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Human Rights Task Force Information Sheet Economic Empowerment for Women

There are 1.2 billion people living in extreme poverty worldwide, and the majority are women and girls. This isn't because women are less capable than men; it is because they encounter circumstances, norms and laws that limit their full economic participation.

"Women are more likely to work in unsafe, insecure jobs for low pay and less likely to have access to capital, markets, education, training and the right to own or transfer property."
(Kathy Calvin, CEO, UN Foundation)

Research demonstrates that gender equality boosts economic growth by closing the gender gap in labor markets worldwide. Recent reports support the fact that overall, better jobs for women benefit individuals, families, communities, companies, and economies...

- Estimates indicate that income parity would raise the GDP by 5% in the US, 9% in Japan, 12% in the United Arab Emirates and 34% in Egypt.
- Companies that invest in women's employment often find their bottom line benefits by improving staff retention, innovation, and access to talent and new markets.
- Women's economic empowerment results in greater investment in children, education, nutrition, health and reduced poverty.
- Increases in employment and earnings benefit women by boosting their self-esteem and bargaining power at home, reducing domestic mistreatment and violence, and delaying early marriage and pregnancy.

An illustration in a recent UN Foundation report demonstrates the benefits of economically empowering women through microfinance:

"Runa, a woman in her mid-thirties, was a client of a microfinance program in a rural village in Chittagong, Bangladesh. She was in purdah with a young daughter by her side when we interviewed her outside her modest home. Runa had used the credit from the microfinance program to set up a profitable handicrafts business in her home. She had done well and used part of her earnings to buy a rickshaw for her unemployed husband, who was now earning a living as a rickshaw taxi driver. He had also stopped beating her, Runa volunteered matter-of-factly. From Runa's standpoint, the microfinance program had been a success. The microloan had truly empowered her. Benefits "spilled over" to her husband, and the household's higher income likely made her daughter better off as well."

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