

Unlimited Potential: Business Partners for Gender Equality

2015 Women's Empowerment Principles Annual Event

10-11 March 2015



2015 EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

1. *The Need for All Stakeholders to Partner for Gender Equality*



(UN Global Compact/ Andres Wong)

Meeting participants acknowledged that while progress has been made since the Fourth UN World Conference on Women in Beijing 20 years ago, the progress has been too slow. There needs to be a collective approach by all stakeholders including government, business, the UN and civil society to advance gender equality or efforts will continue to fall short. Holding the WEPs event as an official side event to Commission on the Status of Women marks a beginning of a new era for partnership. The [UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon noted](#): “Now it is clear that achieving gender equality will require the concerted efforts of all actors. The Women’s Empowerment Principles

provide a roadmap for businesses to play their role in respecting and supporting women’s rights. Removing the barriers that keep women and girls on the margins of economic, social, cultural and political life must be a top priority for us all – businesses, Governments, the United Nations and civil society.” Joe Keefe, President and CEO, Pax World Funds, added to the importance of partnerships, “We believe that the WEPs community coming together at the CSW 2015 for the first time, marks the beginning of a new stage in this critically important process, it marks the beginning of a different kind of relationship between the business community and the UN, and it is a relationship that is full of promise.”

WEPs companies called on Governments to create an enabling environment for women’s economic empowerment to flourish and for inclusive business to grow. Among other things, participants voiced that governments and businesses need to value the full contributions of unpaid care work in order for gender roles to be neutralized. Sallie Krawcheck, Chair, Ellevest claimed work and care should not be binaries.



(UN Global Compact/ Andres Wong)

At the conclusion of the meeting the WEPs community adopted a [10-point Statement](#) calling on all stakeholders to scale up gender equality action to deliver for women and sustainable development. “As partners for gender equality, we welcome the opportunity to actively participate in global and local forums on gender equality, including the Commission on the Status of Women, to discuss challenges and opportunities, share good practices and lessons learned, and forge partnerships that will allow us to collectively advance implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and realize our commitments to the WEPs” – Excerpt from the 10-point Statement

2. **Mainstreaming Gender is Crucial to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**



(UN Global Compact/ Andres Wong)

Participants were encouraged that gender equality and women’s and girls’ empowerment have been identified as a stand along goal as well as a crucial component to the achievement of the other goals. [Hon. Hillary Rodham Clinton remarked](#) “We need a strong goal on gender equality and we need to integrate gender equality throughout all of the goals. If it’s not there, there will be less of a force behind change.” Participants also noted that stakeholders increasingly recognize the important role of business in achieving sustainable development and highlighted the WEPs as a platform to guide private sector efforts to mainstream gender equality into corporate sustainability, thereby maximizing business’ contribution to the SDGs.

3. **Not Business as Usual: Time for New Business Models**

WEPs stakeholders called for new business models that leverage women’s skills and expertise to create positive sustainable change within communities, businesses and economies. Women have the power to bring a new framing and perspective to old business models in order to create sustainable and inclusive economic environments. As Sallie Krawcheck, Chair, Ellevest noted in her [keynote remarks](#), generating return and having impact are no longer mutually exclusive.



(UN Global Compact/ Andres Wong)

Katherine Miles, Author of “*Incubate, Invest, Impact – Building and Investing in High-Impact Enterprises for Empowering Women and Girls: An Action Plan for Gender Lens Incubation and Investing*,” moderated a panel on [Exploring New Models for Business, Investing and Networks](#) which highlighted the business case



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and business drivers for creating high impact innovative business models with a gender lens. One example showcased was Solar Sister’s “business in a bag” kit to help women start their own clean energy businesses. The innovative business model aims to eradicate energy poverty and provide economic empowerment to women. During her remarks, H.E. Zorana Mihajlović, Deputy Prime Minister, and Minister of Construction, Transport & Infrastructure, Republic of Serbia further emphasized the recognition of women’s roles in achieving sustainable change, “It is important to show that women are each and every country’s economic potential for development.”

4. What Gets Measured Gets Done

Throughout the two days, speakers and participants stressed the importance of data and reporting to create change and motivate organizational strategy. As Barbara Landmann, Senior Vice President, Field Force Operations, Alcatel-Lucent noted in her remarks, “What you measure will improve; (I’ve heard that several times today). We’ve set a strategy, we have goals, we set targets, we have tactical metrics and we measure those metrics on a monthly basis, on a quarterly basis, on a weekly basis. And without measurements in place and constantly looking at your performance against those measurements, we will not see the necessary improvement that our strategy demands and frankly our marketplace demands. It’s an imperative for us to drive gender equality.” The breakout session on reporting showcased [gender equality reporting trends for WEPs companies](#) and highlighted reporting best practices from four WEPs signatories.

5. Time to Conquer the Unconscious Bias

As captured by Ursula Wynhoven, General Counsel & Chief, Governance and Social Sustainability, UN Global Compact and Kristin Hetle, Director of Strategic Partnerships, UN Women in their [remarks](#), it is time to remove the conscious and unconscious barriers or “gender asbestos” seen in the room, the walls, and the floors. Participants voiced, gender biases and perceptions don’t just go away because we want them to, we need to actively and intentionally include women or the system will unintentionally exclude them. A breakout session on Tackling Unconscious Bias highlighted concrete company practices on how to intentionally address individual and organizational behaviour. To learn more about your unconscious bias and implicit associations check out the [Business Implicit Association Tests](#), developed by Diverseo in support of the WEPs.



(UN Global Compact/ Andres Wong)

6. Time for Men to Step Up Beside Women to Change the Status Quo



(UN Global Compact/ Andres Wong)

To address gender inequality, it is vital to engage men in today’s society as that is where the power lies in nations and organizations. As H.E. Manuela Schwesig, Federal Minister of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, Germany shared in her remarks, “Empowerment means a cultural change in the businesses, but also beyond them.” Elizabeth Broderick highlighted this cultural change in her [lunchtime remarks](#), stating that it is about men stepping up beside women to work in partnership to achieve gender equality. Broderick

spearheaded the [Male Champions of Change](#) (MCC) strategy in Australia in 2010 and is now engaged with over 100 male leaders from across the globe to lead action and accelerate progress. At the event she launched the [MCC online manual](#) and challenged audience members to start MCC groups in their own communities, businesses and nations.



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7. Women in Technology and Technology for Women’s Empowerment: Intersecting Revolution

Today technology has the potential to empower women to be agents of change in their families, communities and economies. Panelists on the [Technology and Women’s Rights](#) panel stressed we need to change the discussion from the disappointing statistics of women in the industry to highlighting the success stories in order to encourage women to join the industry and make them feel like they belong. While STEM programmes are needed to develop future generations the impacts from these efforts will not be seen for

another 30 years. To change the gender balance now, society needs to address the retention gap as women are leaving the industry at twice the rate as their male counterparts and organizations need to start building technical roles for women who are already in the workplace. Bruce Campbell, Director, Technical Division, UNFPA pointed to the opportunity to leverage technology to advance women's empowerment. He explained if you follow the life of a 10 year old girl who has interacted with technological devices disseminating information on women's health and reproductive rights, her autonomy and ability to make decisions about her own reproductive health dramatically increase.

8. Raising the Bar by Sharing Best Practices

Throughout the two day event companies shared best practices and policies that they are implementing to advance and invest in women's employment. Panelists shared business case data highlighting the real benefits of implementing and scaling gender smart measures in the workplace, such as effective anti-sexual harassment mechanisms, sponsorship/mentorship programs to increase gender diversity in leadership, flexible working arrangements, and investing in women in the value chain. During a [SheWorks](#) panel on implementing the WEPs in the workplace, Dan Briskin, Vice President of HR, Gap Inc., shared his company's experience, noting that, "Companies that promote women in leadership do better, it is a clear bottom line benefit for us...What is good for our women employees is good for all employees." During a panel on connecting women entrepreneurs to markets, Luna Shamsuddoha, Dohatec New Media, spoke to the positive impact of including women in the value chain, "As a community we can bring women into the value chain and help entrepreneurs succeed by engaging them in modern technology."