

GENDER EQUALITY AND HEALTH

Decisions and practices in the workplace

GENDER EQUALITY AND HEALTH ARE KEY TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Gender equality and health are pivotal to social and economic development in society.¹ The rights to equality and health, including sexual and reproductive-health rights, are two key principles of human rights, anchored in the International Bill of Human Rights.² Human rights are a collective responsibility of governments and companies, but their roles and responsibility differ.

Companies have a responsibility to respect human rights in their business operations. Regardless of its type, a company must comply with national laws and regulations on occupational health and safety, parental leave, sexual harassment, health insurance, and freedom of association and collective bargaining, to name a few. However, where national laws and regulations offer a level of human-rights protection that falls short of internationally recognised human-rights standards, companies should operate to the higher standard. The United Nations, the European Union and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) have developed guidelines for companies, which outline responsible business conduct (RBC). In recent years, several governments have begun to translate these voluntary principles into mandatory human-rights due-diligence legislation for companies. Also, companies face greater scrutiny of their business operations by investors and consumers.

INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR GENDER AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN BUSINESSES

The 2011 United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) represent an authoritative global standard for companies to prevent and address human-rights risks in their operations. With the growing awareness of the disproportionate impact that business operations have on women, the UN introduced the Gender Dimensions to the UNGPs in 2019. The new Gender Dimensions provide specific gender guidance to each of the guiding principles, establishing the need for companies to have a clear, zero-tolerance policy towards sexual harassment and violence, and have good grievance mechanisms in place, which are communicated regularly to employees.³

A WIN-WIN SITUATION

Respecting the human right to equality and health creates a win-win situation for employers and employees. A World Health Organization report reveals that, for every dollar invested in key interventions for reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health, approximately \$20 in benefits could be generated.⁴ According to the International Finance Corporation, investors in companies with solid gender-diversity strategies receive returns that run at a compound annual growth rate of 3.5%.⁵ McKinsey Global Institute found that companies with a more even gender balance in representation experience better financial results because diversity improves performance and innovation.⁶ Finally, studies reveal that companies with many female leaders have a 47% higher return on equity and achieve operating results 55% higher than companies with only male leaders.⁷ Investing in gender equality, diversity and health is simply good business.



¹ From here onwards, when referring to health – sexual and reproductive – health should automatically be considered a central issue, because sexual and reproductive health is a highly “gendered” dimension of health.

² The International Bill of Human Rights consists of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the main instruments through which it has been codified: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

³ Human Rights Council (2019).

⁴ World Health Organization (2013).

⁵ International Finance Corporation (2017).

⁶ McKinsey Global Institute (2015).

⁷ McKinsey Global Institute (2010).

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INTEGRATE GENDER EQUALTY AND HEALTH IN THE WORKPLACE

Investing in health and gender equality in a company is a catalyst for economic growth and for the social and economic development of people, businesses and wider society. Everyone stands to benefit from a thriving population that is healthy and equal.

To support its efforts at achieving sustainability, the Danish Investment Fund for Developing Countries (IFU) has adopted a strategic focus on gender equality and health. Since 2016, IFU has participated in a strategic partnership with the Danish Family Planning Association (DFPA), a civil-society organisation that promotes gender equality and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in Denmark and around the world. These guidelines are the result of the joint knowledge and experience gained from this partnership and from IFU's efforts to integrate gender equality and health into investment decisions and practices.

These guidelines offer a practical approach based on best practice.

- Key takeaways are:**
- An overview of the benefits of integrating gender equality and health in the workplace
 - A systematic approach
 - Encouragement to assess if company policies and guidelines are up to standard
 - Tools to integrate gender equality and health in the workplace
 - Communicating initiatives and results
 - Cases that illustrate best practice



BENEFITS

Health and gender equality are closely linked and cut across business operations. Companies that recognise the win-win of investing in gender equality and health in the workplace realise the potential of all their employees, strengthen the company and signal leadership to customers, investors and stakeholders.⁸

Importantly, both health and gender equality must be addressed for either to be achieved. Workplace initiatives that serve to integrate gender equality and health in the workplace benefit the company and lead to several key rewards such as:

- Healthy and productive employees
- Better risk management and due diligence
- Improved female labour-force participation
- Access to a larger talent pool
- Enhanced ability to attract and retain skilled employees
- Improved employee motivation, creativity and innovation
- Stronger financial performance
- Stronger brand and reputation
- Fewer workplace conflicts and less risk of litigation

In addition to the operational benefits that a business may enjoy, another compelling motivation is that investors, customers and legislators alike increasingly expect companies to engage in RBC. This includes promoting gender equality and health in the workplace on both voluntary and mandatory bases.

Health

Healthy, thriving employees are pivotal to any company's health and productivity. Nevertheless, many workers around the world face multiple barriers to accessing health services and facilities, including family planning, female hygiene products and medical care. This is the result of several barriers, for example, lack of knowledge, low wages and poor access to finance. In a workplace, health is typically seen through the lens of occupational safety and related risks. SRHR issues, such as maternal health, access to contraceptives and the right to parental leave, as well as prevention of harassment, are equally relevant and deserve equal consideration in a workplace.

Poor access to health services and information is one of the greatest barriers to women's equal participation in paid work and, consequently, to women's economic empowerment and agency.

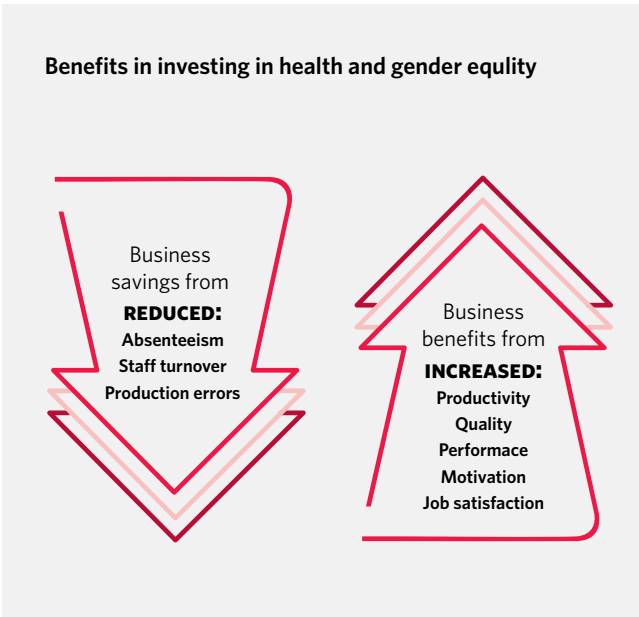
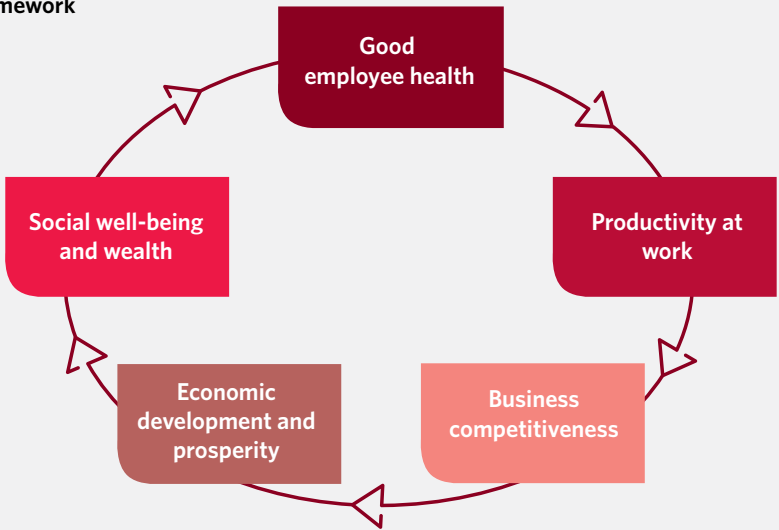
Providing employees with knowledge of health, including reproductive health and family planning, leads to fewer unplanned pregnancies, better nutritional practices and improved hygiene, among other benefits.⁹ This in turn creates healthier – and likely happier and more motivated – employees, which reduces sick leave and turnover rates and leads to greater productivity and better performance.¹⁰

Did you know that...

approximately 74 million women worldwide experience unplanned pregnancies every year owing to poor access to health information and contraceptives?¹¹ Through workplace health initiatives, companies can raise awareness of family planning and provide access to contraceptives to improve employee sexual and reproductive health.



Healthy workplace framework



⁸ Turban, S., Wu, D., & Zhang, L.T. (2019).

⁹ Family planning refers to educational, comprehensive medical and social activities that enable individuals, including minors, to determine freely the number and spacing of their children and to select the means by which this may be achieved.

¹⁰ Ward, G., De Neve, J-E., & Krekel, C. (2019).

¹¹ UNFPA. (2014).

Gender equality

Gender inequality is a substantial challenge to development and remains a barrier to the realisation of women’s human rights – also in the workplace.¹² Gender inequality effectively hinders half of the world’s working-age population from achieving their full potential. When countries and companies fail to recognise women’s importance in the economy, then families, companies and communities suffer.

Poor provisions for parents and poor access to childcare, poor work–life balance, discrimination, sexual harassment and violence at work are all rooted in structural inequality and lead to gender inequality and poor health and well-being, particularly among women and sexual minorities.

It is well documented that women continuously face barriers resulting from gender inequality, for example, in career advancement resulting from structural inequalities.¹³ Other pressing gender-equality issues around the world include the gender pay gap and limited access to education, training, resources and promotions.

Furthermore, in societies with traditional gender norms, women contribute a disproportionate amount of unpaid work, which includes caring for children and the elderly, and taking care of the household and possibly a family farm. These family responsibilities effectively limit the time and energy that women can spend on paid labour and participate equally in the economy.



Traditional gender norms do not exist solely in the privacy of the home. These cultural norms and practices also seep into the workplace because people bring their cultural identity and values with them to the workplace.¹⁷ Because of this, women are often viewed, first and foremost, as homemakers rather than as competent employees in their own right, and are perceived as being less suited for managerial and supervisory positions.

Companies can turn the tide on gender inequality in the workplace by making certain changes. For example, by offering training in gender bias, companies can raise awareness among company decision-makers of their own biases, and so reduce gender bias in hiring and promotion processes. Research reveals that companies that remove or narrow the gender pay gap and create a culture of transparency around pay can strengthen employee commitment and brand reputation.

Furthermore, if employees can achieve a better work–life balance, women in particular can invest more time in their careers. By prioritising work–life balance for all employees, companies can develop family-friendly workplaces and forestall women from exiting the labour market. Providing all employees access to mentorship opportunities is critical to career growth.¹⁸

Consequently, investing in workplace gender equality is not only the right thing to do; it is good for business. Increasing gender equality strengthens job satisfaction and employee engagement, increases productivity and financial performance, and expands the talent pool.¹⁹



Did you know that...

globally, women earn 23% less than men for work of equal value? In some countries, the gap is as high as 40%. Furthermore, women earn less over a lifetime and leave employment with insufficient retirement savings, because they do 250% more unpaid care and household work than men. Further, only 48% of women, compared with 80% of men, participate in paid work. Maternity adversely affects women’s income and career advancement opportunities.¹⁴ This is popularly referred to as the motherhood penalty.¹⁵ For every 100 men promoted and hired to management positions, only 72 women are promoted and hired.¹⁶ Additionally, access to parental leave, childcare and family planning affect whether or not women work outside the home.

Did you know that...

women globally account for only 38% of human-capital wealth vs. 62% for men? In low and lower-middle-income countries, women account for a third or less of the human-capital wealth.²⁰

¹² World Bank. (2018).
¹³ Polonski, V. (2017).
¹⁴ Lersch, P.M., Jacob, M., Hank, H. (2017).
¹⁵ UN Women. Women in the changing world of work: facts you should know. Stanford University. Correll, S.J., Benard, S., & Paik, I. (2007). ¹⁶ Okoro, S. (2019).
¹⁶ Huang, J., Krivkovich, A., Starikova, I., Yee, L., & Zanoschi, D. (2019).

¹⁷ Communication Theory (2015).
¹⁸ Chronus (n.d.).
¹⁹ Okoro, S. (2019).
²⁰ Wodon, Q., & de la Briere, B. (2018).

INTEGRATION OF A GENDER LENS IN BUSINESS

To become gender champions and create a culture of inclusivity, companies need to adopt a gender lens in their business operations. This requires companies to develop and implement strategies, gender-sensitive policies and workplace practices that are supported at the most senior level and across the organisation.

A successful integration of gender equality and health will differ from company to company depending on the type of business, as well as on the company's opportunities, challenges and cultural context.

Mainstreaming a gender lens in business operations will be helped by systematically developing, designing and implementing health and gender-equality strategies.

This approach should be anchored in both a sound commitment by leadership and a supportive organisational culture, as well as in a well-defined workplace framework, structures (e.g. policies and practices), documentation and awareness-raising activities.

CONSIDER THESE SYSTEMATIC STEPS:

- 1. ESTABLISH AN ORGANISATIONAL SETUP AND ENSURE COMMITMENT FROM MANAGEMENT**
- 2. ASSESS SPECIFIC RISKS, NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES IN THE CULTURAL CONTEXT**
- 3. REVIEW COMPANY POLICIES**
- 4. DEVELOP STRATEGIES AND POLICIES AND IMPLEMENT PRACTICES**
- 5. ESTABLISH A BASELINE AND DOCUMENT PROGRESS**
- 6. RAISE AWARENESS INTERNALLY**
- 7. COMMUNICATE THE RESULTS TO INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS**



1. ESTABLISH AN ORGANISATIONAL SETUP AND ENSURE COMMITMENT FROM MANAGEMENT

Formal structures are necessary to ensure a company’s minimum compliance with national legislation regarding health, workplace policies, benefits and leave. Commitment and ownership by senior management are important, because they set the direction and position formal structures to effectively integrate gender equality and health initiatives. Similarly, it is important to achieve buy-in from middle management, because their primary role is to ensure that workplace policies and practices are implemented across the organisation. Assign adequate responsibility among management for the implementation of the company’s policies, and allocate funds necessary to implement the policies.

Use the formal structure of an occupational health and safety (OHS) committee, with diverse representation across the company, to introduce improvements. Further, include a well-functioning grievance mechanism that allows employees to file potential grievances safely and anonymously, e.g. in cases of harassment or discrimination.

Team up with local civil-society organisations to significantly increase the quality and value of the efforts. They often have valuable knowledge and insight into the needs and grievances of the people living in the community where your company operates. Civil-society organisations draw their strength from their ongoing dialogue with local citizens and insight into local culture, norms and practices.

2. ASSESS SPECIFIC RISKS, NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES IN THE CULTURAL CONTEXT

No business exists in a vacuum. It will always be part of the society in which it is situated. So, it is important to understand the cultural context of topics such as gender equality and health. In some cultural settings, you might encounter issues about which open discussion is culturally unacceptable because they are taboo. Gender norms and roles or sexual and reproductive-health topics, such as access to contraception, sexual harass-

ment or menstrual hygiene, are a few of the topics that might be especially difficult to address.

To address these topics in your company and in the local community, an information campaign covering health and gender-related issues can be initiated. The campaigns can raise awareness, address any misconceptions and create positive behavioural change for improved health and gender equality. Furthermore, peer-education initiatives can be a sensitive and non-intimidating way of approaching topics that are taboo.²¹ See more about practices on page 16-18.

ASSESSING THE CULTURAL CONTEXT

HEALTH

- What is the general health situation and what are the most pressing health challenges that your employees face?
- What is the nutritional situation in the area in which your company works? Are some of your employees mal- and/or undernourished?
- Is the access to quality health services in the area in which your company operates adequate?²²

"Their cup is not empty; so, you can't just pour your ideas into it. Their cup is full, so you have to understand what is in their cup. If you don't understand the meaning and beliefs behind a community's practices, you won't present your idea in the context of their values and concerns, and people won't hear you."

Quote from interview in A moment of lift, Melinda Gates, 2019.

GENDER

- What are the leading gender norms in the area in which your company operates? What are the family structures? How are the roles of women and men in families/the community differently perceived?
- Is sexual harassment and/or gender-based violence a problem in the workplace and in local communities where employees live?
- What is the educational level for girls, women and men in the area? Are girls and women denied access to higher education and work because of gender norms and household responsibilities, e.g. caring for children or the elderly?
- What is the sexual and reproductive-health situation in the area in which your company operates? What are the HIV/AIDS rates? How many children do women bear on average? Is access to family planning and contraceptives available? Do women have access to safe local pregnancy and birth facilities?

²¹ Peer educators are employees who are selected and trained to implement workplace initiatives and campaigns to raise awareness of relevant workplace topics, e.g. about health and gender equality, and disseminate information about those topics. Local civil-society organisations will often have extensive experience with facilitating peer-educator programmes.
²² Access refers not only to the physical presence of health facilities, but also access for people from all levels of society, regardless of their economic situation, to quality health services.

3. REVIEW COMPANY POLICIES

For a swift insight into how the company is performing and where action could be warranted, go through the checklist below to review relevant health and gender-equality practices and initiatives.

The HR policies/employee handbook should include the following:²³

- A gender-equality policy
- A workplace policy addressing HIV/AIDS and other life-threatening diseases, e.g. included in the OHS policy
- Maternity and parental leave policy
- Non-discrimination policy
- OHS policy
- Anti-sexual-harassment and anti-gender-based violence policies

Ensure that all policies comply with national law, and that they are aligned with international labour standards and recommendations. Make sure that all policies are continually implemented and communicated in a way appropriate to the company's staff.

Is the company health sensitive?

- Does the company provide any health services for employees?
- Does the company provide annual/regular health check-ups for employees?
- Does the company respect the rights of all genders to time off for medical care and counselling, for them and their dependents?
- Does the company offer benefits such as separate male/female toilets with locks, possibly with access to free sanitary pads and condoms in staff toilets?
- Does the company provide nutritious meals for employees, especially during pregnancy?

Gender equality in the company

- Has the company confirmed that workplace policies and practices are free from gender-based discrimination and bias?
- Does the company use non-discriminatory and gender-sensitive recruitment and retention practices, including not inquiring about marital status, pregnancy, intent to have children, number of dependents or similar information?
- Does the company offer equal pay (including benefits) for work of equal value?
- Does the company provide female empowerment programmes?

- How frequently do female workers participate in training programmes compared with their male co-workers?

Gender equality and representation

- Does the company strive for equal representation of genders across all levels/departments?
- Does the company have both male and female representation in the HR department?
- Does the company proactively recruit and appoint female employees to ensure a gender balance across all levels, including to management positions?
- Does the company have female representation on the board?

Health insurance

- Does the company provide health insurance, which covers sexual and reproductive-health issues, including family-planning counselling, reproductive cancers, HIV/AIDS and other STIs?
- Does the employee health insurance have equal coverage regardless of position?
- Does the employee health insurance cover employee spouses and children?
- Does the company have health insurance that includes counselling for survivors of domestic violence?

Pregnancy/parental leave and work-life balance

- Does the company take any measures to accommodate employees with children, especially nursing children?
- Does the company offer flexible working hours?
- What is the return-to-work policy for female employees returning from maternity leave, e.g. with shorter working days and time and/or space allocated for breastfeeding/extracting milk?
- Does the company guarantee that workers can return to a similar job position after parental leave?
- Are pregnant employees allowed to attend prenatal care appointments during working hours?
- Does the company offer support to working families, including but not limited to, onsite childcare and breastfeeding rooms?

Does the company adequately address sexual harassment and violence?

- Are there initiatives against sexual harassment and gender-based violence, and zero-tolerance of sexual harassment and violence at work, including verbal and physical abuse?

- Does the company have a well-functioning grievance mechanism that is legitimate, accessible, predictable, equitable, transparent, human-rights-compatible, a source of continuous learning, and based on engagement and dialogue? Is it included in company policies?
- Has the company, with the involvement of employees, identified and addressed safety and security issues, including potential safety issues connected to travel to and from work?

Occupational health and safety committee

- Does the company have an OHS committee that is gender diverse, meets regularly and has representatives from all employee levels?
- Does the OHS committee address issues related to employee personal health and well-being beyond safety?
- Does the OHS committee actively address the risks of the negative impact on employee sexual and reproductive health connected to the workplace?
- Does the OHS committee create room for employees to discuss and exchange experiences with each other and peers?

- Does the OHS committee work strategically with gender-specific risks and challenges?
- Does the company have an operational grievance mechanism with ties to the OHS committee?
- Are all employees aware of the policies that provide them with an operational grievance mechanism?

Does the company adequately address life-threatening disease, including HIV/AIDS?

- Does the company have a zero-tolerance policy towards discrimination of employees living with life-threatening diseases, including HIV/AIDS, and when recruiting new employees?
- Does the company ensure confidentiality for employees living with HIV/AIDS, including non-disclosure of employee HIV/AIDS status to third parties without consent?
- Does the company provide employees with information about prevention, protection and testing related to HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections?

²³ A company can also choose to have one workplace policy that incorporates all the following HR-related issues.

4. DEVELOP STRATEGIES AND POLICIES AND IMPLEMENT PRACTICES

Based on the assessment of business risks, needs and opportunities, develop a suitable strategy and policies. The list below suggests ways to approach this work.

Creating awareness

In poverty-prone areas, the lack of health-related information and knowledge is a common challenge. Consequently, providing knowledge and information contributes considerably to strengthening employee health and improving gender equality. This can be achieved through regularly scheduled presentations in the workplace about health and gender equality, where a trained professional discusses, for example, the importance of sharing household responsibilities, pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections, nutrition, sexual harassment, gender-based violence, hygiene and sanitation, family planning, and typhoid and malaria. Health and gender equality talks can improve employee behaviour, giving employees the tools to take better care of themselves, their peers and their families – and possibly make it easier for women to stay in paid employment through support in their family. Furthermore, knowledge of gender equality, health, hygiene and nutrition will be passed on to employee families and friends, which will improve the health status of entire communities. Think carefully how these talks will be conducted to ensure that the workplace is a safe environment for the confidentiality of employee information, and also to ensure that communication is conducted appropriately.

Providing access to health services, initiatives and facilities

Ensuring that employees have access to health services and facilities can be an appropriate strategy if a company is placed in a rural or remote area, where access to health facilities is limited by lack of medical personnel or poor infrastructure. Access to health services can be secured in various ways; some larger companies benefit from having an onsite clinic that employees can visit during working hours. Giving employees access to clinics can reduce absenteeism, as employees do not have to stay away from work to attend health services. If a company is small, it can be practical to have a health professional visit the company regularly to attend to employee health issues. It is recommended that any access to health services includes access to family-planning counselling and contraception, and information about pregnancy and the treatment of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS. Providing this service can reduce the number of unplanned pregnancies among employees and increase employee knowledge of how to protect themselves against sexually transmitted infections.



Peer-education programmes

Peer education improves employee health and gender equality through knowledge exchange and change in behaviour, beliefs and attitudes. Peer-education programmes train a group of employees in specific topics and communication skills, and then allocate some of their working hours to sharing their knowledge with colleagues – or peers. Employees often spend most of their productive time together. This can be a casual social setting at work in which employees discuss health and gender-equality issues. Peer education can sidestep barriers of communication, culture and hierarchy in a workplace, which are related to gender, race, age, religion, sexual orientation and rank in a company. At the same time, it is a low-cost strategy that relies mostly on commitment and support from management, and the willingness

to allocate time to peer educators to carry out their activities. It is an awareness-oriented initiative that works well as a component in broader health and gender-equality strategies, which also requires more concrete health benefits and gender-equality initiatives.

Comprehensive health insurance

Workplace health insurance is one of the most effective ways to secure employee access to health services. Health insurance that provides access to quality health services for employees and their immediate dependents strengthens employee security and safety, and provides treatment of medical issues that might otherwise be too expensive. Preferably, health insurance benefits should allow employees greater flexibility in attending follow-up

health services during working hours. Furthermore, effective health insurance should cover gender-specific issues and especially women-specific issues.

Female empowerment programmes

A company that is serious about gender equality will ensure that employees have equal access to training and career-development programmes. But because women face significant barriers to equal participation in paid employment, equal access can require differentiated treatment. Advancing and developing their careers is an even greater challenge in the face of cultural norms, gender bias and responsibilities towards family and home. And so, offering empowerment programmes specifically aimed at female employees can make sense. These can include train-

ing programmes in education, mentoring and communication. These programmes ensure that female employees receive the necessary support to strengthen their voice and empowerment, leading to the realisation of their full potential.

Ensuring a well-functioning health and safety committee

Many countries require an OHS committee by law. In practice, however, the focus is often on workplace safety and accident prevention. A well-functioning OHS committee has trained members, meets regularly, conducts periodic inspections of the workplace and has access to all parts of the workplace and all employees. Furthermore, the composition of the committee should reflect the workplace, meaning that management and both female and male employees are represented. This is important because women and men face different health and safety challenges at work. The composition of the committee should incorporate different age groups and participants from different company levels. Finally, the OHS committee can be a good place to anchor health-related issues more firmly in your company's strategic focus.

Flexible working hours

Flexible working hours allow a workplace to actively address gender equality and accommodate the needs of female employees in particular, who struggle with work-life balance attributable to gender norms and a heavy burden of home-care responsibilities. Flexibility makes it easier for women to balance responsibility related to family and home with a paid job. Flexible working hours can also make it easier for employees to prioritise their health, because it allows them to visit health professionals during

the day when they or their dependents have health issues. This is a low-cost practice that makes a workplace more woman- (and parent-) friendly. Further, it increases gender equality, reduces stress and improves employee health and general well-being. Flexible working hours can also be a component of a retention strategy, because such incentives make it easier for women to balance work life with home life and therefore remain in paid employment.

Community health and gender initiatives

A company and its employees are part of a community. So, the health and gender-inequality issues that exist in the community will also affect employees and, in turn, affect their ability to contribute fully as healthy, thriving individuals. Consequently, it is wise to include local communities in both the planning and implementation of company health and gender-equality initiatives whenever possible. A company can benefit greatly by providing communities (the source of their employees) with relevant health and gender-equality initiatives.

An enabling environment to manage health and gender equality

Employees must have good relations with their managers or supervisors and the human resources department. Good relations in the workplace enable employees to openly address their health and gender-inequality concerns. An organisational culture with open-door policies and a high level of confidentiality and non-discrimination, among other measures, helps institutionalise good health and gender equality.

EXAMPLES OF GENDER EQUALITY TRAINING AND PROMOTION

More than 20 garment-sector companies came together through Fair Wear Foundation, an international multi-stakeholder organisation, to end violence and harassment in the workplace in their supplying factories in India and Bangladesh. The programme includes training of workers, supervisors and managers to better understand what constitutes verbal and physical abuse, sexual harassment, forced labour and sexual assault. The programme has been implemented in approximately 80 factories. It has provided capacity building for 5,110 workers, 2,221 supervisors and 282 managers. Furthermore, the initiative led to the establishment of 37 internal complaints committees (India) and 35 anti-harassment committees (Bangladesh) in the supplying factories.

A company in the banking sector developed an eight-month “Women’s Next Level Leadership Program”, which focused on the challenges that multicultural women face in career advancement.

The programme was launched in 2016 and reached 170 participants in 2017.

A tech company developed a one-year programme for female workers to receive personalised development and leadership support, including the opportunity to shadow executives.

5. ESTABLISH A BASELINE AND DOCUMENT PROGRESS

It is important to systematically document the company's health and gender-equality initiatives, considering both quantitative and qualitative indicators, which help track progress and benefits. The documentation serves as proof of the benefits that the company reaps from investing in gender equality and health. The documentation of practices can help maintain in-house support and commitment, and communicate results and best practices with external stakeholders.

It is important that a baseline and KPIs be established before beginning health and gender-equality initiatives. The baseline allows objective tracking of progress and successes.

IFU has developed a Gender Equality Scorecard (GES), which combines several factors, allowing users to develop a comprehensive gender-equality focus.²⁴ As a baseline reporting and tracking tool, it also lets users track progress and development. It is intuitive, easy to apply and understand, and it provides users with a quick and thorough visual overview of the strengths and challenges of gender equality.

The scorecard is used to assess gender equality in individual companies within six vectors:

- 1. Pay equity
- 2. Workforce participation
- 3. Leadership and governance
- 4. Benefits and professional development
- 5. Workplace environment
- 6. Women-powered value chains

It can be used to:

- Strategically assess, score and select potential opportunities for a company to demonstrate commitment to gender equality
- Identify areas for improvement and ensure that value creation works to the benefit of gender equality and women's empowerment
- Conduct ongoing assessments of gender equality
- Track a company's progress in becoming a gender champion

Relevant KPIs include:

- Percentage of female ownership
- Percentage of board who are women = total number of board members and total number of board members who are female
- Percentage of senior management (SM) who are women = total number of SM and total number of SM who are female
- Percentage of total employees who are women = total number of employees and total number of employees who are female as well as employees who are female and younger than 25
- Initiative to specifically advance women
- Diverse representation policy
- Flexible work arrangements
- Anti-sexual harassment policy
- Employment benefits
- Fair compensation policy
- Fair career advancement policy
- Anti-discrimination policy
- Absenteeism rates/sick days
- Turnover rates, including turnover of working mothers after childbirth
- Employee job satisfaction, retention
- Productivity
- Error rates and lost-time incidents
- Female representation in management at different levels of the organisation
- Products or services that specifically benefit women



²⁴ The Gender Equality Scorecard is a copyrighted tool by SEAF, with input from IFU and DFPA.

6. RAISE AWARENESS INTERNALLY

Once the foundation is laid, communication and awareness are key. That means making sure that all company levels are aware of these efforts to improve health and gender equality, and that staff members understand the opportunities they present to the workplace and employees. At this stage, it is important that communication is inclusive and that the information is understood by everyone in the company. For instance, in the presence of high rates of staff illiteracy, information should be presented orally and through infographics and visual illustrations.

Companies have had continuous success with awareness campaigns that target male and female employees to encourage integration in multidisciplinary work teams and so achieve a healthy, constructive and competitive work environment. During these campaigns, it is important to adopt inclusive linguistic and visual content in both internal and external communication and be sure that all initiatives are implemented on the same basis for all employees. Consequently, it is important that employees are aware of what equality means to them. Quotes from employees can be used in the campaign with role models, and champions can be appointed to drive the campaign forwards through their visibility in the campaign newsletter, leaflets, intranet and other graphic materials.



7. COMMUNICATE THE RESULTS TO INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

Investment in gender equality and health brings numerous benefits: It improves the lives of people and families, it improves the company’s performance, and it contributes to sustainable development of entire communities. A company’s strategic and practical efforts to strengthen RBC should be communicated to external stakeholders, e.g. through the annual report. Being perceived as a transparent company that seeks to establish best practices can attract qualified employees, customers and investors, while nudging other companies to do better.

In addition, there are certification schemes or principles to which companies can sign up, to document the commitment to this work and communicate it to the world. Below are some options to explore.

2X Challenge

In 2019, IFU joined the 2X Challenge, a global initiative by development finance institutions (DFIs) to improve gender equality and include women in investments and development. The 2X Challenge was established in 2018 by the G7 DFIs to inspire other DFIs to collectively mobilise \$3 billion in investments in women in developing-country markets. Through a focus on “financing for women”, the 2X Challenge aims to improve access to leadership opportunities, finance, decent jobs, enterprise support, and products and services that advance economic empowerment and equal participation of women in developing countries. Consequently, there is momentum across the international investment community to advance women’s sustainable social and economic development.²⁵



The 2X Challenge has been accepted by Canada, the UK, the US, Italy, France, Japan, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, Finland and Denmark. In all, \$2.47 billion was committed and mobilised by the end of 2019.

EDGE Certification

EDGE Certification is a global, independent and third-party certification system for gender equality. Companies with a minimum of 200 employees can assess their performance on gender equality and become certified on a 1–3 scale (1. ASSESS – recognising commitment; 2. MOVE – showcasing progress; 3. LEAD – celebrating success).²⁶

Women’s Empowerment Principles

The Women’s Empowerment Principles (WEP) are a UN Women and UN Global Compact initiative consisting of seven principles to which companies can commit, to take decisive action towards gender equality. The WEPs cover leadership, workplace, market-place, community and transparency. More than 2,000 companies globally have signed up to work with the principles.

Top Employers Institute

Top Employers Institute is a global human resource organisation that certifies excellence in employee conditions and allows companies to assess and improve their workplace environment. Top Employers Institute operates in 31 countries and 23 industry sectors.

Institutionalising health and gender equality throughout your company’s business operations can be challenging and requires you to manage risks and document progress for continuous improvement. However, strengthening health and gender equality is not a zero-sum game, but benefits your workers, your company and local communities.

If you have any questions or concerns about how to initiate or improve your company’s gender-related efforts, you are welcome to reach out to IFU and DFPA for further guidance on how to mainstream health and gender equality in your business operations.

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ABOUT US

THE INVESTMENT FUND FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES (IFU)

IFU creates development on a commercial basis. Through investment in private companies in developing countries and emerging markets in Africa, Asia, Latin America and parts of Europe, IFU helps establish financially sustainable companies and has derived positive development effects for employees, partners and society.

IFU has increased its focus on gender equality and health among its investments. In 2019, IFU adopted a Gender Equality Policy as a part of its overall sustainability policy. It is IFU's ambition to make a difference in gender equality through its investments and to develop new approaches that will maintain IFU's position as a front-runner in gender equality in private-sector investment in developing countries, and so attract other investors to follow suit.

IFU believes that opportunities exist to create value in companies and communities by integrating gender equality in company leadership and corporate culture, business practices, workplace policies and health initiatives to empower employees. IFU further believes that there are commercial, developmental and societal benefits to investing in gender equality and women's empowerment. See www.ifu.dk for more information.

THE DANISH FAMILY PLANNING ASSOCIATION (DFPA).

DFPA is a private, non-governmental organisation without religious or political affiliations, and is the Danish member association of the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), the world's largest sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) organisation. DFPA has been working in developing countries for more than 20 years, promoting SRHR of young people, women, and men.

In recent years, DFPA has engaged increasingly with the private sector in developing countries, partnering with companies and business associations to institutionalise health, including SRHR, and gender equality in private sector workplaces. DFPA believes that the private sector is critical to engage to develop responsible business practices and to improve the lives of men and women in the world of work. See www.sexogsamfund.dk for more information.

PARTNERSHIP

IFU and DFPA have been in a strategic partnership since 2016, developing strategies, tools and methods for how IFU project companies and investment professionals can advance their work in gender equality and health. This publication is part of that work. If you have any questions about the work or would like more information about how your company can approach this, please do not hesitate to reach out to IFU and DFPA.