

Call to Action: Bringing Down Legal Barriers for Women's Economic Empowerment

"The ideal of equality before the law and equality of economic opportunity is not just wise social policy: It's smart economic policy. When women and men participate in economic life on an equal footing, they can contribute their energies to building a more cohesive society and a more resilient economy. The surest way to help enrich the lives of families, communities, and economies is to allow every individual to live up to his or her fullest creative potential." Dr. Jim Yong Kim, President, The World Bank Group

Equality is not only a human right, but also a key priority in achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). While data shows that closing the labour force participation gap would increase the Gross Domestic Product of countries globally, the report by the World Bank Group, [Women, Business and the Law 2016](#), found that almost 90 per cent of 173 countries researched have at least one legal barrier restricting women's economic empowerment, such as their ability to hold certain jobs, access finance, and own real property. These legal restrictions inhibit women's ability to participate effectively in the labour sector and contribute fully to development. To achieve full and sustainable economic prosperity and other development outcomes, all actors need to develop and implement strategies and policies that foster women's economic empowerment and encourage all individuals, women and men, to take responsibility to help drive change.

We call upon Governments from around the world to bring down legal barriers restricting economic opportunities for women, and by doing so, help create an enabling environment for inclusive economic growth. Governments can support such efforts by, among others:

- Enacting laws that promote a level playing field for men and women
- Establishing effective public institutions, including courts and gender equality mechanisms, for the promotion and protection of women's economic opportunities and rights
- Promoting and enabling women's full and equal participation in leadership and decision-making
- Supporting women's entrepreneurship, including through capacity building and finance, public procurement and supplier diversity
- Ensuring women's equal access to assets, including equal rights to land, natural resources and other property rights
- Addressing discrimination against women in the workplace
- Implementing laws and policies with respect to women's health and safety
- Implementing measures to end violence against women and girls
- Recognizing the value of unpaid care work and investing in infrastructure and social services to support working mothers and fathers
- Guaranteeing legal protection and other services for women in the informal sector
- Ensuring access to education for all women and girls and supporting educational opportunities in fields where they are underrepresented

Two resources that can help Governments to engage businesses in achieving national priorities on governance and women's empowerment are the *Business for the Rule of Law Framework*, an initiative of the UN Global Compact, and the *Women's Empowerment Principles*, a joint initiative of UN Global Compact and UN Women.

As partners for good governance and gender equality, we welcome all Governments to actively participate in this global call to action which will benefit women, men, families, communities and nations.

Supporting Organizations:



Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.



About Women, Business and the Law

In its latest edition of *Women, Business and the Law*, the World Bank Group examines laws, regulations and institutions from 173 economies worldwide to establish a fact base on the many ways in which the law has been used to establish differences on the basis of gender, generally to the detriment of women. The report analyzes trends across seven indicators: Accessing institutions; Using Property; Getting a Job; Providing incentives to work; Building credit; Going to Court and Protecting Women from Violence. Achieving gender equality is essential to fulfilling the World Bank Group's mission to end extreme poverty by 2030 and promote shared prosperity in every developing country.

For more information please visit: www.wbl.worldbank.org

About Business for the Rule of Law

In 2013, the UN Secretary-General announced Business for the Rule of Law (B4ROL), highlighting the benefits to businesses and highlighting the role responsible businesses can play in respecting and supporting the rule of law. Thus far, the UN Global Compact has facilitated multi-stakeholder dialogue on the rule of law through 19 consultation workshops, which have sought to build understanding of the rule of law, identify the business case for respecting and supporting the rule of law, and gather examples of the actions businesses can take to support the rule of law. Output from the workshops has informed the development of the Business for the Rule of Law Framework ("Framework") which aims to guide businesses in understanding why and how to take action to support the strengthening of the legal framework where they operate as a complement to Government's own action in this area. The Framework was initially launched at UN Global Compact headquarters on 24 June 2015 with plans for similar launch events and ongoing multi-stakeholder discussions around the globe led by our Global Compact Local Networks and other strategic partners to ensure appropriate prioritization of rule of law efforts at the local level.

For more information please visit: www.unglobalcompact.org/take-action/action/business-rule-of-law

About the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs)

The WEPs were launched by UN Women (UNIFEM at the time) and UN Global Compact in 2010 following a year-long, multi-stakeholder, international consultation. The seven Principles offer guidance to business on how to empower women in the workplace, marketplace and community and are based on real-life company examples. The WEPs provide a holistic framework for business action to advance women's empowerment, covering topics ranging from women in leadership, to access to child and dependent care, to sexual harassment, to networking and mentoring opportunities, to support for women's entrepreneurship and community initiatives focused on the empowerment of women and girls. To date, more than 1,000 business leaders from around the world have signed a CEO Statement of Support for the Women's Empowerment Principles, underscoring that equal treatment of women and men is not just the right thing to do — it is also good for business and needs to be a priority.

For more information please visit: www.unglobalcompact.org/take-action/action/womens-principles