



## **A TIDAL WAVE OF CHANGE**

Dee Beaudette, CFRE - President, Collective Changes

As I walked along a beach in Seattle the other day, I passed a bench that was engraved with these words, “Take time to watch the changing tides”. I was hoping these words were fortuitous of the empowerment of women globally and breaking of the barriers facing women in the workforce. It is time for changing tides—but we can’t take time to watch.

There is an unprecedented engagement of all the necessary players dancing around the concepts from very high levels. Corporations are utilizing modest levels of internal mentoring and corporate social responsibility as a means to attract, engage and retain women employees – but often not broad enough to capitalize on the talent they have at stake. Many governments are seeking collaborative ways to solve global issues (and some even lifting the veil of ignorance and arrogance) yet we see them slow to actually integrate cost effective measures to change their lack of women’s empowerment and economic growth. They have yet to recognize that the sooner they jump on the band wagon the sooner their GDP will rise. NGO’s are leveraging feet on the ground and some of the often underutilized and overlooked individuals are acting on “individual social responsibility” but without the leveraging of skills and new technology to support their efforts. High level leadership to solve global issues of parity and equity is the common thread but as we watch for changing tides we see more talk about the possibilities and little about actions. Changing tides?

The fifty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women took place at United Nations Headquarters in New York March 4-15, 2013. Governments adopted an historic agreement on the Status of Women to prevent and end violence against women and girls. This is yet another agreement which displays intention but not action. These same conversations have been taking place in a number of similar venues for the last 20 years – yet time and time again we see no movement.

The continuum of gender based violence, spans from domestic and intimate-partner violence, to political violence, and violence in the public space with impacts women’s lives, their families and society as a whole. Gender based violence has not decreased since this conversation started. The economic impact of gender based violence, especially for families in poverty continues to be devastating. In order to gain prosperity in any economy, gender based violence must not just be addressed, it must be condemned and punished.

Globally, gender-based violence kills and disables more women between the ages of 15-44 than does cancer.

In an exclusive essay, Warren Buffet explains why women are key to America's prosperity. In his words:

“Start with the fact that our country's progress since 1776 has been mind-blowing, like nothing the world has ever seen. Our secret sauce has been a political and economic system that unleashes human potential to an extraordinary degree. As a result Americans today enjoy an abundance of goods and services that no one could have dreamed of just a few centuries ago.

But that's not the half of it -- or, rather, it's just about the half of it. America has forged this success while utilizing, in large part, only half of the country's talent. For most of our history, women -- whatever their abilities -- have been relegated to the sidelines. Only in recent years have we begun to correct that problem.”

“The closer that America comes to fully employing the talents of all its citizens, the greater its output of goods and services will be. We've seen what can be accomplished when we use 50% of our human capacity. If you visualize what 100% can do, you'll join me as an unbridled optimist about America's future.”

Buffett challenged male executives to think about how women can boost productivity.

This would create not a changing wave to watch but a tidal wave we can ride. Some corporations are leveraging corporate social responsibility through the support of women owned SME's (small and medium enterprises) in their supply chain. This is a huge step in the right direction as it will create jobs, and build social, economic and political stability in their families and communities. An example of one of these companies we have had the opportunity to see, first hand, the efforts of The Gap's process as well as Starbucks efforts to help smaller coffee growers – often women's enterprises or efforts.

USAID's new Women's Leadership in Small and Medium Enterprises program is aimed at scaling up micro to medium business ownership. The program's goal is to decrease the gender gap in business ownership—for example, in South Asia only 3% of small and medium businesses are women-owned. Multiple studies and research indicate dramatic reductions in gender based violence (GBV) when there is a decrease in the gender gap in business ownership. In a 2008 UNDP study the actual GDP income can be impacted by as much as 7.5% and household income reduced by 4.5% based on

The Women's Empowerment Principles – Equality Means Business is a joint initiative of UN Women and the UN Global Compact. The Principles outline seven steps for business on how to empower women in the workplace, marketplace and community. The Principles highlight that empowering women to participate fully in economic life across all sectors and throughout all levels of economic activity is essential to build strong economies; establish more stable and just societies; achieve internationally agreed goals for development, sustainability, and human

rights; improve quality of life for women, men, families and communities; and propel business' operations and goals.

It is estimated by The Institute for Business and Finance Research in a 2010 published article that there are well over one million women with MBAs who desire to give back and share their skills to enhance social, economic and political security.

By leveraging technology and talent we can create a tidal wave empowering women and growing jobs which will bring about dramatic growth of economies as well as political, social and economic stability.

---

Dee Beaudette is the President for Collective Changes [www.collectivechanges.net](http://www.collectivechanges.net) a nonprofit that provides business mentors for women's SME's in developing nations and Consultant for MacKenzie-Romero Consulting, former CEO of Peak Education, Executive Director of HIS Foundation, Executive Director of Washington State Distributive Education Clubs of America (DECA). Dee is a diversified professional with over 25 years of leadership, organizational development and marketing with a strong background in non-profit development and management including all phases of philanthropy; strategic development, governance, financial analysis, donor development and recognition. Dee is the emerging expert on e-learning, virtual mentoring and speaks on the need for mentors and engagement of women's economic empowerment.