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Empowering women through business

A practical guide for businesses to
support women's empowerment



March 2017

Acknowledgements

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Why women's empowerment?

Welcome to the first edition of Value for Good's knowledge series in which we aim to share insights from our client work, provide useful frameworks, and showcase good practices.

Since 2015 we have been involved in numerous projects to support corporations and the UN on the issue of girls' and women's empowerment – particularly how the private sector can play a role. Using the insights gained from these projects, we compiled a practical guide for businesses to address women's empowerment issues.

Business as a force for positive change.

There is a growing recognition that all players in society – including the private sector – have a role to play in making a difference to the lives of women.

In 2015, the global community came together in New York and adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which includes SDG5 – the fundamental goal to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls by 2030. For the first time the UN brought the private sector into the conversation, recognising its crucial role in helping society achieve global goals. The private sector is critical to achieving SDG5 in many ways: from providing access to formal employment and income earning opportunities, to making available financial services and products that cater to the specific needs of women, to mention but a few.

“The biggest opportunity for us all is in SDG Goal 5. It permeates all of the other goals and it's critical to economic growth, our best weapon to end poverty by 2030.”

– Paul Polman, CEO Unilever

Businesses are increasingly developing ambitious agendas on women's empowerment along their corporate value chains. Indeed, many companies are boldly making public commitments, realising that supporting women can drive business success, help attract better talent, and enhance their reputations.

Governments are also increasingly requiring businesses to drive positive change on women's empowerment. For example, from 2018 onwards, UK companies with more than 250 employees will be required to disclose their gender pay gaps.¹

A call to action. To fully close the gender gap and achieve gender equality by 2030, more companies should use their unique positions, including the voice of their male workforce, to reach and affect the lives of millions of women as employees, suppliers and influential consumers. We hope this guide can encourage further action.

“Men have a unique opportunity in this, as we still make up 80% of the executive ranks and even more at CEO level. We have a unique obligation to be out in front on growing women in the workforce. It's not a women's issue. It's a workforce issue.”

– Julio A. Portalatin, President and CEO, Mercer

1. The Guardian, “Gender pay gap reporting for big firms to start in 2018”, 2016



Barriers to women's empowerment

Despite much progress on girls' and women's rights, many barriers to women's empowerment persist around the world. Some barriers are particular to a specific life stage, others are cross-cutting, accompanying women throughout life.



Facts from around the world

Experiences illustrating the magnitude of barriers faced by women.

10% of girls miss school



IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA 10% of girls miss school during their menstrual period due to a lack of toilets in schools.¹

IN BRAZIL, one woman is killed in a domestic violence situation every 2 hours and assaulted every 15 seconds. This equals 12 female deaths and 5760 assaults against women every day.⁵

5760 assaults every day



No financial benefits



THE UNITED STATES and Papua New Guinea are the only two countries out of 170 that provide no financial benefits of any kind to women during maternity leave.²

GERMANY is ranked 95th among 135 countries regarding wage equality between women and men for similar work. This is behind Rwanda, the US, Algeria and Thailand.³

95th among 135 countries



IN INDIA AND PAKISTAN, women spend nearly ten times as many hours performing unpaid care work compared to men.⁴

10 times as many hours unpaid care



1. UNESCO, Puberty Education & Menstrual Hygiene Management, 2014; 2. ILO, Maternity and paternity at work, 2014; 3. WEF, Global Gender Gap Report, 2016; 4. McKinsey, Gender Parity Report, 2015; 5. Mapa de Violencia, Homicídio por armas de fogo no Brasil, 2016

Six reasons to empower women

What is the (business) case for women's empowerment? There is mounting evidence showing that women's empowerment is worth the investment – also from a private sector point of view.

The Performance Case. Applying an integrated approach to gender equality across the corporate value chain can improve business performance.¹ Evidence suggests that companies with the highest percentages of women board directors perform 53% better on ROE than those with the least.² Furthermore, women globally control over USD 20 trillion of total consumer spending and make or influence up to 80% of buying decisions.³

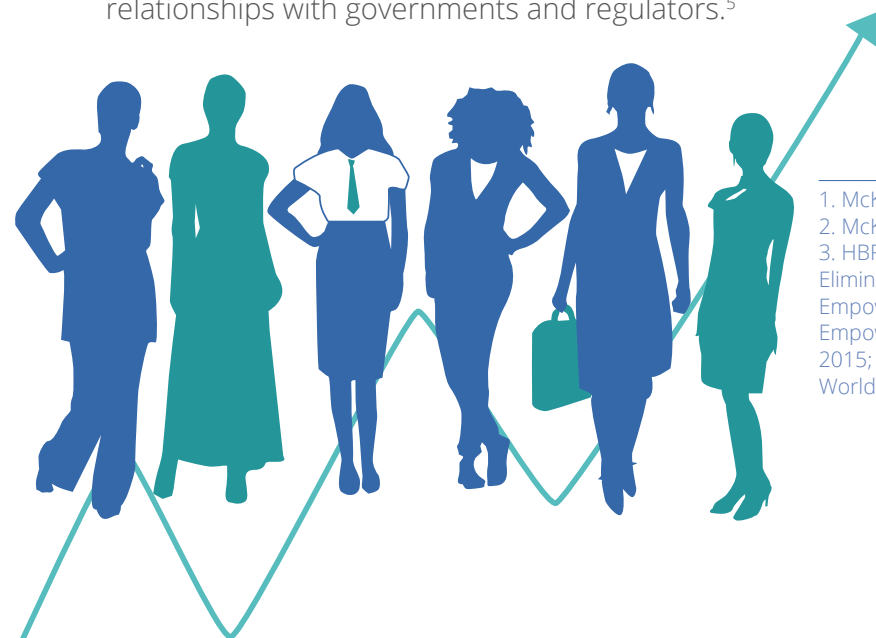
The Moral Case. Every woman has the fundamental human right to earn a living wage without conditions of slavery and lead a life free of discrimination and prejudice – just as every man does. Currently, the scale and nature of inequality and disempowerment experienced by many women is counter to principles of fairness and human rights. As a 'right and a worthy thing to do,' more than 1,000 companies have signed the CEO Statement of Support for the UN Women's Empowerment Principles.⁴

The Reputational Case. Corporations should not underestimate the influence that diversity has when it comes to their reputation. According to a McKinsey study on "The Business of Empowering Women," 60% of companies responded that corporate engagement with women has enhanced brand and reputation, while 40% said it improved relationships with governments and regulators.⁵

The Economic Case. Gender inequality is a critical economic challenge. Current GDP growth cannot be sustained unless women increasingly participate in the economy. By advancing women's equality USD 12 trillion (11%) could be added to global annual GDP by 2025. In a "full potential" scenario in which women play an identical role in labor markets to that of men as much as USD 28 trillion (26%) could be added to global annual GDP by 2025.⁶

The Talent Case. "Women are the largest untapped reservoir of talent in the world," according to Hillary Clinton. Evidence shows that a more gender-sensitive, inclusive, and diverse corporate culture can result in a better talent pool, increase employee productivity, lead to less employee fluctuation and improve access to skilled labour.⁷

The Ripple Effect. Women are more likely to spend their resources on health and education, investing up to 90% of their earnings on these societal priorities compared with just 30-40% for men. This spending creates a powerful ripple effect throughout society and across generations. If businesses worldwide redressed the gender pay gap, they would also contribute to greater investment in health and education.⁸



1. McKinsey, Gender balance and the link to performance, 2015; 2. McKinsey, Is there a payoff from top-team diversity? 2012; 3. HBR, The Female Economy, 2009; 4. Convention on the Elimination of all forms of discrimination against women; Women Empowerment Principles, 2010; 5. McKinsey, The Business of Empowering Women, 2010; 6. McKinsey, Power of Parity Report, 2015; 7. Catalyst, Why Diversity Matters, 2013; 8. World Bank, World Development Report, 2012

A framework for corporate action

Given the numerous cases for businesses to invest in women's empowerment, many have started to act. But how to begin if this is a new corporate priority? A useful framework to address the issue is the sphere of influence model, which helps assess whether key aspects of women's empowerment are being covered and helps identify areas for action. This framework was adopted by the UN Global Compact and has been used by multiple businesses in their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and sustainability efforts.

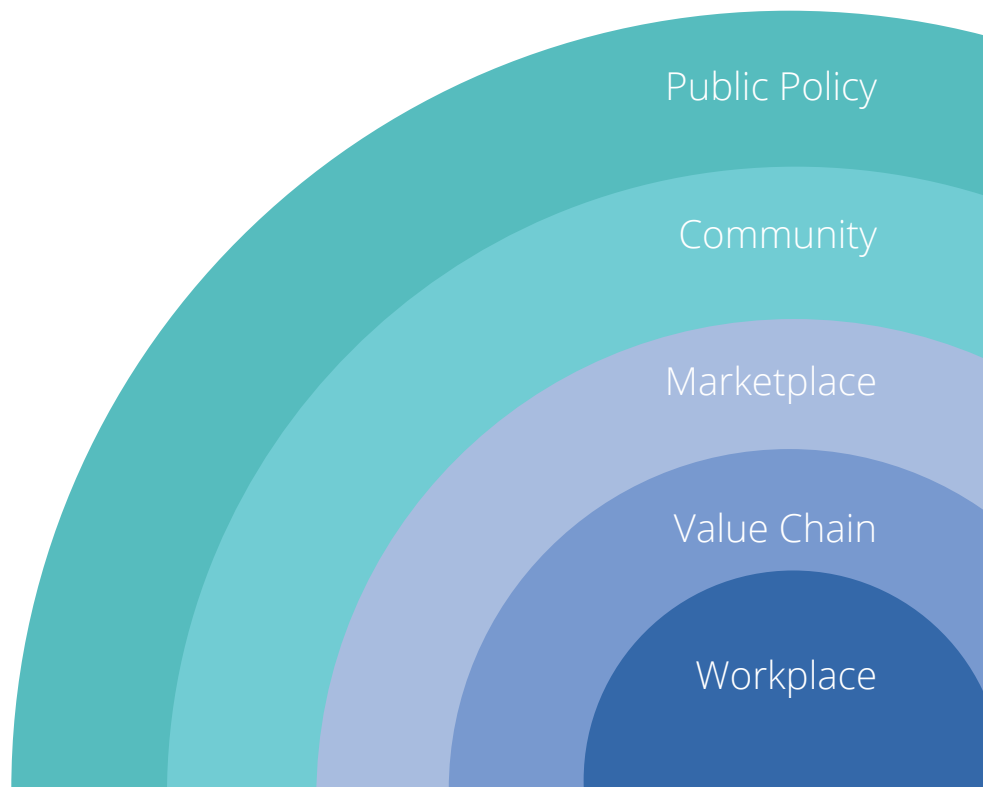
Workplace: workplace policies and activities that affect female and male employees

Value Chain: code of conducts, standards, and programs related to a company's value chain

Marketplace: activities and efforts related to a company's products and services and how they interact with customers

Community: social investments and non-commercial financial support to local communities, employee volunteering, pro bono engagement, product and other in-kind donations

Public Policy: public dialogue, media campaigns, advocacy, and regulatory efforts



Actions and good practice examples

What can be done? Below and on the next page we provide some illustrative actions and examples of good practice particularly relevant to CEOs, marketing units, HR divisions, procurement departments and sustainability functions – to enhance women’s empowerment and gender diversity along each sphere of influence.¹

Workplace

- Understand barriers to female recruitment, retention and advancement in the company by interviewing men and women across divisions
- Provide support for family and child care, including encouraging men to take parental leave, providing on-site child care, moving away from a 24/7 culture, and promoting options for telework
- Ensure healthcare counselling is gender sensitive
- Prevent and address sexual harassment and abuse, working with both men and women
- Provide training to recruitment personnel to address barriers, gender stereotypes, and biases
- Pay comparable wages for comparable work and regularly track performance of equal pay policies
- Create networking opportunities and provide mentoring to ease women’s career progression
- Communicate senior management’s internal and external commitment to gender diversity

IBM’s German Women’s Leadership Council aims to increase the proportion of women in the company overall. The Council members offer a career mentoring program to female employees, including on-the-job training and shadowing. It also provides information on activities and services available for female employees.

In 2014, **Gap** became the first Fortune 500 Company to announce equal pay for equal work across the global organization. In recognition of the Equal Pay Day 2016, Gap signed on to the Equal Pay Pledge at the United State of Women Summit with 27 other companies.

Value Chain

- Ensure women as well as men working for supplier companies are treated with dignity; institute a code of ethics and conduct random audits with consequences for suppliers that do not comply
- Work with procurement departments to understand and address barriers related to engaging women-owned enterprises as suppliers
- Build the capacity of women retailers who sell company products to end consumers, by enhancing their access to finance, business networks, mentorship, and business skills training

Coca-Cola’s 5by20 initiative aims to enable the economic empowerment of 5 million women entrepreneurs across its global value chain by 2020. From fruit farmers and artisans to micro-distribution centre owners, Coca Cola helps women entrepreneurs overcome the most common barriers they face to business success by providing them with professional training, support networks, and access to finance. Achieving this vision very much depends on building scalable models and powerful cross-sector partnerships.

1. The examples chosen are a selection of various good practices, they are not to be seen as exhaustive, nor are they endorsed by Value for Good.

Value Chain

Workplace

Actions and good practice examples

Marketplace

- Integrate gender considerations into product development
- Provide affordable and accessible products and services that address girls' and women's needs, being careful not to reinforce negative gender stereotypes, e.g. producing only pink clothes for girls
- Embed gender in key marketing and sales metrics, such as sales targets
- Avoid depicting women and men in biased or stereotypical ways in marketing and advertising
- Run communication campaigns that celebrate diversity and raise awareness on issues related to gender inequality, stereotypes and bias

Dove, one of Unilever's beauty brands, has long been a champion in challenging traditional beauty standards and is committed to improving women and girls' self-esteem as part of the brand's DNA. In June 2016 Dove launched its new #MyBeauty-MySay campaign, which features different women defining beauty on their own terms. The brand wants women to be proud and to love themselves for who they are.

Community

- Make community investments that promote the advancement of women and gender diversity
- Leverage company expertise and assets, including products and services to support women's empowerment and diversity initiatives
- Encourage employee volunteering by both men and women that benefits organisations working on gender equality, women's empowerment and diversity issues

DigiGirlz, a Microsoft YouthSpark program, provides middle and high school girls with opportunities to learn about careers in technology, connect with Microsoft employees, and participate in hands-on computer and technology workshops.

Public Policy

- Engage in public debate on women's empowerment and gender equality via blogs, social media campaigns, etc.
- Commission and share the findings of research on root causes and solutions to the barriers girls and women face on topics or geographies relevant to the company
- Partner with public and social sector stakeholders on advocacy efforts related to gender equality, diversity and women's empowerment

In 2015, UN Women launched the HeForShe IMPACT 10X10X10 initiative to engage 10 key decision-makers from each of the following sectors: government, business and academia. Accor Hotels, Barclays, Koç Holding, McKinsey, PWC, Schneider Electric, Tupperware Brands, Twitter, Unilever and Vodafone all participated in the initiative to advance gender equality and women's empowerment by driving change from the top.

Public Policy

Community

Marketplace

A check list for success

How to ensure success? Our work with businesses active around the world helped develop a checklist for action on women's empowerment.

- Understand women's needs**

Analysing the diversity of barriers and understanding their root causes in each market helps ensure the most relevant needs of women employees, suppliers, and customers are being addressed.
- Make the business case**

Understanding the potential reputational costs of not addressing women's rights along the value chain, or the cost of not retaining or developing women helps make the investment case on women's empowerment for the business.
- Assess current engagement**

Mapping current activities helps reveal gaps. This also ensures an understanding of ongoing activity across the business, including strengths and weaknesses of current activities and helps identify priorities going forward.
- Involve all divisions and men**

Wide company involvement and particularly involvement of men ensures a multi-faceted and holistic approach to the issue with a positive impact on the corporate culture. It also increases the chances of successful implementation.
- Embed in existing strategies**

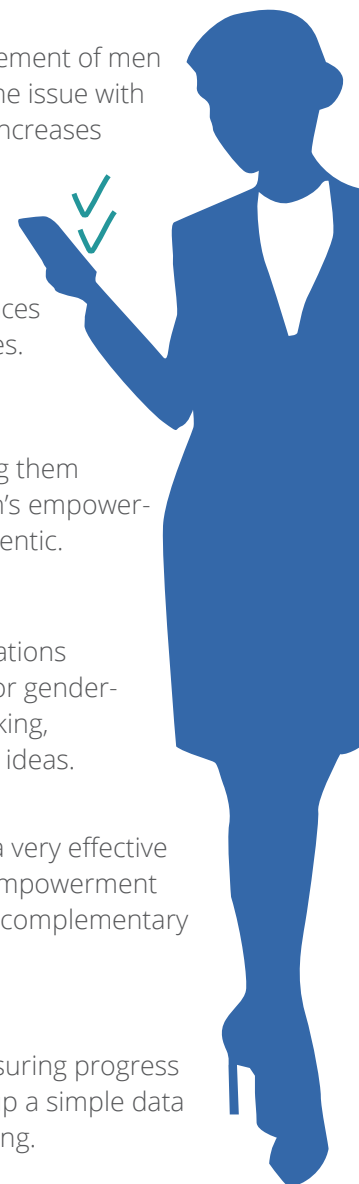
Embedding women's empowerment and gender diversity into corporate strategy increases the chances to create synergies and optimise internal resources.
- Hold leadership accountable**

Securing buy-in from business leaders and holding them accountable for meeting targets related to women's empowerment guarantees engagement is serious and authentic.
- Engage with others**

Engaging with other businesses, women's organisations and thought leaders can help those responsible for gender-related company issues stay abreast of latest thinking, learn from others' experiences, and generate new ideas.
- Join cross-sector partnerships**

Partnerships with NGOs and government can be a very effective way to reach common goals related to women's empowerment by sharing risks and resources and making use of complementary expertise and networks.
- Measure what matters**

Defining KPIs and targets as well as regularly measuring progress helps ensure accountability and success. Setting up a simple data collection mechanism also enables regular reporting.



Useful resources

Where to get additional information? Here are some useful resources on women's empowerment that are publicly available and accessible online.

The Global Gender Gap Report, 2016

World Economic Forum

Ranks over 140 economies according to how well they are leveraging their female talent pool, based on economic, educational, health and political indicators.



The Power of Parity, 2015

McKinsey Global Institute

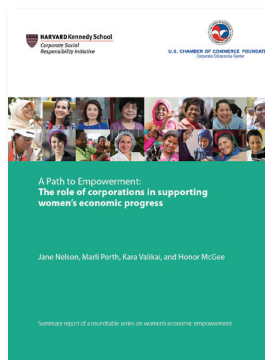
Presents a strong business case for gender parity through a "full-potential" scenario in which women participate in the economy identically to men.



A Path to Empowerment, 2015

Harvard Kennedy School & the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation

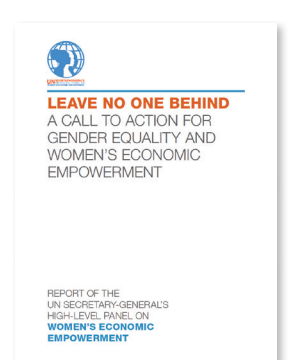
Explores the role of business in supporting women's economic progress through a framework for corporate leadership in the field.



Leave No One Behind, 2016

UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel On Women's Economic Empowerment

Highlights seven primary drivers to unlock the potential of women to fully participate in the economy and achieve financial independence.



The Rewards of an Engaged Female Workforce, 2016

The Boston Consulting Group

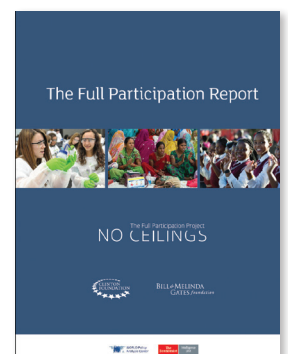
Analyses workplace preferences and engagement of some 345,000 employees, and provides recommendations on how companies can improve female employee engagement.



No Ceilings, 2015

Clinton Foundation and Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Makes an evidence-based case for the full participation of girls and women in the 21st century. Includes extensive data analysis.



Partners for impact

Value for Good (VfG) and Adrian Hodges Advisory (AHA Ltd) have a strategic partnership to better serve clients by combining complementary skills and capabilities.

AHA Ltd is a UK based consultancy working to create innovative market access and business development strategies for global corporations, by aligning CSR commitments with opportunities to build competitive advantage along extended value chains. Since 2015, VfG has been working with AHA to deliver gender equality and women's empowerment strategies and approaches to leading corporations and the UN.

www.hodgesadvisory.biz

Our services

Value for Good is a strategy consulting firm that works with businesses, governments, international organisations, foundations and non-profits to create measurable impact for society.

By sharing insights based on our client project experience related to women's empowerment, we hope to encourage more organisations to implement good practices to advance the status of women worldwide.

For further information on our services and expertise related to women's empowerment, contact Kathrin Bauer at kbauer@valueforgood.com.

"The team provided valuable strategic input and timely practical support for a review of our impact on girls' and women's empowerment. Thanks to the clarity of briefing and analysis provided, a complex topic was made readily accessible and relevant to different internal functions. This enabled informed discussion and decision making across the business to good effect."

Amanda Gardiner, VP Sustainability and Social Innovation, Pearson

