

SEAF's Gender Equality Scorecard© – a tool to advance women's economic empowerment and gender equality in emerging markets

By Bert van der Vaart, CEO & Co-founder, SEAF

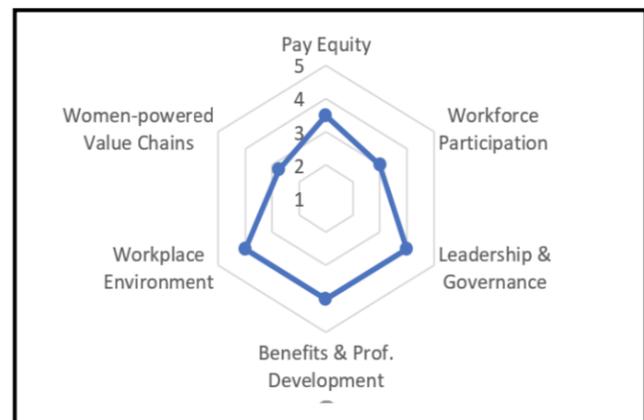
After nearly 30 years of investing in emerging and frontier markets, SEAF has finally found market forces aligning with our desire to expand investing effort to address women's economic empowerment and gender equality. Women have the potential to be the driving force in every economy, yet in so many developing countries, government and workplace policies have failed to spur these engines of growth. At SEAF, we believe that the private sector work is essential to providing solutions to issues that governments in emerging economies have yet to address.

Women are essential to economic development. While women are increasingly forming a larger part of the global workforce, they are often undervalued in both the marketplace and the workplace. The UN SDGs will never be met if we don't work to overcome the economic empowerment challenges women and girls are facing .

In 2017, we launched the SEAF Women's Opportunity Fund ("SWOF"), SEAF's first sole-purpose gender lens investing fund, which has focused on women-led and owned SMEs in Southeast Asia (consider replace with specific countries Vietnam, Indonesia and Philippines). From this investment activity, and in partnership with the Investing in Women Initiative and Criterion Institute, it was apparent that more could be done to advance gender equality through SME investing, all for the benefit of women, investors, and entrepreneurs. As we began down this path, we realized that while there are several gender equality assessment guides in the market place, such as MEDA's GEMS framework, there has yet to be developed a practical scoring mechanism to track gender equality progress over time in order to target work for gender equality-related value creation. We set out to develop what would become the SEAF Gender Equality Scorecard© ("GES"), a proprietary tool SEAF uses to assess women's economic empowerment and gender equality within individual investment opportunities and portfolio companies for select SEAF funds.

The GES© was created in recognition that significant, shared value can be created for women, investors and entrepreneurs through investing in gender equality-focused companies. Current research suggests that a commitment to ESG, in general, and gender equality and women's economic empowerment, in particular, significantly improves company performance. This rating system is structured around six gender equality vectors, including pay equity, workforce

SEAF Gender Equality Scorecard © Components



participation, leadership and governance, benefits and professional development, workplace environment, and women-powered value chains.

SEAF's Gender Equality Scorecard© is used for two main purposes - as a screening tool to identify companies already demonstrating a commitment to gender equality as well as a tool to assess portfolio companies' level of demonstrated gender equality in order to improve it over the investment hold period, as a value creation activity. In addition, the scorecard serves as a guideline to develop SEAF's best practices in the implementation of its gender improvement plans across the parameters of each gender equality vector. Finally, SEAF will leverage the scorecard data derived from the tool as it is applied across its gender lens portfolio to support the analysis of the impact of improving gender equality on increasing investment returns for investors, thus validating our investment thesis. Ultimately, we hope to attract more investors to investments that take into account women's economic empowerment and gender equality in the workplace.

Thus far, SWOF has invested in Phuong Chau, the leading OB/GYN healthcare facility in the Mekong Delta which provides skilled employment for women, and eases the capacity pressure on the public hospital system; Kyna, a Vietnamese EdTech company that provides online education courses for adults and children with a particular emphasis on women and girls; and Organica, a leading Vietnamese producer and distributor of organic and natural foods that was founded by a young mother who was concerned with food security in the country. We employ the GES© to analyze these investments on an annual basis to continuously identify potential avenues for value creation.

We invite you to learn more about the GES©, provide us with feedback, share the knowledge, and to join us as we work to empower women in the marketplace and workplace in emerging markets.