



Mel Nava is the CEO and Founder of 1Export, a female-founded and -led start-up company in the Philippines that supports the growth of Filipino brands on the global stage. Photo: Investing in Women

INVESTING IN WOMEN

SMART ECONOMICS

CATALYSING INCLUSIVE, SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC RECOVERY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Investing in Women (IW) is a multi-country Australian Government initiative in Southeast Asia that seeks to accelerate women’s economic empowerment through increased and equitable opportunities in the private sector, contributing to inclusive, sustainable economic recovery and growth in targeted countries.

Building on the results, partnerships and lessons established under the first seven years of the program (2016-2023) IW works to extend and deepen Australia’s contribution to advancing gender equality in Southeast Asia by influencing and growing an ecosystem of policymakers, business leaders, capital providers and women’s economic empowerment actors.

THE CHALLENGE

Women’s economic empowerment is not only a fundamental aspect of promoting gender equality; it is key to enhancing business competitiveness, fuelling inclusive economic growth and building equitable societies. Despite the immense potential, women continue to be underrepresented at all levels of economic participation.

In the rapidly evolving and diverse landscape of Southeast Asia, gender inequality stands as a significant barrier to economic advancement. While some progress has been made, the region continues to grapple with significant gender gaps in economic opportunities and outcomes, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The evidence clearly shows that investing in women—unlocking their productivity, skills, talent, innovation and leadership—benefits not only the women themselves but also their families, communities, workplaces and nations. Placing women at the forefront of economic recovery and resilience is a strategic imperative to achieve sustainable development in Southeast Asia.

THE APPROACH

IW tackles constraints to gender equality in Southeast Asia. The program works to accelerate women’s economic empowerment by supporting women to thrive in the workplace and succeed in business. To achieve this aim, IW partners with a diverse ecosystem of business leaders, capital providers, entrepreneurs and gender equality advocates in Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam and Myanmar to reduce or remove structural barriers to women’s economic participation.

By advancing women’s economic empowerment, IW works to build the foundation for more inclusive, resilient, and gender-equal societies and economies.



From left to right: Annie Guiang, head of quality control at Prime Innov8 in the Philippines, Jeannie Andrada, founder and product creator of JustGoLowCarb in the Philippines, and Rita Erna Mayasari, member of the Army Women’s Corps (Kowad) in Indonesia. Photos: Investing in Women

ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE

IW has been tackling women's economic empowerment with the support of the Australian Government since 2016.

Since then, IW has:

Established Business Coalitions for workplace gender equality in Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam and Myanmar.

**128 MAJOR
BUSINESSES**
**> 1M
EMPLOYEES**

Worked with 10 investing partners, that catalysed over AUD 525 million to bridge the finance gap for women entrepreneurs.

**\$15.4M
INVESTED TO
82
WOMEN LED/
OWNED SMEs**

Increasing deal growth in the regional investment community via gender lens investing in partnership with market-building allies.

**3.4X
INCREASE IN
NUMBER**
**7X
INCREASE IN
VALUE OF GLI
DEALS**

Supported local partners to deliver targeted advocacy campaigns across Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam.

**MORE THAN
311M
IN ONLINE
REACH**

Data as at June 2023.

DRIVING IMPACTFUL CHANGE FOR GENDER EQUALITY

IW uses innovative approaches to catalyse women's economic participation and strengthen the enabling environment for women's economic empowerment, including:



Workplace Gender Equality supporting Business Coalitions that work with influential businesses on shifting workplace cultures, practices, and policy to achieve workplace gender equality, reaching more than one million employees.



Enabling Policy Reform working with credible local institutions to strengthen the evidence base and drive collective action needed to influence and inform policy reform that supports women's equal economic participation, particularly related to the care economy.



Campaigns and Communities of Practice supporting locally driven campaigns that positively shift gender norms amongst women and men that inhibit women's economic participation. Working with a community of advocates, IW will build evidence and networks that support the broader adoption of more gender-equal attitudes and behaviours.



Gender Lens Investing working to increase access to capital for women owned and women led small-and-medium enterprises (SMEs) by partnering with capital providers on Gender Lens Investing strategies and products.

While we acknowledge the diverse roles women play in society and the economy, our efforts focus on women in the formal sector and small-to-medium-sized business owners, recognising them as crucial drivers of progress on gender equality that can stimulate broader change.

PARTNERING FOR PROGRESS

Our success hinges on collaboration with those driving change in the region. We invite corporations and business leaders, policymakers and implementers, capital providers, entrepreneurs, and advocates to join us on this journey to achieve lasting change for gender equality in Southeast Asia.

Together, we can build an inclusive world that supports women to participate equally, spurs economic growth, and paves the way for more equitable societies and economies.



Impact investors and entrepreneurs at the 2017 Transformational Business Network conference in Jakarta, Indonesia. Photo: Investing in Women

PHILIPPINES

INDONESIA

VIETNAM

MYANMAR

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INVESTING IN WOMEN
SMART ECONOMICS
AN INITIATIVE OF THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT

**Australian
Aid** 