



Dear Jennifer,

During the United Nations' first-ever World Conference on Women in Mexico City in 1975, Women's World Banking founder Michaela Walsh shared a simple but powerful thought: "Women have to own their own banking accounts." That feels obvious to us today, but her words were revolutionary at the time.

Just one year before the conference, women in the United States still needed their husband's signature to open a checking or savings account. Those limitations inspired four visionary leaders, including Michaela, to form Women's World Banking on May 10, 1979—the first nonprofit focused solely on growing women's economic empowerment by ensuring their full inclusion in the formal economy.

By partnering with the financial institutions that shape our global economy, Women's World Banking develops financial services and tools with women's unique needs in mind—helping more women open savings accounts, borrow for their businesses—everything necessary to participate equally in their societies and economies.

Since 2018, we have reached more than 37 million women with critical programs and services, invested heavily in women-centered banks and institutions, and advocated for inclusive policies that reduce inequalities and promote growth.

But there is still so much work left to be done. While many of us experience the world differently than when Women's World Banking was founded, there are still nearly a billion women worldwide who are routinely denied access to critical financial products and services—simply for the fact that they are women.

Each of these billion women have individual stories, dreams, and aspirations for themselves, their families and their communities—goals that can only be achieved with full and equal access to the economy.

That's why we're working towards a future where all women can not only open their own bank accounts, but access capital to launch businesses, insurance to remain resilient through challenges, and other financial tools so they can determine their own futures.

I know this future is possible, and as we celebrate Women's World Banking's 45th anniversary this year, I'm grateful for forward-thinking people like you who are helping us to build it. Thank you, Jennifer, for forming part of our movement to ensure financial access and engagement is a reality for all.

With gratitude,

Mary Ellen

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Mary Ellen Iskenderian

President and CEO

Women's World Banking

P.S. Women's World Banking is celebrating its 45th anniversary this year by sharing the stories of influential people who've shaped our journey!

