

**BLUEPRINT
FOR BUSINESS
LEADERSHIP
ON THE SDGS**

**5 GENDER
EQUALITY**



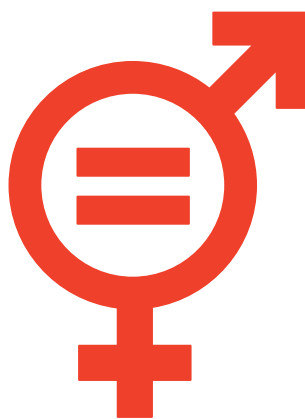
5 GENDER
EQUALITY

How business leadership can advance Goal 5 on Gender Equality



Gender equality is a fundamental and inviolable human right. Yet women around the world continue to face significant economic, social, and legal barriers to equality. Women are more likely than men to be unemployed, are overrepresented in low wage jobs, hold fewer managerial, entrepreneurial and leadership positions, and on average, only make 77 cents for every dollar earned by men. In 18 countries, men can legally prevent their wives from working. Women continue to bear disproportionate responsibility for unpaid care work and often experience maternity-related discrimination. Women entrepreneurs also face particular challenges to building and growing their businesses including lack of access to financing and business networks. In fact, less than 1% of spending by large businesses on suppliers is earned by women-owned businesses.

While progress has been made in terms of education and health, significant gaps remain. STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) programmes and fields continue to be dominated by men, women around the world continue to lack access to reproductive and maternal health care, and worldwide, an estimated one in three women will experience physical or sexual abuse in her lifetime.



The private sector has an important role to play in advancing gender equality. All businesses have a fundamental responsibility to respect the rights of women and girls, as per the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. Leading companies recognize that their greatest contribution to SDG 5 is ensuring that they meet this responsibility and will prioritize the management of potential human rights risks accordingly. Leading companies will also seek to maximize their positive impact towards gender equality across all levels and functions of their business, throughout their supply-chain and within the communities where they operate, rather than only identifying the easiest point of entry. The Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs) provide a holistic framework for business action to advance gender equality and can provide further guidance to businesses looking to contribute to the achievement of Goal 5. This SDG Brief draws from the WEPs to provide additional inspiration on what comprises business leadership in support of Goal 5.

By ensuring respect for women and girls and supporting gender equality, businesses can unlock vast amounts of economic potential. Research demonstrates that gender diversity helps business perform better. Fifty percent of the population has been unable to realise its true potential due to gender-based discrimination. If this were to be corrected, businesses would find themselves with more productive labour, higher levels of innovation and, a more stable, inclusive and equitable climate.

Gender equality is both an objective and driver of sustainable development. Women's empowerment has a multiplier effect and is essential to building strong economies; establishing more stable and just societies; and improving the quality of life for families and communities. Action to support gender equality can contribute positively to a host of other Goals. Estimates suggest that advancing women's equality can add \$12 trillion to global growth. It can also reduce poverty by bringing work opportunities to women and ensuring equal access to economic resources; improve health and educational outcomes since initiatives to foster gender equality will focus on maternal health and reduce the educational gap between men and women, and directly contribute to the overarching goal of reduced inequalities, which in turn will create the foundations for more peaceful and inclusive societies.

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Business Actions in Support of Goal 5

Targets of Goal 5

5.1 End gender based discrimination

5.2 Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation

5.3 Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation

5.4 Recognise and value unpaid care and domestic work

5.5 Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership

5.6 Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights

5.A Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources

5.B Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women

5.C Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels

Business Actions

1

Implement policies and practices that are free from and prevent gender-based discrimination across the workplace, marketplace, and community

2

Support women's employment and strive for gender balance at all levels across the business and supply chain

3

Develop products and services and implement marketing practices that empower women

4

Promote gender equality through investment, community initiatives, and advocacy

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Do your actions satisfy the Leadership Qualities?



Guiding Questions
to apply to the Leadership Qualities to your business

Intentional

- Is your company committed to supporting the achievement of Goal 5? Have you developed a holistic strategy that reflects this commitment, covering end-to-end operations and the wider community?
- Are you committed to learn from your actions and do you have processes in place to improve them accordingly?
- Is your strategy supported by the highest levels of management, including the Board of Directors?

Ambitious

- Do your actions achieve long-term outcomes that greatly exceed those resulting from current industry practice?
- Are your actions aligned with what is needed to achieve Goal 5?

Consistent

- Is support for Goal 5 embedded across all organizational functions?
- Are staff and board incentives aligned with achieving Goal 5?

Collaborative

- Do you proactively look for opportunities to partner with Governments, UN agencies, suppliers, civil society organizations, industry peers and other stakeholders to inform how to advance Goal 5?

Accountable

- Do you publicly express your commitment to advance Goal 5?
- Do you identify, monitor, and report on impacts, including potentially adverse impacts?
- Do you mitigate risks associated with your action?
- Do you remediate negative impacts associated with this action?
- Do you engage stakeholders in a meaningful way?

Key Considerations
for Goal 5

Top-level commitment helps position gender equality as a strategic business priority. Establishing a holistic strategy that manages risks and opportunities across the workplace, marketplace and community is crucial. Intentionally addressing unconscious bias is particularly important to ensuring that gender equality policies and practices have their intended impact.

Ambitious action on gender equality is holistic and goes well beyond normal good practice. Leading companies will identify cutting-edge approaches based on industry and/or regional best practice, establish robust policies and practices, and set clear targets to track progress and ensure continuous improvement.

Rather than looking for the easiest point of entry, leading companies will identify how they can maximize their positive impact toward the achievement of Goal 5. Leading companies will ensure that their gender equality strategy is embedded across all organizational functions. Importantly, leading companies know that action taken to support women's empowerment is a complement to, not a substitute for, action to respect the rights of women and girls.

Leading companies understand the importance and benefits of meaningful multi-stakeholder consultation to inform policies and practices. Stakeholders may include those affected by the company's operations as well as external experts. Leading companies also recognize that achieving gender equality cannot be achieved by one sector alone and proactively look for opportunities to partner and collaborate to achieve common objectives.

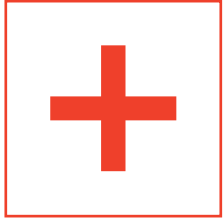
Making commitments public, and progress transparent is key to drive gender equality performance. The use of sex-disaggregated data is critical to making and measuring progress and accountability for specific goals and targets related to gender equality. When it comes to addressing adverse impacts, having in place effective grievance mechanisms is particularly important.



How taking action on Goal 5 is interconnected with other Goals



The Global Goals are inherently interconnected. Action taken toward one Goal can support or hinder the achievement of others. Identifying and addressing these interconnections will help business to build holistic and systemic solutions that amplify progress and minimize negative impacts. To help build a greater understanding, we have illustrated some of the ways in which the Goals connect. These are not exhaustive, and we encourage business to consider how they apply in their own operations.



Maximise likelihood of positive impact on:



Action to support gender equality can contribute positively to a host of other Goals and is a precondition for advancing development and reducing poverty. With women and girls making up more than half the global population, improving health and educational outcomes (Goal 3 and 4), reducing poverty (Goal 1), and tackling inequality (Goal 10) requires specific consideration of the particular needs of women and girls and the barriers they face. At the same time, women's empowerment is proven to have a multiplier effect, contributing to the health and well-being of whole families and communities, as well as economic growth (Goal 8) and peaceful societies (Goal 16).

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BUSINESS ACTION 1

Implement policies and practices that are free from and prevent gender-based discrimination across the workplace, marketplace, and community



All businesses have a responsibility to respect the rights of women and girls. Leading companies recognize that meeting this responsibility is how business will have its greatest contribution to Goal 5. Leading companies will prioritize the management of human rights risks and carefully and continuously monitor the effectiveness of and seek to scale-up policies and practices across their operations, throughout their value chains and within the communities where they operate. In particular, they will look to industry and regional best practice, experts, and consultation with affected stakeholders to inform where improvements can be made. Leading companies will also look for opportunities to strengthen and expand their policies and practices to support the empowerment of women and girls. Recognizing that deep seated gender stereotypes and norms often form an invisible barrier to progress, hindering the effectiveness of well-intentioned policies and practices, leading companies will take care to address unconscious bias throughout the organization.

Example practice

- A personal goods manufacturer headquartered in Asia provides compliance training on the company's sexual harassment policy and introduced a program in partnership with the ILO aimed at working with men to address gender-based discrimination and gender-based violence
- A consultancy maintains **disaggregated data for male and female workers in its business and supply chain**, including data on wages and contract status to identify, monitor and take evidence-based action against gender inequality
- A bank regularly undertakes an **objective gender pay gap audit** by a qualified external party and takes robust remedial action to ensure jobs of equal value are remunerated equally. The company requires suppliers to do the same.
- A company introduces mandatory **unconscious bias workshops** for all staff across all levels of the organization.
- A global mining company has committed to implementing the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights (VPSHR) and produced an online training on human rights and gender equality for security professionals



Consider the leadership qualities and interconnectedness of your action, including...

Ambition: ambitious action to tackle gender-based discrimination must set new benchmarks in the company's operating context, and inspire others to take similar action. This often implies that action extends far beyond own operations, including to the supply chain and wider community.

Collaboration: effectively addressing gender-based discrimination requires collaboration with a broad set of stakeholders including governments, peers, local communities, and non-governmental organizations.

Interconnectedness: eliminating gender-based discrimination can reduce global inequality (Goal 10). It can contribute to decent working conditions (Goal 8) and allow women to take jobs and command wages that have a positive impact on dependents. As such, support reduction of poverty (Goal 1), hunger (Goal 2) and improve health and well-being (goal 3) and education (Goal 4)

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BUSINESS ACTION 2

Support women's employment and strive for gender balance across the business and supply chain and at all levels



Women's full employment and leadership is essential to expand economic growth, promote social development and enhance business performance. Leading companies will invest in women-focused employment practices, recognizing the social, economic and business benefits of doing so. Businesses can support women's employment in a range of ways, from setting targets to increase gender balance in leadership positions and establishing networking and mentorship opportunities for women, to introducing policies and practices to support working parents such as flexible work options, leave and re-entry options to positions of equal pay and support for access to child and dependent care. Further, businesses can take intentional action to attract women into non-traditional roles and change corporate culture to support women and men workers. In the supply chain, business can invest in health programmes and training opportunities for women workers and support women's leadership by expanding business relationships with women-owned enterprises, including small businesses, and women entrepreneurs. The most effective approaches for supporting women's employment and achieving greater gender-balance will depend on the specific operating context of the company.

Example practice

- A Turkish retail company creates a 12-week **training program to support women entrepreneurs** in its value chain and help them enhance their business. The company connects the participants of this program to other role models and mentors, and introduces them to banks and brands with whom they could work
- A global food producer works to **strengthen women smallholder farmers' linkages with market actors** to achieve gender equality across the marketplace
- A garment factory in established an on-site kindergarten, pays the annual school fees for workers' children, and has a government-accredited health clinic that provides free medical care for workers and their families
- An online retailer introduces a **fully paid parental leave policy that goes beyond national standards** and is offered to all employees, regardless of gender or whether they become parents through birth or adoption. The policy deliberately seeks to **counteract unconscious bias against women** and mothers in the workplace by enabling parents to play more equal roles at home
- A multinational bank implements a "Diverse Supplier Subcontracting Program" which helps first tier suppliers establish their own Supplier Diversity Programs and enhances opportunities for women-owned businesses
- A global retailer works with supplier factories in Southeast Asia to provide opportunities for women to learn about reproductive health and family planning.



Consider the leadership qualities and interconnectedness of your action, including...

Ambition: ambitious action for gender balance sets new benchmarks in the company's operating context, and inspire others to take similar action; often extending far beyond own operations, including to the supply chain and wider community.

Interconnectedness: supporting women's employment and striving for gender balance can reduce global inequality (Goal 10). It can also allow women to take jobs and command wages that have a positive impact on dependents and, as such, support reduction of poverty (Goal 1), hunger (goal 2) and improve health and well-being (Goal 3) and education (Goal 4).

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BUSINESS ACTION 3

Develop products and services and implement marketing practices that empower women



Companies have significant reach and impact through their development of products and services and marketing practices. All companies have a responsibility to respect the rights of women and girls and manage any potential adverse impacts. Among other things, this includes ensuring that their products, services and facilities are not used for human trafficking and/or labour or sexual exploitation and that marketing and other company materials respect the dignity of women and girls. In addition to meeting their responsibilities, leading companies will look for opportunities to innovate and develop products and services that help address barriers to gender equality and empower women, such as gender-sensitive solutions to credit and lending barriers. Leading businesses may also use their influence to address gender biases and challenge gender stereotypes through their marketing campaigns.

Example practice

- An insurance company in Asia launches the first-ever **comprehensive insurance scheme for women in South Asia** which includes trauma allowances for victims of rape, acid attacks and other discriminatory acts; the program also features a mobile app with a 'panic button' which mobilises rescue services for the user if pressed
- Recognizing the expanding role of women entrepreneurs, a large UK-based bank **launches specialized financial services, microfinance opportunities and business loans and also provides an online resource center for women entrepreneurs** running small and medium-sized enterprises
- A manufacturer of laundry detergent releases an advertisement campaign in India to **challenge the common belief that household chores are solely a woman's job** and promote the idea that **household work should be more evenly distributed between men and women**



Consider the leadership qualities and interconnectedness of your action, including...

Ambition: ambitious action through development of products, services, and market practices implies that it achieves the long-term outcomes required for realization of Goal 5. They should be developed and distributed with a clear potential for generating a lasting impact through prompting a fundamental shift in behavior.

Interconnectedness: empowering women can reduce inequalities (Goal 10), poverty (Goal 1) and hunger (Goal 2). It can contribute to health and well-being (Goal 3). Developing new products and services also contributes to innovation (Goal 9)

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BUSINESS ACTION 4

Promote gender equality through investment, community initiatives, and advocacy



Businesses have significant convening power, extensive networks, resources, and expertise that can be leveraged to promote gender equality. Leading companies recognize the economic and social benefits of gender equality and seek to use their influence, alone or in partnership, to advocate for inclusion and support efforts aimed at advancing women's empowerment. Among other things, businesses can develop or support relevant community initiatives, recognize women's leadership in and contributions to their communities, partner with organizations that are committed to advancing the rights of women and girls, engage government and other stakeholders to bring down legal barriers to women's empowerment, and help generate access to capital for gender equality and women's empowerment through galvanizing finance or gender-lens investing.

Example practice

- A Russian company **advocates against** legal barriers to women's economic empowerment and promotes the economic and social benefits of inclusion
- A communications company in West Africa offers its airtime for free to groups who **advocate against female genital mutilation** and offers support and financial assistance for the cause
- An Italian electricity company, partners with an NGO **to empower semi-illiterate women from electricity deprived villages in India and Latin America to install and maintain small photovoltaic systems**. This partnership **develops the capacities of women entrepreneurs** by providing them with technical training
- An IT company **invests in engineering schools in developing countries, hires and trains local employees**, and establishes educational schemes for **women students** to ensure that they can thrive in the workplace
- A sustainable investment management company based in the US **applies a gender lens** to all of its mutual funds, favoring investments in companies with diverse boards and management teams and avoiding companies that fail to provide a safe work environment for women. This includes companies that encourage or tolerate harassment, or that have a history or pattern of discrimination or mistreatment of women, are involved in the exploitation or trafficking of women, or whose products demean women or use negative stereotypes in their advertising, promotion or marketing.



Consider the leadership qualities and interconnectedness of your action, including...

Ambition: ambitious community initiatives and advocacy have the potential to achieve the long-term outcomes required for realization of goal 5. They would usually consist of a series of actions over an extended time period to ensure that positive changes last and reinforce themselves.

Interconnectedness: promoting gender equality can reduce global inequality (Goal 10). It can also allow women to take jobs and command wages that have a positive impact on dependents and, as such, support reduction of poverty (Goal 1), hunger (Goal 2) and improve health and well-being (Goal 3) and education (Goal 4).

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