

PRESS RELEASE, January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2020

## Non-profit H&M Foundation launches a startup like no other – pitching global top 100 investors to back Unfounded Ltd and help close the financial gender gap

Today the world's top 100 investors are receiving an investment opportunity from *Unfounded Ltd* with the potential to unlock USD330 billion in annual global revenue. The twist? The company might not be real, but all the data and figures are – and so is the potential of women in business. Women make up half the world's population, yet female-founded start-ups only get about 3% of global venture dollar volume. By not giving women entrepreneurs equal access to finance, investors keep missing out on what could become the new Apple Inc. or Amazon.com – every year.

Unfounded Ltd is a metaphor for the immense and largely untapped business potential women and female-led businesses represent for the global economy. The financial characteristics of women have been translated into a could-be company – Unfounded Ltd – that is now being pitched to the top-100 global venture capital firms and investors. There is just one detail missing in the investment opportunity letter. Women. Based on data alone, this should be an investment opportunity that no investor can afford to overlook.

Sadly, statistics show otherwise. The finance gap has been estimated at USD1.7 trillion globally by the World Bank, despite a mountain of evidence highlighting women as a good investment. Women are strong savers, responsible borrowers and calculated risk-takers. Women entrepreneurs achieve higher rates of return, and if allowed to grow, enterprises led by women perform better in the stock market.

“With less than 10 years left to reach the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, it's time to step up the focus on gender equality and specifically financial inclusion as a driver for positive change for women as well as for entire economies. By using the language of investors, we want to reach the individuals who make the judgement calls and write the checks. Unfounded Ltd is a tool to break the barriers that women entrepreneurs face in access to finance,” says Diana Amini, Global Manager, H&M Foundation.

Financial inclusion has been identified by the United Nations as a key enabler in reaching many of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030; reducing poverty, improving education and fighting inequality, but also to create innovation, jobs and economic growth. Still, whether in Silicon Valley or in Sri Lanka, the lack of adequate access to finance is felt by women everywhere. A recent report by the UNSGSA shows that in developing countries, 80 percent of women-owned businesses with credit needs are either unserved or under-served. And in the US, only 2.8 percent of venture capital went to companies founded by women in 2019, according to PitchBook.

Since 2014, H&M Foundation has worked with CARE and has to date supported 167,500 women living in low-income communities to set up and run their own businesses through training, skills development and microfinancing. So far, H&M Foundation has donated close to USD15 million (SEK140 million) to CARE to promote gender equality.

“We know that financial inclusion is one of the best ways to break the cycle of poverty. Together with H&M Foundation we supported 5.000 women entrepreneurs in Ethiopia with training and access to finance, resulting in an increase in their income of 500%. Investing in women brings both financial and social benefits and the sooner investors start realizing this, the better,” says Reintje van Haeringen, Chief Executive, CARE Netherlands.

Together with the investment opportunity letter, investors will also be receiving a report covering the potential of women entrepreneurs. It also includes a compilation of tips and actions on how to address biases in the world of finance, and examples of initiatives on how to create positive change in parts of the world where it is needed the most. The report illustrates women entrepreneurs that are locked behind the statistics.

Website: <https://unfounded.ltd>. For hi-res imagery and press resources: <https://unfounded.ltd/press>

### For more information or interview requests, please contact:

Malin Björne, Communications Manager, H&M Foundation

Mobile: +46 70 796 39 75

E-mail: [malin.bjorne@hmfoundation.com](mailto:malin.bjorne@hmfoundation.com)

## NOTES TO EDITORS

- In 2015, Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls became a stand-alone goal included in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by world leaders at a UN Summit. The year 2020 means only ten years left to work to reach the Sustainable Development Goals.
- In 2017, H&M Foundation developed [Foundation 500](#), a list of entrepreneurs growing their businesses in the harshest startup environments in the world. Referencing the famous Fortune 500 list of CEOs, Foundation 500 consisted of a list of 500 female entrepreneurs enrolled in H&M Foundation's and CARE's Global Program on Women's economic empowerment. By portraying women in a style usually reserved for male entrepreneurs and CEOs; strong, confident, in powerful body postures, the campaign let the viewer re-imagine who what an entrepreneur and a business leader can look like.
- [Unfounded Ltd](#) builds and expands upon the insights from the partnership on gender equality and women economic empowerment that H&M Foundation and CARE together have worked on since 2014 – with 167,500 women reached so far.
- Many of the women entrepreneurs participating in the programs run by H&M Foundation/CARE report that when their companies start to grow and more capital is needed, getting access to financial support is difficult – mainly because they are women.
- Economic empowerment of women minimizes their dependency but also improves the lives of the society surrounding them, since women tend to reinvest money in their families, children and communities.
- The report and investment opportunity letter sent to global top-100 investors can be downloaded at <https://unfounded.ltd/press>
- Details and results of the program run by CARE and H&M Foundation: <https://hmfoundation.com/global-program-for-equality/>
- The following spokespersons are available for quotes and interviews:
  - Diana Amini, Global Manager, non-profit H&M Foundation
  - Reintje van Haeringen, Chief Executive, CARE Netherlands
  - Pre-written text and quotes from four women that have successfully taken part in the Women in Enterprise Program

### About H&M Foundation

The H&M Foundation is a non-profit global foundation headquartered in Stockholm, Sweden. Its mission is to drive long lasting, positive change and improve living conditions by investing in people, communities and innovative ideas. Through partnerships with organisations around the globe, the H&M Foundation aims to act as a catalyst for change and accelerate the progress needed to reach the UN Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. It focuses on four areas; Education, Water, Equality and Planet and can also provide emergency relief. The H&M Foundation is privately funded by the Stefan Persson family, founders and main owners of H & M Hennes & Mauritz AB. Since 2013, the family has donated 1.5 billion Swedish krona (\$200 million/€163 million) to the H&M Foundation. [www.hmfoundation.com](http://www.hmfoundation.com), [www.unfounded.ltd](http://www.unfounded.ltd). Follow @hmfoundation on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and LinkedIn.

### About CARE

Founded in 1945, CARE is a leading humanitarian organization fighting global poverty and providing lifesaving assistance in emergencies. In 100 countries around the world, CARE places special focus on working alongside poor girls and women because, equipped with the proper resources, they have the power to help lift whole families and entire communities out of poverty. To learn more, visit [www.care-international.org](http://www.care-international.org).