

ALTIOREM EXPERT GUIDE

Advancing gender equality through gender lens investing



**NOVEMBER
2023**

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AtekArt (2022) Part of the "Generation 17" initiative to promote the 17 UN SDGs



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Introduction

Gender lens investing (GLI) is an approach to investment that seeks to incorporate gender issues and analysis into investment decisions. This approach aims to identify investments that promote gender equality and women's empowerment, while also generating financial returns. Gender lens investing is not a new concept, but it has gained increasing attention in recent years as more investors recognise the potential benefits of investing in companies that prioritise gender equity. This Expert Guide will explore the concept of gender lens investing, its benefits, challenges, and highlight top resources to deepen your understanding. *

* This guide is for informational purposes only and does not constitute professional, financial, or investment advice.

Key insights

1. **Gender lens investing is a powerful strategy:** Gender lens investing, which incorporates a gender-based analysis into investment decisions, offers a compelling approach to address gender inequality and promote women's empowerment. It has the potential to generate competitive financial returns while driving positive social impact.
2. **Gender lens investing strategies are evolving:** Gender lens investing encompasses a spectrum of strategies, including gender lens 1.0, gender lens 2.0, and access themes. Gender lens 1.0 focuses on investing in companies with gender diversity and women in leadership positions. Gender lens 2.0 expands the scope to include investing in companies that prioritise gender equality across their operations, policies, and products. Moreover, the concept of access themes highlights the interconnectedness of various access factors, such as education, finance, technology, and healthcare, in achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls.
3. **Gender lens investing aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):** Gender equality and women's empowerment are integral to achieving multiple SDGs, including SDG 5: Gender Equality. By considering the specific needs and barriers faced by women and girls, gender lens investing can contribute to a broader range of sustainable development outcomes.
4. **Collaboration and stakeholder engagement are crucial:** Effective gender lens investing requires collaboration and engagement with various stakeholders, including companies, non-profits, and advocacy groups. By working together, investors can leverage collective influence to drive systemic change and advance gender equality.
5. **Diversity and inclusion are essential:** To overcome the challenges associated with gender lens investing, it is crucial to prioritise diversity and inclusion within investment processes and organisations. By promoting diversity among investment professionals and creating inclusive policies and practices, investors can enhance decision-making and better identify investment opportunities that align with gender equality goals.
6. **Measurement and reporting are critical:** To demonstrate the effectiveness and value of gender lens investing, it is essential to establish clear goals, metrics, and reporting frameworks. By measuring both financial performance and social impact, investors can track progress, improve transparency, and communicate the value of their gender lens investing strategies.

What is Gender Lens Investing?

Gender lens investing is an investment strategy that integrates gender considerations into the investment process. It involves analysing investments based on their potential impact on gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as their financial performance. Gender lens investing is not a single strategy but a range of approaches that can be used to address gender inequality in different ways.

Gender lens investment approaches have expanded in recent years. All asset classes have seen a tremendous increase in the number of funds and assets under management. Fund strategies range from empowering women and funding women-run businesses to reducing gender violence and poverty for women and children.

One way to understand gender lens investing is to look at the different levels of engagement that investors can have. At the most basic level, investors can simply screen out companies that have a negative impact on gender equality. For example, investors might avoid companies that have a history of labour violations or those that do not have policies in place to address sexual harassment in the workplace. To really create change, investors can actively seek out companies that have a positive impact on gender equality.

Gender Lens Investing Strategies

The first proactive strategy is to invest specifically into funds that apply a gender lens, such as funds that invest in companies with female founders and CEOs. Think of this as gender lens 1.0, where companies with women in leadership and board positions are preferred by fund managers.

This is evolving to investment managers analysing companies and considering different policies and practices within the organisation that empower women. This is gender lens investing 2.0, where culture and processes are considered, and the gender lens expands from management to the entire organisation and even supply chains.

A third strategy is investing in funds that prioritise 'access themes' that align with SDG 5: Gender Equality and affect systemic change to improve the rights and lives of women globally. For investments to have an impact related to achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls, investors do not have to invest solely in gender-focused funds, they can focus on products, services, and businesses that prioritise accessibility in areas such as education, healthcare, and financial inclusion.

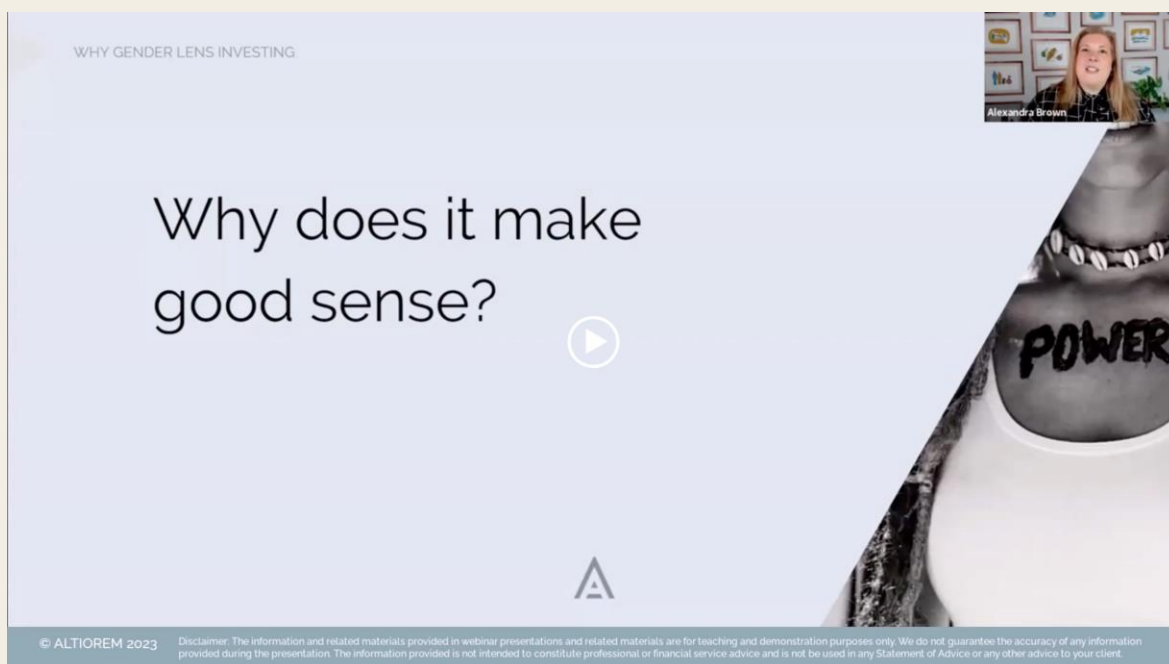
Another key element to investment strategies focused on gender outcomes is engagement. Investing in funds that actively engage with companies to encourage improved standards and issues surrounding gender equity can be considered a strategy but is often used in conjunction with the above three GLI approaches.

Gender lens investing can also be applied across different asset classes, including public equities, fixed income, and private equity.

Making the case for a gender lens

Gender lens investing offers several benefits, including the potential for financial returns and the ability to drive positive social change. We explore why gender lens investing is important and how global sustainability goals are driving systemic change to empower women.

The benefits of gender lens investing can be explained from the ethical case, business, investment, and economic case. These four different perspectives provide a powerful toolkit and can be used interchangeably by advocates to resonate with different audiences.



- Video link: [Why does it make good sense?](#)
- Source: Video snippet from [Women in Banking and Finance UK](#) event "Supporting women through gender lens investing" held May 2023

Ethical case

Gender equality is a fundamental and inviolable human right. Yet women around the world continue to face significant economic, social, and legal barriers to equality. Women are more likely than men to be unemployed, are overrepresented in low wage jobs, hold fewer managerial, entrepreneurial and leadership positions, and on average globally, [only make 77 cents for every dollar](#) earned by men. In 18 economies, [men can legally prevent their wives from working](#). Women continue to bear disproportionate responsibility for unpaid care work and often experience maternity-related discrimination. Women entrepreneurs also face specific challenges to building and growing their businesses including lack of access to financing and business networks.

These types of circumstances may not feel ethically or morally right to you. Investing to empower women, might simply be the right thing to do, and driven by concepts like fairness, equity, and social justice. When making the ethical case, it may be as simple as saying:

“It feels right to me, and I want to move my money / my business / our investment strategy, towards supporting women and gender equity.”

Business case

We commonly define ‘women in leadership’ as women on boards and in senior management, and is the most documented indicator of gender balance, and the one most strongly tied to corporate performance. The overarching results of research in this space is that women in leadership improves company profitability and productivity.

According to a report by McKinsey and Company, companies who were at the top for gender diversity and inclusion were 25% more likely to outperform on profitability. Companies at the bottom were 19% more likely to lag in profitability. An Australian study demonstrates that increasing the representation of women across each of the key leadership roles in an organisation added market value of between \$52m and \$70m per year for an average sized organisation.

There are a few theories for this. Some suggest that diverse boards might benefit companies financially because diversity provides greater creativity and different perspectives for decision-making, and others think that diverse boards are improving overall board talent.

There is no doubt that diverse teams help a business overall. Diverse teams are critical for innovation, better decision-making, team performance, and improved reputation. As a company aiming to sell products or services, it makes sense to incorporate the perspectives of 50% of the population, and the different qualities and skills that women bring to the table.

The business case is well supported.

Investment case

Extensive research shows improved financial metrics with women in leadership, such as lower risk and higher sales growth, earnings per share (EPS) growth and boosted return on assets (ROA).

For investors, gender lens investing can provide a competitive advantage by identifying companies that are well-positioned for growth and profitability. Companies that prioritise gender diversity and equality are more likely to attract top talent, which can lead to higher productivity and innovation. Additionally, companies that provide products or services that benefit women and girls may be better positioned to tap into a large and growing market.

As at Q1 2023, the global public market of gender lens equity funds was US\$4.2 billion and growing, and gender lens fixed income was estimated at US\$8.9bn. However, these figures do not represent all investment opportunities to positively impact and empower women; gender lens investing has moved beyond an examination of how many women are serving at the highest levels of a company, and now includes investment in companies that prioritise gender balanced processes and policies, products, services and accessibility. Therefore, the market to invest towards achieving gender equity will be considerably higher than these figures indicate.

But beware, with the growing trend to invest with a gender lens, comes pinkwashing!

Pinkwashing is when a company or investment appears to integrate gender more than they actually do. Just because a pension fund or investment fund, or a company states they are focused on empowering women, we need to look under the hood! For example, companies may state they have women on the board, but the treatment of women throughout the rest of the company is poor. Or, funds may state they

have a gender lens, but where is the evidence in leadership and governance of the companies they are investing? Where is the evidence in employment, and is there a difference in how men and women feel working for a company – is it a safe environment, are there equal opportunities, is there flexibility?

There is potential alpha in gender equality and diversity. The benefits to businesses we just spoke of, means funds that invest in companies prioritising gender equality, may outperform. Which means investors may potentially make better returns. *

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Economic case

Of the four cases, this one is extremely powerful. It is a sad fact that [gender inequality](#) cuts across every single country on Earth. No matter where one is born, their [life will be harder](#) if they are born a girl. If born in a poor country or district, it will be even harder. Gender inequality systematically disadvantages half of humanity.



WHY GENDER LENS INVESTING

Economic

- Gender inequality systematically disadvantages half of humanity
- Lack of access to education and jobs keeps women disempowered and slows down economic growth
- Reducing the gender gap in labour force participation by 50% would lead to an additional 6% gain in GDP by 2030
- Investment in women boosts economic development, competitiveness, job creation and GDP

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Video link: [The Economic Case](#)

Source: Video snippet from [Women in Banking and Finance UK](#) event "Supporting women through gender lens investing" held May 2023

Factors continuing to disempower women include reduced access to education, financial services and the labour force, [discriminatory legal rights](#), and social norms such as the average woman completing 3-6 hours of [unpaid domestic work](#) per day compared to 0.5-2 hours by men. Women are more vulnerable to poor healthcare systems, and maternal and child mortality.

Globally, [women earn only 51 cents for each dollar](#) men earn in labour income. In the developing world, the gap is wider, with women earning only 29 and 33 cents on the dollar in lower-middle-income and

low-income countries, respectively. These estimates highlight the significant gender disparities in labour markets, emphasising the need to increase women’s participation in employment, improve their access to diverse occupations, and address the significant job quality disparities they face.

Gender inequality impacts economic performance. There can be no robust economy without gender equality, a critical ingredient of any strategy for durable, resilient and more inclusive growth.

There is growing evidence to suggest that investing in women is needed to address the [climate crisis and food security](#) issues. Gender equality and these big global issues intersect. For example, investing in female farmers increases resilience to climate shocks, nourishing school communities, protecting food supplies, and lowering carbon emissions. Educated women can help their communities to cope with the effects of climate change, and lead on climate-smart agriculture, tackling hunger while protecting our planet, and keeping children in school. There is a lot of evidence to support investing in women has flow on effects that benefit communities.

Empowering women to participate fully in economic life across all sectors and levels of activity is essential to building resilient economies and establishing just and stable societies. The [Women’s Empowerment Principles](#) offers practical guidance to achieving this across the private sector.

Investment in women boosts economic development, competitiveness, employment, and GDP. It is estimated that on average, across the OECD, a 50% reduction in the gender gap in labour force participation would lead to an additional [gain in GDP](#) of about 6% by 2030, with a further 6% gain (12% in total) if we completely closed the gap. In addition to GDP, there is overwhelming research to support the fact that empowering women adds to [positive development outcomes](#) including security, health, and wellbeing.

Sustainable Development Goals are driving change

Addressing social inequalities

In response to the global urgency for action by all countries – developed and developing – to end poverty, improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth, all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and lands, the 17 [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs) provide a blueprint for global partnership and action.

For investments to have an impact related to achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls, investors do not have to invest solely in gender-focused funds. Action to support gender equality can contribute positively to a host of other goals and is a precondition for advancing development and reducing poverty.

With women and girls making up more than half the global population, improving health and educational outcomes (Goal 3 and 4), reducing poverty (Goal 1), and tackling inequality (Goal 10) requires specific consideration of the particular needs of women and girls and the barriers they face. At the same time, women’s empowerment is proven to have a multiplier effect, contributing to the health and well-being of whole families and communities, as well as economic growth (Goal 8) and peaceful societies (Goal 16). The SDGs provide a compelling framework for understanding the interconnectedness between gender equality and other critical development goals. Gender lens investing can contribute to multiple SDGs, particularly Goal 5: Gender Equality, by recognising and addressing the specific needs, barriers, and potential of women and girls.



Source: United Nations

Sustainable Development Goal 5: Gender Equality

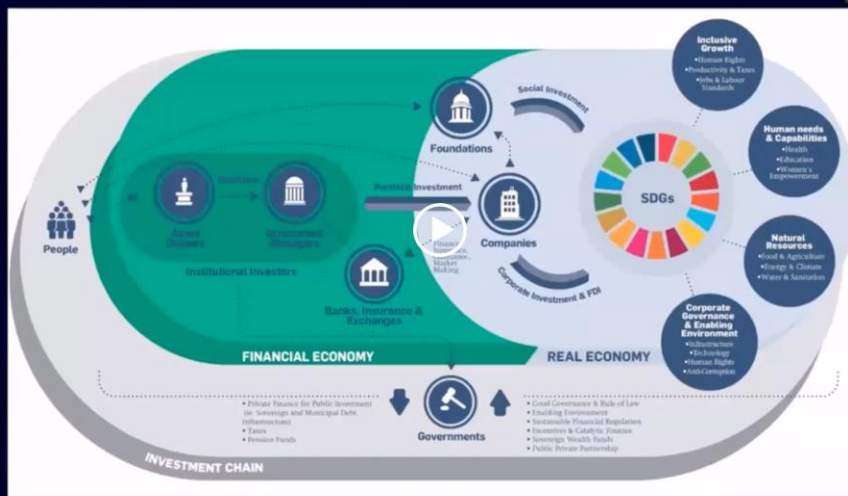
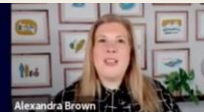
Sustainable Development Goal 5 ([SDG 5](#)) aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. This means eliminating discrimination against all women and girls everywhere, eliminating violence including trafficking and exploitation, and eliminating harmful practices such as child or forced marriage. SDG 5 targets equal opportunities, equal rights, and access to resources, technology, financial services, and health care, especially sexual and reproductive health. It aims to recognise and value unpaid care and domestic work.

One of the targets for this goal is to adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels. It is crucial to recognise that gender equality cannot be achieved through investment alone. Public policy changes, including the adoption and enforcement of sound policies and legislation, play a vital role in creating an enabling environment for gender equality and women's empowerment. Gender lens investing should be complemented by efforts to advocate for policy reforms and collaborate with stakeholders to drive systemic change.

Incorporating the SDGs in gender lens investing offers a powerful approach to addressing gender inequality and promoting women's empowerment within the investment landscape. As the field of gender lens investing continues to evolve, it is essential for investors, asset managers, policymakers, and other stakeholders to [collaborate](#), share knowledge, and prioritise diversity and inclusion. By doing so, we can harness the full potential of gender lens investing to create a more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable world.

WHY GENDER LENS INVESTING

You can make a difference



Source: UNGC (2017) Guide to unlocking prosperity, Finance, investment and sustainable development

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- Video link: [You can make a difference](#)
- Source: Video snippet from [Women in Banking and Finance UK](#) event "Supporting women through gender lens investing" held May 2023

Challenges of Gender Lens Investing

Despite the potential benefits of gender lens investing, there are also several challenges associated with this approach.

Lack of Standardised Data

One of the main challenges is the lack of standardisation in gender data and metrics for measuring the impact of gender lens investing. Unlike financial metrics, gender data is not standardised, making it difficult to compare companies based on gender equity. This lack of standardisation can make it challenging for investors to identify companies that prioritise gender equity and to measure the impact of their investments on gender equality. Without reliable data, it can be difficult to assess the effectiveness of gender lens investing strategies and to compare the performance of different investments.

Underrepresentation of Women

Another challenge is the [lack of diversity](#) among investment professionals. Women and people of colour are [underrepresented](#) in the investment industry, which can lead to blind spots and biases in investment decision-making. To overcome this challenge, investors must prioritise diversity and inclusion in their own organisations and work to create more opportunities for women and people of colour in the industry.

Limited Investment Products

The limited availability of gender-focused investment products is also challenging. While there has been a growing interest in gender lens investing in recent years, there are still relatively few [investment products](#) that are specifically focused on promoting gender equity. This can make it difficult for investors to find opportunities to invest in companies that prioritise gender equity and to diversify their gender lens investments.

Need for Education

Many investors and asset managers are unaware of gender lens investing, and this hinders its uptake and impact. There are free [short courses](#) and [organisations](#) that advocate for the mobilisation of capital towards gender equality, but we need more education, awareness, and action to create systematic change. [AltioREM](#) is a hub for research in gender lens investing, and aims to close the knowledge gap, inspire action and implementation, and support advocates in their gender-focused missions.

How to invest with a Gender Lens

There are several types of investment strategies that can be used to move money away from areas that disempower women, to themes and key issues that will positively impact gender equality.



- Video link: [What types of investment strategies?](#)
- Source: Video snippet from [Women in Banking and Finance UK](#) event "Supporting women through gender lens investing" held May 2023

Gender Lens Investing 1.0

Gender lens 1.0 involves investing in businesses that support women in leadership – that is, women founders, women CEO's, women on the board and women in management.

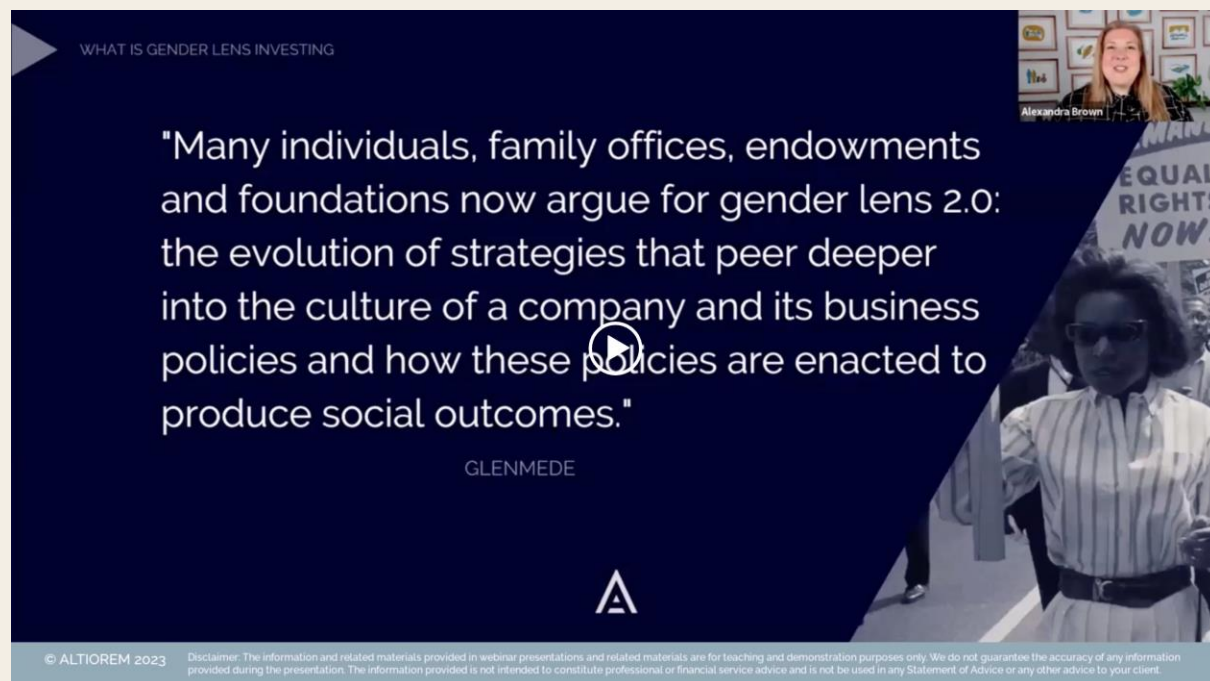
Gender lens investing 1.0 is based on key metrics such as the percentage of women on boards, and the number of companies with women founders. These metrics remain measurable and comparable across countries, stock exchanges, and investment products, making it a popular approach for investors.

However, while women in leadership remains a key component of investment strategies with a gender mandate, it alone does not ensure equitable conditions for all employees, or drive the systemic change needed to achieve gender equality.

Gender Lens Investing 2.0

Gender lens investing has expanded as access to company data has expanded, and funds and investors can take a deeper look at the underlying gender equity policies and practices.

Gender equity means bridging the historical gaps in gender equality through policies such as maternal care, resources like management training, and programs that foster a culture generally more supportive of women.



WHAT IS GENDER LENS INVESTING

"Many individuals, family offices, endowments and foundations now argue for gender lens 2.0: the evolution of strategies that peer deeper into the culture of a company and its business policies and how these policies are enacted to produce social outcomes."

GLENMEDE

Alexandra Brown

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- Video link: ["Many individuals, \[...\] and foundations now argue for gender lens 2.0..."](#)
- Source: Video snippet from [Women in Banking and Finance UK](#) event "Supporting women through gender lens investing" held May 2023

This quote sums up the demand for deeper gender lens strategies:

"Many individuals, family offices, endowments and foundations now argue for gender lens 2.0: the evolution of strategies that peer deeper into the culture of a company and its business policies and how these policies are enacted to produce social outcomes." – Glenmede

Gender Lens 2.0 means preferencing companies that implement policies and practices that are free from and prevent gender-based discrimination across the workplace, marketplace, and community. For example, compliance training on the company's sexual harassment policy, or a program working to address gender-based discrimination or gender-based violence. It may include regular and objective gender pay gap audits by a qualified external party, or action to ensure jobs of equal value are remunerated equally.

This strategy seeks to support women's employment and strive for gender balance at all levels across the business and supply chain. For example, a training program to support women entrepreneurs in a company's value chain, the introduction of a fully paid parental leave policy offered to all employees regardless of gender, and policies that deliberately seek to counteract unconscious bias against women.

Gender lens 2.0 includes supporting companies that develop products and services and implement marketing practices that empower women. For example, specialised financial services and microfinance opportunities for women entrepreneurs, or an advertisement campaign for a laundry detergent manufacturer that promotes to both men and women, challenging the idea that household chores are solely a woman's job and encouraging a more even distribution.

It means supporting companies that promote gender equality through investment, community initiatives, and advocacy. For example, a company advocating against legal barriers and promoting the inclusion of women, or an electricity company empowering semi-illiterate women from energy-deprived villages in developing countries, to install and maintain solar energy systems.

There are incredible examples of companies worth supporting that are using a deeper gender lens.

Investing in Access Themes

These [access themes](#) are from a framework developed by Cornerstone Capital Group.

After analysing SDG 5: Gender Equality, they came up with 7 themes that can be used as a gender lens.

The seven themes are:

- Access to fair treatment/equal opportunity
- Access to healthcare
- Access to financial services
- Access to telecommunication systems
- Access to education
- Access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene
- Access to adequate housing and living conditions



Source: Cornerstone Capital Group (2019) Advancing the Gender Lens Framework

The concept of access, which encompasses the ability of individuals and societies to achieve desired social, economic, and environmental outcomes, serves as the common thread linking all the Sustainable Development Goals. These access themes are intricately interconnected. For instance, when women have improved access to telecommunication tools like mobile phones and internet services, they gain better access to online financial services, educational resources, healthcare, and career opportunities.

Enhancing education and financial access can lead to increased financial security, while internet access can contribute to improved health outcomes for women as they can access information on disease risks and prevention. Access to clean water, sanitation, hygiene, adequate housing, and better living conditions is crucial for improved health and a more stable and secure living environment. The potential examples of these interconnections are limitless, yet the amount of investment flowing into an intersectional approach remains limited.

To fully address the complexities of sustainable development and gender equality, it is imperative to adopt an intersectional approach that acknowledges the interconnected nature of various access themes. Investments that consider the overlapping factors of gender, socioeconomic status, race, and other dimensions of identity can yield more comprehensive and impactful outcomes. By embracing an intersectional lens, investors can foster more inclusive and equitable societies while simultaneously generating financial returns.

Engagement

Actively engaging with companies to improve gender outcomes is an important aspect of gender lens investing. While engagement can be considered a strategy, it is often used to enhance and support all GLI strategies. With the evolution of GLI approaches, the metrics and criteria of investors are changing, and asset managers are actively working with companies to improve their organisational priorities and practices around gender equity, and by extension, how capital markets value women and girls.

As more asset managers track metrics such as the representation of women across all levels of an organisation, the more likely they are to engage with companies and encourage better diversity, gender balanced workplaces, and reduced pay gaps. Some gender equality indicators, such as corporate culture, are more difficult to quantify, and meeting with company managers is necessary when public data is not available.

Engagement and dialogue clarify a company's processes, products, and practices. Directly communicating with management can uncover where the organisation is doing well supporting women and highlight gaps that can be improved. Unlike fossil fuels or gambling, gender outcomes can be engaged on without disrupting a company's normal business model.

Best Practices

To overcome the challenges of gender lens investing and maximise its potential, investors should follow several best practices. These include:

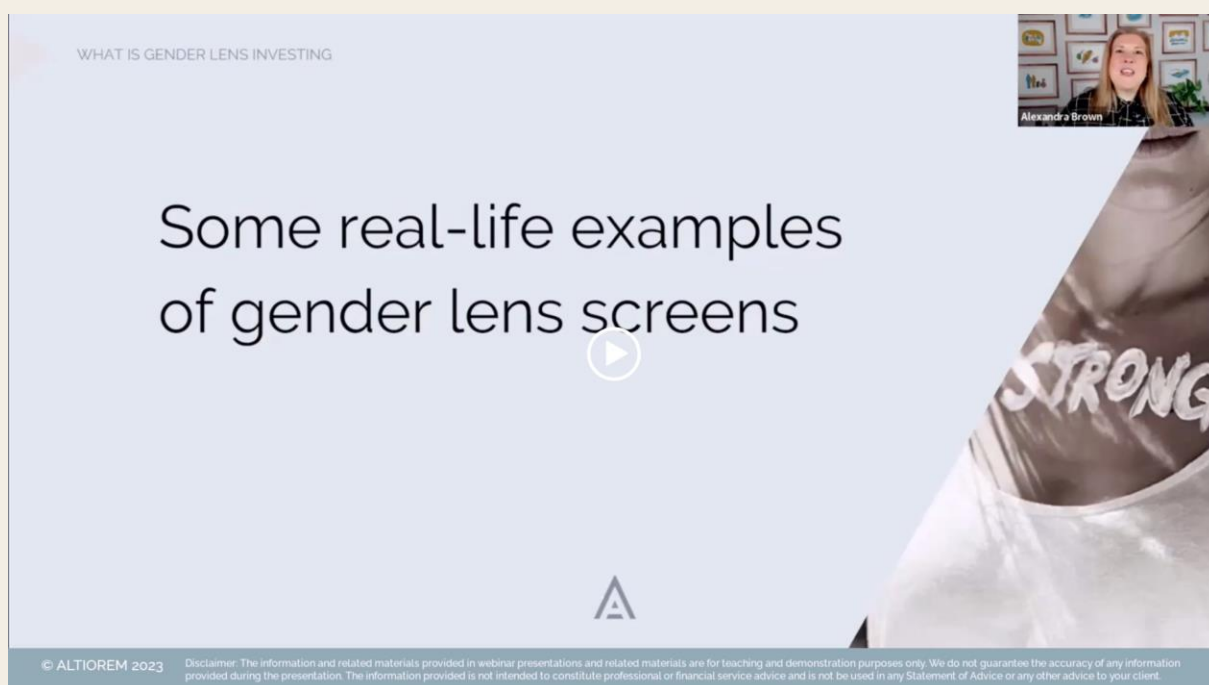
1. **Conduct a gender-based analysis:** Before investing in a company, investors should conduct a gender-based analysis to assess the company's policies and practices regarding gender equality and women's empowerment. This analysis should consider factors such as the gender composition of leadership and employees, the company's policies and practices regarding equal pay and work-life balance, and the products or services the company provides.
2. **Set clear goals and metrics:** Investors should set clear goals and metrics for measuring the impact of their gender lens investing strategies. This should include both financial and social impact goals and should be based on reliable data and metrics.
3. **Prioritise diversity and inclusion:** Investors should prioritise diversity and inclusion within their own organisations and investment processes. This includes promoting diversity among investment professionals, establishing inclusive policies and practices, and actively seeking out investment opportunities that promote diversity and gender equality.



4. **Collaborate and engage with stakeholders:** Gender lens investing is most effective when investors collaborate and engage with various stakeholders, including companies, non-profits, and advocacy groups. By working together, investors can leverage their collective influence to drive positive change and promote gender equality.
5. **Advocate for policy change:** Gender lens investors can play a crucial role in advocating for policy changes that support gender equality and women's empowerment. This can involve engaging with policymakers, supporting initiatives that promote gender equality, and using their influence to push for regulatory reforms that create a more equitable investment landscape.
6. **Integrate gender lens investing across asset classes:** Gender lens investing can be applied across various asset classes, including public equities, fixed income, private equity, and venture capital. By integrating gender analysis into investment decisions across asset classes, investors can have a more comprehensive impact and diversify their portfolios.
7. **Educate and raise awareness:** Gender lens investing is still a relatively new concept, and many investors may not be familiar with its potential benefits. Therefore, it is essential to educate and raise awareness among investors, asset managers, and other relevant stakeholders about gender lens investing, its impact, and its potential for financial returns.
8. **Measure and report impact:** To demonstrate the effectiveness and value of gender lens investing, investors should measure and report on the impact of their investments. This includes tracking the financial performance of gender lens investments, as well as measuring the social impact and progress towards gender equality goals.

Case Studies

Numerous case studies and examples highlight the varied approaches of gender lens investing. For example, [Impax Ellevest Global Women's Leadership Fund](#), focuses on investing in companies with diverse leadership teams and strong gender policies. The [Global Small Cap Gender Forward](#) fund by Promethos Capital invests in companies with gender diverse leadership in boardroom and executive roles. Their strategy ensures companies meet minimum gender criteria for inclusion in the portfolio, such as at least 20% women on the board. [RobecoSAM Global Gender Equality Equities fund](#) is an actively managed fund that invests globally in companies that advance gender diversity and gender equality. The strategy integrates sustainability criteria as part of the stock selection process and the eligible investment universe includes companies with higher gender scores based on an internally developed gender score methodology. This comprises various criteria, such as board diversity, equal remuneration, talent management and employee well-being.



- Video link: [Some real-life examples of gender lens screens](#)
- Source: Video snippet from [Women in Banking and Finance UK](#) event "Supporting women through gender lens investing" held May 2023

Believed to be the world's first gender lens property fund, [Women in Safe Homes](#) (WISH), supports women who are at risk of homelessness due to abuse or other challenging circumstances, with the aim of acquiring housing for hundreds of women and children across the UK. The fund is an example of innovative partnership in action. Big Society Capital, a leading UK social impact investor, developed the initial fund proposal with property investor Patron Capital and impact investment fund manager Resonance, while women's charities manage the housing and provide other specialist support. Women in Safe Homes was launched in December 2020 with an initial investment of £15.5M, and an aim to raise £100M.

There is a significant demand for safe and secure homes for women in need. In the UK, two-thirds of homeless adults living in temporary accommodation are women, while Women's Aid reports that 60%

of women referred to specialist refuges are turned away, mainly due to lack of space. The Women in Safe Homes fund seeks to provide affordable, safe, secure homes across the UK for women who: are experiencing homelessness; are survivors of domestic abuse; used to be in prison; or have other complex needs.

AXA Investment Managers rebranded its Framlington Women Empowerment fund in order to expand its investable universe. The fund formerly invested in companies that fostered gender diversity, but now the [AXA World Funds ACT Framlington Social Progress fund](#) invests in companies that address a wider range of social needs relating to sustainable human progress.

According to AXA, the new broader mandate allows the fund to address all of the UN Sustainable Development Goals with a social focus, in particular access to affordable housing, essential infrastructure and financial & digital inclusion (SDGs 8, 9 and 11); protection through healthcare solutions and safety (SDGs 2, 3, 11 and 16); and progress by investing in companies which foster education, and entrepreneurship and wellbeing (SDGs 4, 5, 8 and 9).

The portfolio manager has stated that the economic empowerment of women will remain a “critical area of focus” within the fund, and promoting gender diversity will continue to be part of their active ownership agenda addressed through engagement and voting, and other initiatives such as the 30% Club Investor Group in France and in the UK. The 30% Club is a campaign group taking action to increase gender and cultural diversity on boards and senior management teams.

Another example is the [Coralus](#) (formerly SheEO) initiative, which brings together a global network of women investors who collectively fund and support female-led ventures. Coralus demonstrates the power of collaboration and community-driven investment to address gender inequality and promote women’s entrepreneurship.

For more examples of gender lens funds, Parallele Finance provides a [list of equity funds](#) across the globe including asset manager, number of holdings and gender lens investment criteria.

Conclusion

Gender lens investing involves the use of a gender-based analysis to identify investment opportunities that promote gender equality and women's empowerment. This analysis considers factors such as the gender composition of leadership and employees, the company's policies and practices regarding gender equality, and the products or services the company provides. Gender lens investing can take various forms, including investing in companies with female leaders, investing in companies that prioritise gender diversity, and investing in companies that provide products, services, or access themes that benefit women and girls. Gender lens investing is an emerging and impactful approach that aligns financial objectives with gender equality and women's empowerment. By applying a gender-based analysis and investing in companies that prioritise gender diversity and equality, investors can drive positive change while pursuing financial returns. Although there are challenges to overcome, the adoption of best practices and collaboration among stakeholders can unlock the full potential of gender lens investing. As more investors recognise the importance of gender equality and incorporate it into their investment strategies, we can move closer to a more inclusive and equitable world.

Learn more

There are many great resources to strengthen your knowledge and skills in gender lens investing. For example, if you would like to undertake an in depth free course, you can access the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) – [Impact Gender Lens Investing](#) Training Programme. Or, if you are looking for gender ratings and metrics, explore [Ethos ESG](#); a fintech that will help you discover funds and companies that align with gender equality and women's rights.



HOW YOU CAN FIND OUT MORE AND TAKE ACTION

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- Video link: [How can you find out more and take action?](#)
- Source: Video snippet from [Women in Banking and Finance UK](#) event "Supporting women through gender lens investing" held May 2023

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