

Contact: Sandra Bunch, ICRW 202.742.1240,  
[sbunch@icrw.org](mailto:sbunch@icrw.org); Stephanie Miedema,  
ICRW 202.742.1212, [smiedema@icrw.org](mailto:smiedema@icrw.org)

Press Release

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## **ICRW awards gala honors global champions for women's economic growth**

Goldman Sachs *10,000 Women*, South African Small Enterprise Foundation awarded  
for work on women as entrepreneurs in developing world

**WASHINGTON, D.C.**, March 4, 2009 – On the eve of International Women's Day, the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) calls for substantial investments in poorer women as economic actors who spur global economic growth, and celebrates two global leaders who have been trailblazers toward that goal.

"The economic collapse hits women in developing countries the hardest," says ICRW President Geeta Rao Gupta. "Yet never before has the world been so poised to take advantage of the powerful economic potential of women in developing countries.

"Investing in women requires both vision and innovation," she adds. "If other world leaders – from business, government, service and other communities – follow the example of our awardees tonight, we can take our 40 years of evidence and build programs and services that improve economies and people's lives everywhere," Rao Gupta says, addressing guests who attended the evening's event, including congressional representatives, members of the diplomatic corps, celebrities and media.

The 2009 Champions for Change awards gala, held tonight at Union Station in Washington, D.C., was co-chaired by His Excellency Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Ambassador of Kuwait, and Mrs. Rima Al-Sabah. Cherie Blair, wife of former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair, made remarks during the event as the evening's special guest.

The Vision award went to Goldman Sachs for *10,000 Women*, an initiative to provide 10,000 underserved women around the world with business and management education. The Innovation award was presented to the Small Enterprise Foundation (SEF), a South African microfinance organization that aims to eliminate poverty by economically empowering women from the poorest households of South Africa through micro-enterprise and sustainable small business.

"We commend Goldman Sachs and SEF, and the many other global leaders, for their inspiring work to improve the economic livelihoods of women, particularly during today's unprecedented economic climate, which provides a key opportunity to put underserved women at the forefront of global economic change," says Blair, who also serves on the ICRW leadership council.

“Very poor women have shown again and again how, when given the chance, they are able to face all of the challenges that life throws at them, overcome these, and ensure that their families are provided for and advance from strength to strength,” says John de Wit, SEF president and founder, who accepted the Innovation award with Lufuno Muvhango, project manager of Intervention with Microfinance for AIDS and Gender Equity (IMAGE).

“In these times when it seems that the foundation on which we have based our understanding of how the economy works has dissolved before our eyes, we will do well to recognize the rock that has not been shaken, the women of our society who, when given the opportunity will ensure that society does not collapse,” de Wit adds.

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Award recipients John de Wit, Small Enterprise Foundation; and Lufuno Muvhango, IMAGE, are available for media. For inquiries and scheduling, contact Stephanie Miedema, ICRW, 202.742.1212 or [smiedema@icrw.org](mailto:smiedema@icrw.org). For inquiries related to the *10,000 Women* initiative, contact Joe Snodgrass in Goldman Sachs Media Relations at 212.902.5400.

Date: Wed. March 4, 2009

Time: 6:30 p.m.

Place: Union Station, Washington, D.C.

***ABOUT ICRW:*** *The International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) is a leading Washington, D.C.-based international research organization with offices in India and Uganda that works to advance gender equality and human rights, fight poverty, and promote sustainable economic and social development for all. Learn more about ICRW and its work at [www.icrw.org](http://www.icrw.org).*