



A series by the African  
Private Equity and Venture  
Capital Association

# Achieving the SDGs through African Private Equity and Venture Capital

SDG 5: Gender Equality



# Executive Summary

Over the past 20 years, AVCA has remained committed to tracking, monitoring, and reporting on the wide-reaching positive impact of private equity and venture capital across the continent. The objective of this case study series, **Achieving the SDGs through African Private Equity and Venture Capital**, is to encourage greater collaboration between fund managers, institutional investors, and entrepreneurs to **drive sustainable growth in Africa**.

It is now six years since the United Nations (UN) launched a global call to institutions and individuals to commit to creating a future of prosperity and peace for all by 2030, through the Sustainable Development Goals (“SDGs”). The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (“the 2030 Agenda”) established 17 SDGs with 169 targets and 232 indicators to enable progress tracking as key global actors, including investors, businesses, civil society, and governments, implement the 2030 Agenda.

According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), meeting the SDGs in emerging markets will require an investment up to the value of US\$4.5 trillion annually, primarily for infrastructure, education, healthcare, and agricultural development. Globally, the private sector is responsible for most investments and has played a historic role in addressing structural, social, and environmental challenges in Africa.



## GENDER EQUALITY

The SDGs provide a practical framework to achieve inclusive growth on the continent, and the private sector has a vital part to play in mobilising African countries to achieve the 2030 Agenda while strengthening the economy. Africa-focused fund managers and institutional investors have risen to the challenge as they continue to deploy and allocate capital to support the businesses driving long-term economic growth across the continent.

Recognising the importance of businesses and investors in realising the 2030 Agenda, the UN Development Programme (UNDP) launched the SDG Impact Standards for Private Equity Funds to outline a clear system to support private equity (PE), venture capital (VC) and other private market funds to achieve impact and contribute towards sustainable development through their investments.





**GENDER  
EQUALITY**

---

Where Africa is concerned, responsible investing has always been at the heart of private equity due to the origins of the asset class. As Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles became more prominent in the global investment landscape, AVCA set out to tell the story of impact in Africa. In 2018, we published our first special report, An

Untold Story: The Evolution of Responsible Investing in Africa, to highlight the role of development finance institutions (DFIs) and private equity fund managers in creating sustainable growth on the continent.

DFIs have demonstrated how investments in the private sector in emerging markets can have significant positive effects on job creation

and economic growth. Furthermore, with the majority of private investors in Africa promoting and achieving both impact objectives and commercial returns, Africa-focused fund managers are uniquely positioned to contribute to achieving the 2030 Agenda by investing in companies that advance the SDGs.

# Sustainable Development

## Goal 5 – Gender Equality

This case study focuses on Adenia Partners' investment in Red Lands Roses, a company that specializes in the production of premium roses in Kenya, and investigates how they are integrating 'SDG 5 – Gender Equality' into this.

Adenia Partners is a private markets investment firm committed to responsible investing and a sustainable Africa. By creating stronger companies with quality jobs, fostering economic improvement, and elevating companies to meet ESG standards, Adenia is increasing the enterprise value for investors, while benefiting workers, communities, and companies in Africa.



# Investor & Company Profile



Portfolio Company Name:

**Red Lands  
Roses**

Country:

**Kenya**

Year of Investment:

**2021**

PE Investor:

**Adenia Partners**

Sector:

**Agribusiness**

# Investor Engagement with the SDGs



## What are the key drivers for integrating SDG 5 into your investment approach and organisational structure?

At Adenia, we are convinced that gender equality in our team and our portfolio companies' teams is a driver of improved performance, through better representation of the communities we serve, and a more diverse pool of ideas and energies. That is why, as a control investor, currently invested in 11 companies employing over 8,500 people, we have always worked closely with management teams to build inclusive workplaces.

In July 2021, we decided to go a step further and to mark our intentionality on gender equality by formally committing to contribute to SDG 5 and its two sub-indicators: (i) increasing women's representation in our leadership and our teams, and (ii) ending all forms of discrimination, making sure that everyone feels respected, accepted, supported, and fairly rewarded.

We decided to set ambitious targets and timelines to best contribute to SDG 5:

- By end of 2022, we commit that 20% of Adenia's Investment Committee members and 25% of Partners will be women
- By 2027, we commit that 30% of Adenia's IC members and 40% of investment team and staff will be women
- At least 50-75% of our future investees will be aligned with at least one 2X Challenge criterion before exit
- We will develop a Gender Policy and tailored Gender Action Plan for 100% of our newly invested companies (as from 2022) before exit

These commitments formalize an intention that has always driven Adenia's vision. As of December 2021, 66% of Adenia Capital (IV) investees are already aligned with at least one criterion of 2X Challenge.



**GENDER  
EQUALITY**



### **How did you integrate SDG 5 into your investment strategy and decision-making processes for your portfolio company?**

Established in 1996 in Kenya, Red Lands Roses (Red Lands) specializes in the production of high-quality, premium roses and offers close to 200 varieties to a client base that spans across Europe, the Middle East and Asia. Adenia was attracted by Red Lands' positioning as a niche producer, with a reputable brand across diverse global markets. Adenia saw an opportunity to help Red Lands grow its production capacity, increase its market share and venture into new global flower markets.

Prior to the investment decision, Adenia undertook an environmental, social and governance due diligence exercise conducted by an external consultant, Ibis Consulting, with the support of our in-house team. Shortly after developing our gender strategy, Adenia identified Red Lands as a high contributor to SDG 5 as it was already a 2X Challenge aligned company:

- The company was founded by a woman
- The Founders seek to attain gender balance within management
- The company employs a majority (55%) of women
- The company already had a gender policy and a bi-monthly Gender Committee. They also have a grievance mechanism and provide trainings on Gender Bias and Gender Based-Violence.



**GENDER  
EQUALITY**



### **What are the key challenges you've faced thus far implementing and measuring progress made towards promoting SDG 5 in your portfolio company?**

Red Lands is a recent acquisition for Adenia and no major challenges have been faced so far. The company will be part of a gender project launched with several of Adenia Capital (IV) companies to run a gender-gap assessment and design a detailed gender action plan to be implemented before exit. This action plan will notably include reviewing or developing HR documentation (including recruitment, career advancement, remuneration, non-discrimination policies) to systematically include a gender perspective and train staff on these updated policies and procedures.

This project will be systematized for all investee companies acquired by future funds.

### **Has the COVID-19 pandemic changed the implementation of SDG 5 and how the organisation achieves impact within your portfolio company?**

Flexible working procedures have been implemented among our investee companies to support eligible employees with necessary daycare. During the Covid-19 pandemic, Red Lands, considered an essential service provider in Kenya, implemented sanitary measures to ensure business continuity, including offering transportation solutions for all employees who work after sunset.

# Investment Impact Profile



No	SDG 5 Goals		Adenia Partners/Red Lands Roses' Contribution
	Target	Indicator	
5.1	End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere.	Presence of internal frameworks or policies to promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex.	<p>Red Lands has implemented a Gender Policy and Grievance Mechanism. The company holds bi-monthly Gender Committee whose goals are the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advancing the status of women towards equality in representation, in education and with regards to personal status</li> <li>• Preventing discrimination as a result of gender or sexual preference in all spheres</li> <li>• Reducing the economic gaps</li> <li>• Fighting violence against women</li> <li>• Promoting modern birth control tools</li> <li>• Sensitizing employees on risks of Female Genital Mutilation</li> </ul> <p>Where women are under-represented and qualifications are the same, Red Lands gives preference to women in appointments, professional advancement and vocational training places.</p>



<b>5.4</b>	Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate.	Provisions at the portfolio company level that support caregivers and those with responsibilities related to unpaid domestic and care work.	Red Lands undertakes various corporate social responsibility activities, including running Gitothua Day Care Centre (GCC), established in 2006, which caters for children of employees of Red Lands as well as a rescue center for women and girls in the surrounding Ruiru community who may be victims of violence. The company also has a scheme for payment of school fees for employees' children with a priority focus on girls.
<b>5.5</b>	Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.	Proportion of women at the portfolio company level in senior executive or managerial positions.	<p>Isabelle Spindler, who founded Red Lands, was exploring exit options after developing the company for 25 years. After its acquisition, Adenia decided to continue to collaborate with her as the Managing Director of the company. In addition, Adenia recruited a woman CEO, Disha Copeaux, to head the company's operations and ambitious expansion strategy (+50% production capacity and +250 employees by 2023).</p> <p>Since acquisition, Adenia set up a gender-balanced Board, with women comprising more than 50%.</p> <p>Our goal is to maintain gender diversity within the company staff (already at 55%) and the senior management team (c. 50%).</p>

## Company View

### **What are the main challenges you face in advancing toward gender equality?**

While there has been a lot of progress achieved in terms of women's rights and gender equality in Kenya, we still need to overcome some deeply rooted societal barriers and cultural beliefs.

In terms of recruitment, we have difficulties finding women candidates for high-level technical management positions in Production, Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and IT departments. This is largely attributed to the reality that fewer women in Kenya graduate from technical and engineering courses. Conversely, lower skilled jobs such as cleaners or laundry works are filled by women partly due to lower education levels required for such roles but also, because most male employees consider these to be women jobs - a perception we want to change.

As part of our efforts to prevent sexual harassment and gender-based violence, we run preventative trainings on the topic, systematically investigate such cases, and specify in all employment contracts that sexual harassment accusations are cause for summary dismissal. We occasionally experience cases of domestic violence, with some female employees reporting to work after

being badly beaten. The company has built a female refuge flat in our Day Care Center to temporarily host women and children fleeing violent situations.

### **How do you support working mothers at Red Lands Roses?**

The company pays all antenatal costs for female employees including a scan at 3 to 4 months. Employees are encouraged to start their maternity leave before the estimated due date as work on a farm during the 9th month can be difficult.

We promote lactation by giving 1 hour paid to all female employees after they return from maternity leave up to when the baby is 9 months old in order for them to spend a longer time with the baby for breastfeeding.

We educate our employees on difficulties of raising and educating a large family of more than three children under current social and economic conditions.

We provide school fees for two children of all our employees until 18 years old.



**GENDER  
EQUALITY**

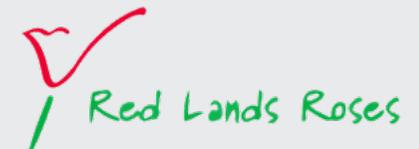
### What are your key priorities for the years to come?

In the coming years, we have lined up several initiatives to promote gender equality including:

- 1. Continue our prevention campaigns against gender-based violence**, via trainings on Female Genital Mutilation, and a continuous monitoring and prevention of all cases of domestic violence and sexual harassment
- 2. Increase female participation in senior roles**, especially in technical works at supervisory and management level, in consideration of the fact that women can do most jobs viewed as male jobs. Our objective is that the Board and senior leadership team of Red Lands Roses always has 50% female members.
- 3. Support work-life balance for all staff, especially women by:**
  - Promoting healthy diet for staff families using vegetables produced in the company community vegetable garden

- Promoting the use of bicycles by female employees
- Promoting sport for female employees at the workplace
- Educating male employees on childcare and domestic duties and tasks to alleviate burden on women with housework after company work
- Educating female employees who don't read and write

**Isabelle Spindler,  
Founder of Red Lands Roses**



### CONTACT AVCA

37 North Row  
3rd Floor  
London W1K 6DH

**E** [avca@avca-africa.org](mailto:avca@avca-africa.org)  
**W** [www.avca-africa.org](http://www.avca-africa.org)  
**T** +44 (0)20 3874 7008