



A MISSING LINK Women & Climate

The data gap connecting women's education, empowerment and the climate crisis

Table of Contents

- 2 Executive Summary
- 3 The nexus of the fashion footprint, women & empowerment
- 5 Empowering women in the fashion supply chain drives positive ESG outcomes
- 7 Leverage the proven success of existing programs to accelerate women's empowerment across the fashion supply chain
- **8** Build upon the fundamental curriculum by incorporating climate topics to upskill workers and improve adaptation strategies
- 9 Need for data collection, measurement, and tools to drive change
- 10 Ramp up collection of gender-disaggregated data to inform policy and influence decision-making

With Thanks

Fashion Makes Change is profoundly grateful to Inditex, whose steadfast committment to women in the communities in which they operate supports their long-standing effort to recognize, embrace and empower the role of women throughout industry.

Executive Summary

Fashion Makes Change (FMC), in collaboration with Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors, is an industry-wide initiative to deliver women's empowerment and climate action in tandem, by accelerating a global educational agenda of empowerment and gender equity in supply chain communities. FMC functions as an instrument of collective action, bridging the fashion industry to consumers through broad-ranging initiatives. In support of its remit, in early 2022 FMC hosted a roundtable with multidisciplinary experts to discuss the data, tools, and evidence that may exist to support quantifying the correlation between women's empowerment & climate change mitigation.

Participants included industry leaders and researchers in the fields of women's health, education and empowerment; gender equity; climate change; and international organizational programs and initiatives, with representatives from Fashion Makes Change; International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) Advisors; the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace, and Security; Project Drawdown; Global Council for Science and the Environment (GCSE);

Planet FWD; Fordham University's Responsible Business Coalition (RBC); International Labor Organization (ILO)'s Better Work Global; and OnePointFive, a sustainability advisory firm.

A consistent theme emerged amongst roundtable participants - despite numerous case studies and qualitative research that links women's education and empowerment with improved environmental, social, and governance outcomes, more empirical data is still needed to quantify a statistically significant correlation between women's empowerment and climate mitigation. The lack of supporting data is not due to a lack of demand, either - in fact, brands have increasingly been seeking ways to link gender equity to supply chain goals, and asking for evidence of causal relationships between empowered women and climate action.

Following the roundtable discussion, FMC conducted extensive desktop research to synthesize the existing evidence and data. The research substantiated the roundtable discussion and pointed to a few key gaps, which in turn present significant opportunities for

fashion CEOs and other sustainability leaders who are looking to make an impact across multiple dimensions: delivering workplace-based women's empowerment programs across the supply chain could not only give women the training they need to gain essential life skills, but could also present an opportunity to monitor and gather necessary data to measure impact and help inform company-level decision-making related to important UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including climate action.

The key finding from this report is that fashion brands should invest funding and resources into carrying out these programs, and into digital tools and data architecture to support key performance indicator (KPI) measurement. By empowering women in their supply chains, and measuring outcomes, they can contribute to longer-term sustainability goals. Furthermore, by obtaining more empirical evidence that speaks to positive outcomes of women's agency, the fashion industry would be able to produce a transferable finding that could apply across various other industries, as well.



A Holistic Approach to

Women's Empowerment

WORK REQUIRED

- Empower women in fashion supply chain through workplace-based programs
- Identify, measure, track and report on gender-specific KPIs
- Implement digital tools / platforms to enable data collection

RATIONALE (THE WHY)

- Training women on skills such as leadership, problem-solving, and financial literacy, can improve ESG outcomes
- Workplace-based programs in fashion have already had proven successes
- There is currently a lack of genderdisaggregated data in global supply chains
- Introduction of digital tools / platforms can drive more holistic improvements – access to technology, financial resources

IMPACT & OUTCOME OF WORK

- Women in supply chain gain essential life skills, improved quality of life, options and access to make their own decisions at work and personal households
- Improved climate resiliency and better climate outcomes due to better equity
- Contribution toward reaching UN SDGs
- Measurement of link between women's empowerment and climate mitigation / adaptation
- Contribution toward company-wide goals on improved supply chain, fair labor conditions
- Data used to inform policies that aim to remove systemic barriers to women's empowerment
- Digital tools can be used for payments, giving women access to own finances

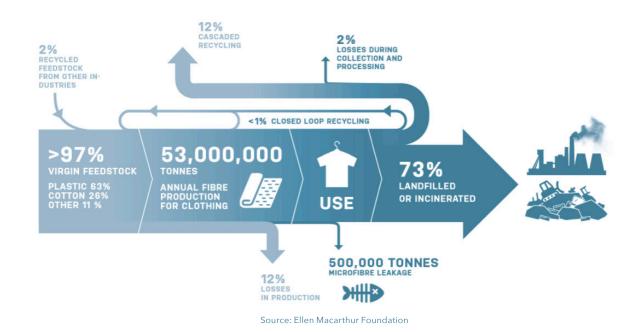
The nexus of the fashion footprint, women & empowerment

Clothing is powerful. It not only expresses personal style but is also increasingly being used to signal the values of both brands and customers alike. Customers are showing growing support for sustainable and ethical fashion brands, and product lines designed with sustainability in mind, such as clothing made from responsibly grown cotton, recycled or biosynthetic polyesters, and garments made in factories that uphold safe environments and pay living wages¹. While some fashion brands have already taken steps to integrate environmental and social initiatives into their overall strategy and operations, there is still an urgent need for individual companies and the industry as a whole to push forward together—to maximize the societal benefits and minimize the harms of the fashion industry's footprint. By implementing strategies across the entire value chain, the industry can produce favorable outcomes for the triple bottom line – people, planet, and profits.

Due to the immense scale of energy and material flows required throughout a garment's lifecycle, positive change within the industry can create a meaningful impact on a global scale. For instance, the fashion industry still accounts for around 8% of global CO2 emissions^{2/3}, 20% of industrial water pollution globally⁴, and uses 70 million barrels of oil each year in the production of polyester⁵. The industry is also responsible for 63% of cotton production, playing a significant role in the agriculture industry⁶. Beyond clothing production, clothing also creates environmental impacts throughout its use and disposal phases. As clothing consumption continues to climb, primarily as a result of increasing demand from industrialized nations, the fashion industry needs to find innovative ways to decouple growth from the growing negative environmental consequences, largely borne by emerging economies.

The importance of womens' education and climate change action, and gaps that need to be addressed

In recent years, the fashion industry has also begun addressing its expansive social impacts across the supply chain, which include dangerous working conditions, child labor, harassment and abuse, and pervasive gender discrimination. Most of these impacts are felt by women, as it is estimated that within the global fashion industry, which consists of an estimated 300 million workers, 75% are women^{7/8}. **Despite being an industry dominated by women, the vast majority live in emerging economies and**

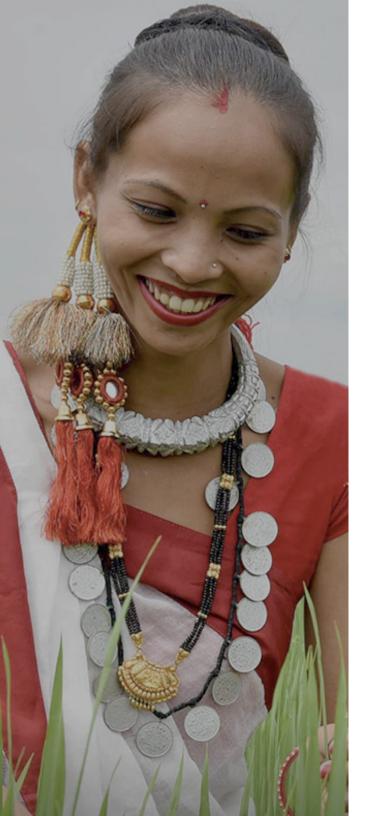


do not have equal access to the same education, training, authority, or financial and technological resources as their male counterparts. This knowledge and power disparity has been shown to increase women's vulnerability to climate disasters, like floods and droughts, which in turn are also increasing in frequency due to climate change?

Recognizing these barriers, many large fashion brands have begun implementing women's empowerment programs to educate and provide additional support and training to both women and men within the supply chain. These types of training programs aim to create safe work environments, eliminate violence and sexual assault, boost leadership skills and teach financial literacy-enabling women to have increased agency and influence in the workplace and their communities. They are designed to give women the "resources, such as knowledge and skills, and the agency –that is, the ability and freedom to define and act upon one's goals—to make decisions

and take action related to matters of significance in one's life". ¹⁰ Men in the supply chain are also eligible and encouraged to participate, to support decreases in discrimination and violence against female workers.

The programs align with several of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including Goal 5 - to achieve gender equality and empower women and girls¹¹ – and Goal 8 - to promote inclusive economic growth and decent work for all¹². They have also been shown to improve the health and well-being of the workers enrolled¹³ and increase resilience against climate disasters and other catastrophes¹⁴. Furthermore, according to the latest IPCC report, there is "high evidence and high agreement that empowering women benefits both mitigation and adaptation, because women prioritize climate change in their voting, purchasing, community leadership, and work both professionally and at home (high evidence, high high agreement)". 15



Despite the positive evidence linking women's empowerment to climate mitigation and adaptation, in a world where decision-makers often rely on data to take action, there is a shocking lack of gender-disaggregated data in global supply chains. Globally, only 21% of data needed to monitor the 54 gender-specific indicators in the UN SDGs is up to date.¹⁶

Furthermore, despite the critical role of education as a component of empowerment, and its impacts across all SDGs, researchers have not yet been able to accurately model the impact of education across all dimensions. This gap in measurement, and associated gap in reporting of results, has led to solutions being overlooked- such as engaging women as change agents within a company. Delivering women's empowerment programs across the supply chain could not only give women the training they need to gain essential life skills, but could also present an opportunity to monitor and gather necessary data to measure impact and help inform company-level decisionmaking related to important SDGs, including climate action.

It is also imperative to remember that even though women, particularly those in emerging economies, can play a role in creating effective solutions to reduce environmental impacts, they should not be held responsible or accountable for doing so. The negative climate impacts of fashion production are driven by fashion companies and growing consumer demand, not by individual workers earning a living. Empowerment programs should be put in place so companies ensure they are working to protect and enhance women's quality of life as a baseline, and then, seek additional cobenefits such as to the community, environment, and the company at large.

To date, sustainability programs and women's empowerment programs have generally not used the same metrics to measure success. Identifying overlapping key performance indicators (KPIs) and gathering additional data on program outcomes will be important to measure the predicted link between empowering women and improved climate and environmental outcomes.

Empowering women in the fashion supply chain drives positive ESG outcomes

While data on women in the supply chain is broadly lacking, there are a growing number of cross-sector studies that demonstrate that women's empowerment and training for skills such as leadership, problem-solving, and financial literacy, can improve environmental, social, and business outcomes¹⁷.

For example, studies on women's empowerment within agriculture and forestry provide evidence that when women are given problem-solving and decision-making power, crop yields are improved, and impacts even extend to the protection of natural carbon sinks such as forests. A study of two forests in India and Nepal found that forest management groups with a high proportion of women in their executive committees demonstrated higher levels of improvement in the overall forest condition¹⁸. A study conducted by PepsiCo demonstrated that by training female potato farmers on best practices, they were able to achieve higher than average yields for the area and use sustainable and regenerative farming practices that contributed to PepsiCo's global climate change commitments¹⁹.

Furthermore, a study in the Brazilian Amazon demonstrated that women's economic empowerment through microenterprises and training on natural resource management techniques enhanced women's decision-making power about resource use, led to improvement in soil nutrients and maintenance of forests, and provided economic gains for the family. ²⁰

Womens' role as change agents in building climate resilience is also driven by their diverse perspectives, inherited knowledge, and inclusive decision-making methods. In many regions, women are stewards of the land and have increasingly taken on more agricultural work while men move to non-farm jobs.²¹ Compared to their male counterparts, the methodologies used by women in agriculture are more akin to adaptation strategies and can be a valuable asset for communities as they build adaptive capacity to combat climate change. For instance, a World Bank study in Bolivia found that while men tend to focus on large-scale interventions, women prefer more practical and lower-cost improvements, such as planting new crops and diversifying livelihood activities.²²

While many initial studies on women's empowerment focus on natural resource management, a new working paper studied 24 garment factories in Bangladesh and showed how the potential of women as leaders and supervisors is overlooked in the fashion industry. For example, women make up 80% of sewing floor workers, whereas men make up 90% of supervisory positions.²³ The working paper suggested there tended to be an initial negative bias against women's managerial skills and performance as supervisors, especially from male subordinates. Over a few months, however, the initial perceived gap in productivity and less favorable performance evaluations compared to male counterparts would ultimately disappear, demonstrating how the study's interventions significantly increased the retention of



female supervisors.²⁴ Evidence from the same study suggests that women leading all-female teams are able to elicit higher payoffs than male supervisors; women are underpromoted in the factory setting, and women supervisors may even improve their worker efficiency. While these findings allow for an initial comparison against the numerous examples of successes of women in the agricultural and forestry sectors, further research will need to be conducted to determine if female line supervisors are able to consistently improve other metrics associated with sustainability like increased quality and less waste.

A woman's ability to advance in factory settings is shown to be unequal and there are immense impacts tied to this inequality. Due to financial and educational disparities and having less upward mobility, women are more vulnerable to climate disasters, like floods and droughts, which are increasing in frequency due to climate change²⁵. Garment Worker Diaries is working to collect first-hand stories from women in the textile industry, and in an initial survey of 1,154 respondents, 61.8% said they were concerned about climate change, including a 27-year old machine operator who noted, "We can't stop river erosion, so maybe next year our house will collapse again²⁶.

Working to provide women the means to improve their adaptation strategies while also fighting the overall cause of climate change will enable women in the supply chain to live more safely and comfortably. The ND-GAIN Index, which measures a country's vulnerability and resilience to climate change and other global challenges, shows that for each additional year of education that girls acquire, countries' resilience to climate disasters increases on average by 1.6–3.2 points.^{27/28} Finding ways for companies to address multiple issues such as women's empowerment and climate change simultaneously can help improve both outcomes.

Leverage the proven success of existing programs to accelerate women's empowerment across the fashion supply chain

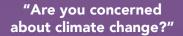
While these links exist, the carbon footprint of women in the supply chain, or even broadly within historically marginalized lower-to-middle income countries, is negligible compared to the footprint of those creating demand for new clothing. However, these studies demonstrated how influential and long-lasting education can be – women's roles in their communities are often interlaced with teaching and storytelling, and this could be an avenue where women share their learnings with their employers, their family, neighbors, communities, and potentially even local councils or governments.

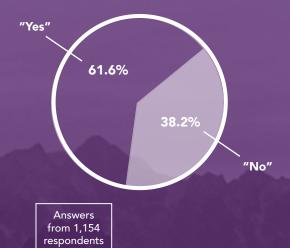
Within the fashion industry, there have already been notable successes from women's empowerment programs across global supply chains as evidenced by the world's four largest programs currently - UN's ILO-IFC Better Work, BSR's HERproject, Gap Inc's PACE program, and CARE International.

UN's ILO-IFC BetterWork program surveyed 17,000 garment workers and factory managers and found that participation in the program resulted in improved working conditions, including by reducing the prevalence of abusive workplace

practices, increasing pay and reducing excessive working hours. Furthermore, at the company level, productivity and profitability both increased due to a reduction in verbal abuse and sexual harassment.²⁹

BSR's HERproject has reached more than 1.2 million low-income women and recorded meaningful improvements in self-esteem, workplace performance, and workplace communication and relationships³⁰. In 2020, Gap Inc.'s PACE program saw an 81% increase in communication skills, a 60% increase in execution skills, and a 75% increase in financial literacy skills, among other benefits, across the 800,000+ women trained through the program. Since 2014, CARE





International has contributed to more than 11 million women increasing their economic empowerment.³² CARE's Made by Women initiative specifically works to empower women garment workers, and between 2016 and 2020, saw more than 167,000 women accessing rights that were previously being denied, and 4.1 million women standing to benefit from improved legal protections as a result of CARE's advocacy. ³³

Over the past five years, these four programs collaborated to develop Empower@Work and create a harmonized Worker Training Toolkit for Women's Empowerment. This new 12-module program is considered the industry standard and best practice for accelerating women's empowerment in the fashion supply chain. By combining teaching and modules from the four existing programs, the Toolkit is able to provide a more well-rounded and holistic curriculum for women in fashion. The modules are underscored by three key factors of empowerment- resources, agency, and institutional environment. Resources include access to money, land, social connections, education skills, and knowledge; agency is the ability and freedom to define and act upon one's goals; and an enabling institutional environment is critical so that individuals are not held back by discriminatory stereotypes, norms, or unfair laws. The modules are obtained and active the provided access to money, and an enabling institutional environment is critical so that individuals are not held back by discriminatory stereotypes, norms, or unfair laws.

Fashion companies should participate in Fashion Makes Change to support the scaling of Empower@Work and implement training programs that address critical worker needs, such as health, financial planning, problem-solving, decision-making, and gender equality. Education is a human right that advances society, and workplace-based programs are tried-and-true instruments to reach women across the fashion supply chain. Empowering women is a critical first step to creating adaptive capacity and climate resilience, and unlocking a greater system of solutions.

Given the success of the stand-alone programs and the pilot success of the 12-module Empower@Work curriculum, for women who have already completed the 12 modules, the addition of resources on climate resilience can help solidify topics already included throughout the Empower@Work program.

Build upon the fundamental curriculum by incorporating climate topics to upskill workers and improve adaptation strategies

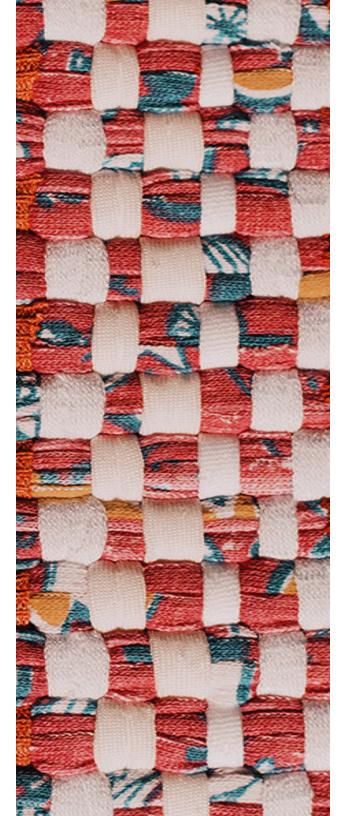
TABLE 1. EMPOWER@WORK'S TOOLKIT & CO-BENEFITS

Empowerment Component	Modules in Empower@Work Toolkit	Examples of Co-Benefits
Agency	 Gender Communication Problem Solving and Decision Making Time and Stress Management Leadership 	 Leadership, problem-solving & decision making skills shown to enhance climate resiliency & adaptation
Resources	FinanceHealthWASH	 WASH highlights importance of health & water conservation, waste disposal practices
Insitutional/Enabling Environment	 Rights and Responsibilities in the Workplace Occupational Safety, Health Execution Excellence, Sexual Harassment, Assault, and Violence Prevention 	 Occupational health & safety learnings can shed light on harmful chemicals, dyes, and promote safer factory processes

For instance, several of the modules within the Empower@Worktoolkit are often directly pertinent to climate targets, such as the Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) module which highlights the importance of water sanitation for health and water conservation and proper waste disposal practices³⁶. Empower@Work may consider adding a standalone 13th module to build upon some of these existing climate and resilience topics. Alternatively, Empower@ Work can incorporate generalized knowledge on climate resilience strategies for women and their communities, building on skills taught in the Problem Solving and Decision Making module. Or, within the Health and Safety module, the program might use examples encouraging workers to speak with management or simply within their homes on ways to reduce waste, conserve water, combat pollutants from the factory, or provide information to help make their communities more resilient to climate change. As these programs are already teaching important conservation principles, incorporating measurement of KPIs related to these topics will help quantify reductions in waste, water, and emissions.

Improved climate literacy does not inherently mean that individuals are held responsible for the climate impact of consumption, but rather provides a basic understanding of the science behind climate change, resource use, and social implications, which are all critical to developing adaptation strategies, and can even up-skill women to help prepare them for the broader transition to a greener economy.

Data collection on women in the supply chain is generally sparse, but as companies begin tracking important gender metrics, they can also



begin tracking KPIs for the climate-gender nexus. Better equity drives better climate outcomes, and by building agency across the system, women are provided the options and access that allow them to make their own decisions in their professions and personal households.

Need for data collection, measurement, and tools to drive change

The potential of women as agents of change has been established in sectoral research but the fashion industry is still facing a shortage of gender-disaggregated data across the global supply chain. The lack of adequate large-scale studies and data collection on the female worker population in fashion impedes the calculation of a statistical correlation between empowerment measures and environmental impact. It is imperative to not let this limitation become a barrier to implementing such programs, as there is an opportunity for brands to proactively explore the untapped potential of addressing climate issues not only in their board rooms but across their suppliers and factories as well.

As brands continue to increase womenfocused training and empowerment programs, they should ensure there are robust tracking mechanisms in place for KPIs. These KPIs, both qualitative and quantitative, can be used to begin assessing the impact of empowering women in fashion to create more equitable and sustainable outcomes. It is recommended to conduct baseline and end-line base needs assessments to gather evidence on key indicators. Illustrative examples of indicators are presented in Table 2.



TABLE 2. EXAMPLES OF KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- Number of people (women and men) working in the supply chain
- Percentage of women promoted and retained in managerial positions in factories
- Percentage of workers receiving a salary at or above the living wage for a given country
- Percentage of suppliers using digital payments (which give women more control and autonomy over their own pay)
- Employees missing work due to local or regional climate-related hazards (floods, heat, hurricanes, etc)
- Percentage of workers enrolled in, and completed the Empower@Work or other empowerment training (% per factory, region, total supply chain, etc.)
- Number of women who take on leadership roles at the local, district, and national level or as committee members
- Number of women participating in trade unions on the front lines

Data collected also needs to be accessible and actionable within the industry. Under the umbrella of groups like Fashion Makes Change, brands can invest in building internal and vendor-facing collaborative digital tools or platforms alongside the curriculum that can facilitate pre- and post-factory assessments; data collection, review and analysis for wage benchmarks, empowerment programs, and other social metrics; and enable longer-term behavior monitoring. Leveraging technology as a tool for tracking women's empowerment program outcomes can create a more meaningful story and allow the industry to create a united push for improving the lives and environmental outcomes of over 100 million women workers and their communities.

Alongside KPIs, brands must also understand the unique challenges faced by their female workforce. One way of achieving this is through first-hand interviews with factory workers and by providing women an opportunity to have their voices heard. Representation and giving credence to women's voices is a critical component of empowerment. Giving female workers a platform to share the challenges they've experienced and tell their stories is an important step in internalizing the training that the women receive³⁷. These women have their own cultures, perspectives, and goals that need to be accounted for when developing community-minded empowerment programs and when seeking climate and economic co-benefits.

Ramp up collection of genderdisaggregated data to inform policy and influence decision-making

While empowering women through training programs is critically important, it is also one piece of a much larger puzzle. As stipulated by Empower@Work, "conducting a training is not sufficient in and of itself to achieve transformative outcomes. Rather, such training programs should sit within a broader intervention of promoting gender equality which engages all key stakeholders including management, worker representatives, and workplace policies and practices, and ideally the community". More broadly, positive outcomes of empowerment are still hindered by existing broader systemic issues and barriers, such as lack of financial resources, lack of technology, discriminatory laws, and gendered land ownership policies, to name a few.



For example, as mentioned earlier, women play a significant role in agriculture and natural resource management, but in many parts of the world, they do not have equal rights to own, use and control land and resources. Even when national legislation promises equal rights to land and resources between women and men, women may not know of their rights or may still be left out due to cultural practices and norms.⁴⁰ At the workplace, even when leadership roles for women are within reach, they may have to decline the opportunities in order to prioritize home and familial responsibilities, in particular, due to expected longer work hours. Maternity leave and childcare access would allow women to re-enter the workforce sooner, but these programs are not as common outside of higherincome countries⁴¹.

Gender-disaggregated data collected through women's empowerment programs can provide the evidence needed to inform policy at global and institutional levels, whilst the collection of stories and first-hand experience from women across the supply chain will be critical for implementing policies at the grassroots level, to make sure that those with lived experience are able to contribute to changes and interventions directly impacting them, through participatory methods and processes.

In fashion supply chains specifically, this collection of data would enable companies to first and foremost gain an understanding of the workers in their upstream supply chain that is currently dramatically under-researched at many companies. Brands need to look at what they are trying to accomplish within their supply chain and ensure they begin creating measurement indicators to track the success of these initiatives. Many studies and anecdotes indicate that women can play

a significant role in climate change mitigation strategies when given the resources and power to take action.

Filling the data gap on women in fashion supply chains is expected to unlock a wide range of positive outcomes on women's quality of life, job performance, and resilience of women and their communities. Considering fashion supply chains are some of the biggest pools of female labor globally, it is pivotal to ensure that women workers are able to not only work in safe and healthy environments but add to the discourse at all levels of decision-making. With the proper measurement in place, brands will be able to track the social and potential climate benefits of women's empowerment.

Transforming the industry requires collaboration within and across fashion brands of all sizes. Large companies in particular have a responsibility to engage suppliers to empower and protect their workers. With a unified industry approach, there is an opportunity to improve women's quality of life and open the door for the social, environmental, and economic benefits that empowered women can create.

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