-19 and women's economic empowerment: a chance to invest for change?](#)'
2. We-Fi (2022) '[The Case for Investing in Women Entrepreneurs](#)', World Bank Group
3. GSMA (2022) '[The Mobile Gender Gap Report 2022](#)'
4. Cherie Blair Foundation for Women (2023) '[Resilience and Determination in the Face of Global Challenges: 2022 Audit of Women Entrepreneurs in Low and Middle Income Countries](#)'
5. World Economic Forum (2022) '[Global Gender Gap Report 2022](#)'
6. UN Women and Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2021) '[Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot 2021](#)'
7. We-Fi (2022) '[The Case for Investing in Women Entrepreneurs](#)', World Bank Group



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Image: Sola Adesakin, Founder
of Smart Stewards and Road to
Growth alumna, Nigeria



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