

WEPs Companies Take Action to Advance the SDGs

The world is united by a new development agenda:

In September 2015, the United Nations adopted the **17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, laying out a path to end extreme poverty, fight inequality and injustice, and protect our planet by 2030. The empowerment of women and girls is integral to all of the SDGs, with many targets recognizing women's equality and empowerment as both an objective and a solution. From health and education, to water and sanitation and climate change, addressing the world's greatest challenges requires equal consideration for and participation of women and girls. Specifically, **Goal 5 – Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls** – establishes targets on ending violence against women; recognizing and valuing unpaid care work; promoting economic leadership and equal participation opportunities, including to technology; and enabling access to sexual and reproductive health services.

The WEPs offer an established platform to scale up corporate action towards the SDGs:

Responsible business and investment – rooted in internationally accepted principles including gender equality – will be critical to achieving the SDGs, including Goal 5 and gender-specific targets across the SDGs. With 1000+ engaged companies and a global network of supporters from civil society, government and academia, the **Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs)** offer an established platform to scale up corporate action and catalyze partnerships and collaborations that have the potential to deepen and accelerate action towards achieving the SDGs.

Examples

**Please note that this is a working document. The final draft will recognize individual company names.*

Please share your company's actions by emailing WEPs@unglobalcompact.org

Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere

Since 2011, a Brazilian bank provides loans for small firms and entrepreneurs through a nationwide microcredit program, helping people open bank accounts, creating jobs and income, and combating poverty, as part of federal government's plan to end extreme poverty. The microcredit program is mainly for urban areas and has originated more than 45,000 loans totaling around US\$ 100 million. Around 51% of entrepreneurs reached are women.

An international bank developed a programme that uses life skills education channeled through sports to empower adolescent girls from low-income communities with the knowledge and skills needed to make better informed life decisions. This youth development project combines sports with lessons on health and hygiene, communication, rights and financial literacy.

Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture

A North American multinational food manufacturing company developed a training programme for women smallholder farmers in the Indian state of Odisha, who rely on increasingly variable rainfall, in sustainable agricultural practices to enhance their capacities to adapt to and cope with climate change. The programme also works to enhance women's participation in the maize value chain and increase their social standing, incomes and savings.

A Swiss transnational food and beverage company employs veterinarians and agronomists to supervise milk routes and provide female dairy farmers in India and Pakistan with advice on various issues, irrespective of whether or not they are the company's suppliers. There is no charge for veterinary

services, while medicines are provided at wholesale cost. The costs are adjusted against subsequent milk payments to the farmers, making the medicines affordable. The company also supports female farmers in expanding their operations, including by assisting with artificial insemination programmes for cattle, subsidising the purchase of milking machines, and assistance in procuring loans.

Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

A global health care company committed to a 10-year, \$500 million initiative focused on reducing maternal deaths and increasing the available services and quality of care. Since its launch, the programme has strengthened 2,553 health facilities and trained 5,480 health workers.

A Kenyan telecommunications company developed a national mobile health program. It commits to providing mobile health solutions to 20,000 community health workers with an initial focus of reaching 1.5 million pregnant women in Kenya, as well as providing affordable saving options for healthcare during maternity and post natal care.

A Japanese cosmetic company developed an affordable skincare line comprised of a facial cleanser, moisturizer and sunscreen, specifically catered to the needs of rural Bangladeshi women, and trained rural women to deliver workshops on hygiene, nutrition and health in 16 villages. More than 27,000 women attended the first sessions, resulting in an increase of: 17,000 women using less sugar, salt and oils in their cooking; more than 16,000 washing their towels and bed linens more often; and 19,600 washing and keeping dirt away from their hands and faces.

An Irish retailer, in partnership with BSR (Business for Social Responsibility), launched HERhealth initiative at 20+ garment factories. The initiative provides healthcare and health education to women working the factories that make their clothing. Thus far, over 19,000 women have been educated on health in India, Bangladesh, Myanmar, and China.

Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all

A North American Coffee company developed a community program in Guatemala, to raise self-esteem and create educational and economic opportunities for indigenous teenaged girls in rural villages. The program uses group peer models to increase self-esteem and prepare the girls to go back to school, create educational funds and economic opportunities for the girls to fund their future education and to assist the girls in becoming peer educators, advocates and community leaders. Of the first forty girls who participated in the self-esteem and education aspects of the program, all of whom had left school after the sixth grade, all re-entered school; all but two went on to graduate from high school; half are now enrolled at university or college; all but two have put off their first pregnancy from the average age of fourteen to at least eighteen.

An American clothing and accessories retailer aims to educate one million women across the world through an educational program, which includes classes on communication skills, financial literacy, problem solving, health and wellness, by 2020.

A global IT management software and solutions company launched an initiative in partnership with Tech Girls Rock, which aims to inspire tween and teen girls to discover an interest in technology and down the road consider tech-related educational opportunities and careers.

An Arab-based transportation and logistics company partnered with national HR development and employment authorities to launch a three year program to support and train 150 Emirati women on ICT skills. Equipped with essential digital and social media skills, the candidates will be able to access more employment opportunities or start their own ventures. For women starting their own businesses, support will be offered through mentorship, services and training. In 2015, the company worked with 484 women on education, empowerment and entrepreneurship programs.

Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

A multinational law firm supports the growth of women-led businesses and social enterprises by providing free legal advice and skills based volunteering through many of their partnerships, including CARE International, Ashoka and UnLtd.

An Australian bank implemented a domestic violence support policy, which includes paid leave and access to counselling for employees who are victims of domestic violence. The additional paid leave component of the initiative is vital to help victims escape financial dependency on their abuser.

A Brazilian energy company has launched a number of initiatives to advance gender equality and the SDGs. Initiatives aligned with the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs) include providing 120 days maternity leave, extended parental leave for male employees, reduction of daily working hours for breastfeeding employees, and offering a Pregnant Parents Course for both male and female employees. Future actions include establishing a breastfeeding room as well as a Gender Identity school program, designed to promote young women's empowerment and to increase career choices, especially in the traditionally male-dominated electricity sector. The company's Pro Gender Equity Committee further contributes to stronger gender and race equity within the company and the Successful Career Program fosters female leadership training aimed at greater participation of women in decision-making and power roles.

An Irish retailer launched an initiative to support women in the traditionally male-dominated farming communities in Gujarat, India. The initial three-year pilot effort trained 1,251 women smallholder cotton farmers, resulting in an average profit increase of 211%, due to a yield increase of 12.6%. Over the next six years, a projected 10,000 female farmers will be enrolled in the programme. A number of studies have revealed that agricultural programmes which effectively involve women can significantly increase cotton production and trigger transformative societal

Goal 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

An Indian based sanitation company created and distributed sustainable toilets to rural villages in India to ensure women and men have equal and safe access to safe bathroom facilities.

Goal 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all

An Italian based energy company partnered with Barefoot College Program to empower semi-illiterate women from electricity deprived villages by providing them with technical training to install and maintain solar panels. After completing a six month course, the women return to their rural communities where they become solar technicians.

A global generator of renewable clean energy partnered with the Center for Excellence and Innovation in the Automobile Industry to develop new technological solutions to make cities more sustainable and mobile, based on renewable sources. The programme seeks to advance women's participation in the

development of environmentally friendly technologies, and ensures that women comprise 50% of leadership roles and encourages suppliers to embed gender equality into their operations.

Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

An Indian Stainless Steel Corporation, with the support of UNDP and IKEA Foundation, engages with women in India to create better employment and entrepreneurial opportunities. Of the two focus areas of the initiative, the employment work stream assists women in finding employment in stable and growing sectors of the economy through skills training, while the entrepreneurship work stream empowers women to start or grow their own business. A pilot project in the employment work stream provided practical training in Steel Fabrication, including cutting, welding, polishing, packing, and quality control, at the company's own factories and other locations. Upon completion, the women were certified by an independent body and assisted by the initiative to find employment opportunities at various companies. The initiative uniquely engages women in manufacturing processes, where women are underrepresented, relative to other sectors such as IT and hospitality. The initiative aims to train 180 women per year during the pilot phase.

A US based investment company seeks to influence companies to increase board diversity by investing in companies that have diverse boards and management teams. The company led the "Say No to All Male Board" campaign and the CEO wrote to companies with all male boards to encourage them to diversify their boards, as well as urged other investors, investment advisors and individuals to adopt proxy voting guidelines that oppose all slates of director nominees that do not include women.

A French hotel group aims to reach gender parity in management and equal pay through employing 35% female hotel managers and reducing the pay gap between men and women at the head office and in three other countries. The company also motivates male employees in gender equality efforts, with a 35% male membership in the company's internal gender equality network and involving 50,000 male employees as HeForShe champions.

A bank in Laos aims to have at least 40% of female vendor representation on their vendor panel by 2017, and ensures that guests at their client events are at least 40% female.

A Lebanese bank has committed to creating services for women. To put this commitment into practice, in April 2014, the bank hosted a series of trainings for other financial institutions in the MENA and European region on best practices in: serving women's needs in the banking sector, improving women's market strategies, and implementing approaches for women-owned SMES. This training series is part of an ongoing capacity-building partnership with the Global Banking Alliance for Women.

A Seattle startup, co-founded in 2014 by former Microsoft employees, is using machine intelligence and natural language processing to develop systems to remove unconscious bias from the recruiting process. With new funding, the company continues to analyze language that is more likely to attract male and female applicants and aims to increase workplace diversity. Thus far, they report to have helped customers fill job openings nearly 20 percent faster and increased applicants from underrepresented groups by 12 to 15 percent.

Goal 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation

A transport company in India collaborated with several non-governmental and civil society groups, to design and implement measures to enhance the safe travel for women on buses. On many routes the company has introduced women only bus services. In addition, helpline numbers were put on display in buses and around bus stops, helpline booklets were distributed through ticket counters, and a helpline service was launched for distressed women.

Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

A North American multinational food manufacturing company developed a training programme for women smallholder farmers in the Indian state of Odisha, who rely on increasingly variable rainfall, in sustainable agricultural practices to enhance their capacities to adapt to and cope with climate change. The programme also works to enhance women's participation in the maize value chain and increase their social standing, incomes and savings.

A multinational energy company created a vocational training program, which reached more than 30,000 people in South America. Recognizing that women drive much of the consumption in the villages through household tasks, and knowing that the energy sector is a male dominated industry, the company tailored the training specifically to develop women energy entrepreneurs who can help address climate change issues in their communities. The company targets women both in rural zones and in the cities, who currently work as domestic helpers or household cleaners, to become clean energy electricians. The program aims to create a network using its points of sales to encourage these women to open their own electrical repair services. These women are also transferring the knowledge to their children, teaching them how to conserve solar light for longer term use.

Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

An American legal research company has supported the growth of rule of law in Myanmar through conducting a legal research workshop to members of parliament, conducting constitutional awareness workshops to over 100 lawyers across the country, and connecting law schools in Myanmar with schools in Hong Kong and Singapore.

Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development: Systemic issues: Multi-stakeholder partnerships

Global Compact Network Brazil, UNHCR Brazil, and UN Women Brazil have partnered with a Human Resources Consultancy and a General Retailer to promote the employment of female refugees. The partnership offers job application guidance to refugee women, while raising awareness of refugee issues through webinars and events aimed at businesses. So far, around 20 refugee women have participated in two workshops aimed at improving the women's interview skills, language skills, financial planning, and knowledge of their rights as refugees, women and workers in Brazil. 7 businesses also participated in the second workshop, and met and received the resumes of participants. The partnership has so far successfully placed refugees with a cleaning company and a restaurant, and connected women with entrepreneurial interests with relevant support networks. Click to view [pictures](#) and [video](#) of the project.

A Venezuelan network of local pharmacies, in partnership with the UNFPA, has launched an initiative to make more people aware of and encourage them to use sexual and reproductive health.