

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT PRINCIPLES

Established by UN Women and the
UN Global Compact Office



THE WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT PRINCIPLES (WEPs)

PRINCIPLES INTO PRACTICE:
AN INTRODUCTION FOR COMPANIES
IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT PRINCIPLES (WEPS)



PRINCIPLE 1
HIGH-LEVEL CORPORATE LEADERSHIP



PRINCIPLE 2
TREAT ALL WOMEN AND MEN FAIRLY AT WORK WITHOUT DISCRIMINATION



PRINCIPLE 3
EMPLOYEE HEALTH, WELL-BEING AND SAFETY



PRINCIPLE 4
EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR GENDER EQUALITY



PRINCIPLE 5
ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT, SUPPLY CHAIN AND MARKETING PRACTICES



PRINCIPLE 6
COMMUNITY INITIATIVES AND ADVOCACY



PRINCIPLE 7
MEASUREMENT AND REPORTING

WELCOME TO THE COMMUNITY

Congratulations on having taken an important step towards the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs) journey. We thank you for your interest and for making your business mean equality.

Amid all the challenges and opportunities in the ongoing pandemic, one fact is unassailable: countries and companies with higher gender equality enjoy higher levels of growth and performance. Investing in women, in their leadership and training, and equal opportunity, brings high returns and help shape what's to come – a more equitable and inclusive workplace, marketplace and society at large.

As business leaders, you now have the opportunity to leap-frog directly to achieve this by unleashing the potential of women. Companies are taking this forward in many ways, one of which involves signing and implementing the WEPs. Forged through an international multi-stakeholder consultative process, they provide a “gender lens” through which business can survey and analyze current practices, benchmarks and achievements. Informed by real-life business practices, they help companies tailor existing policies to realize women's economic empowerment.

As a leader in gender equality, UN Women is nurturing the WEPs Community and provides a series of tools, trainings and programmes to inspire and intensify the efforts to bring more women in at all levels. It includes access to the business-friendly [WEPs Gender Gap Analysis Tool](#), which will help organisations make a confidential self-assessment of their strengths and what they need to do next, paired with an Action Planning Tool.

This first introduction brochure will also provide information about the WEPs and UN Women's services to implement them including training and learning programs, technical assistance and innovative new programs, such as the UN Women WEPs Activator and Industry Disruptor that are bringing companies across Asia and Europe together to co-create gender-inclusive business.

In the spirit of collaboration, our objective is to deepen, broaden and strengthen our private sector engagement to help shift behaviours for gender-responsive business conduct – and organizations like yours play a vital role toward achieving this.

Once again we thank you and the companies that are committed to creating a more gender-inclusive business environment and we look forward to supporting you on your journey.



MOHAMMAD NACIRI

UN Women Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific



KATJA FREIWALD

*Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs) Lead
UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific*

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT PRINCIPLES

Established by UN Women and the
UN Global Compact Office

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT PRINCIPLES (WEPs)

A framework for gender-inclusive, sustainable and resilient business

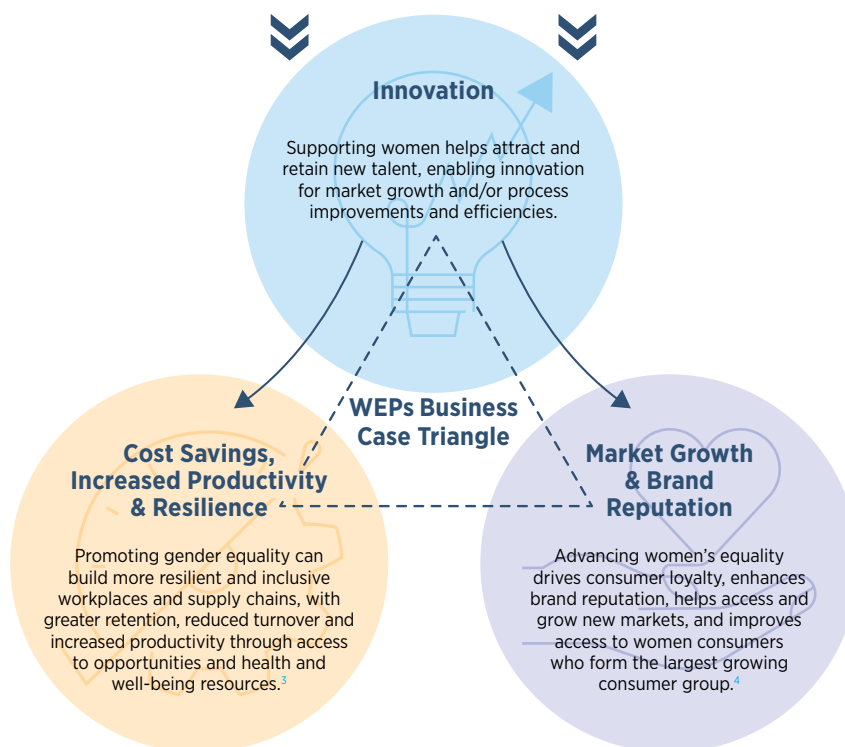
Advancing women's economic empowerment in the Asia and the Pacific holds enormous potential to drive economic growth and support business performance and resilience. At the macro level, achieving gender equality in the workplace could add \$3.2 trillion to the region's GDP¹, paving the way towards more inclusive and resilient economies. For business, integrating commitment to women's empowerment across their value chain is an opportunity to drive sustainable growth.

The Business Case for the WEPs

The Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs) provide a holistic framework for companies to promote and integrate gender equality into their value chains for positive outcomes in business and society. Launched in 2010 by UN Women and UN Global Compact, the WEPs are informed by international labor and human rights standards and grounded in the recognition that businesses have a stake in, and a responsibility for, gender equality in the workplace, marketplace, and community, regardless of their size, sector or geography.

INNOVATION THROUGH DIVERSITY

Companies with more diverse leadership teams perform financially better and are more likely to have superior value creation.²



Strengthening gender-inclusive value chains around the world

Asia and the Pacific are home to many manufacturers supplying brands globally and customers buying from international brands, demonstrating the complex links of global value chains. These companies do not operate in isolation, and as such meaningful change will require collaboration across regions and sectors. Businesses across the globe can benefit from promoting women's economic empowerment throughout their supply chains from the design stage, through to production and retail, making women's economic empowerment relevant to all companies.

¹ ILO (2017). World Employment Social Outlook. Trends for Women 2017. International Labor Office.

² McKinsey and Company (2018). Delivering through Diversity.

³ BSR (2016). Women's Empowerment in Global Value Chains. A Framework for Business Action to Advance Women's Health, Rights and Wellbeing. Business for Social Responsibility.

⁴ McKinsey and Company (2018). Delivering through Diversity.

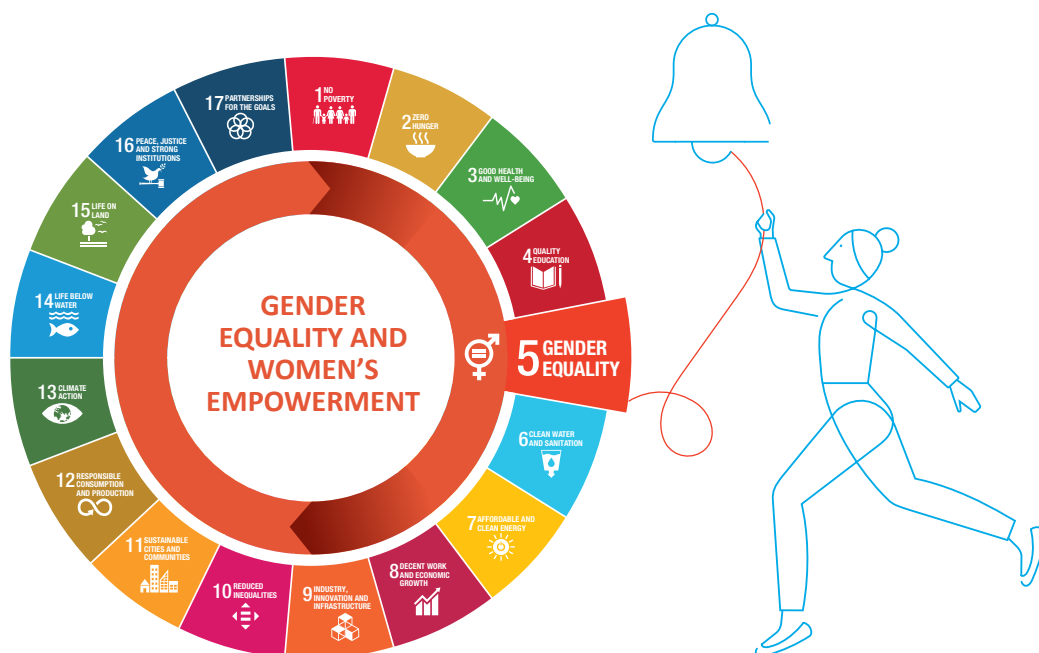
More than just good business sense: the moral and regulatory imperative to promote women's economic empowerment

In addition to the business benefits, companies have a moral and regulatory imperative to address gender discrimination throughout their value chains. Women's rights are human rights and require the same level of commitment that companies give to international human rights frameworks.

New international standards are shifting expectations for business, including but not only, the ILO Violence and Harassment in the World of Work Convention (C190) and Recommendation 206 and the Gender Dimensions report of the UN Guiding Principles of Responsible Business Conduct.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development aims to achieve gender equality and simultaneously acknowledges throughout the Declaration that advancing women's human rights as well as gender diversity and inclusion are a prerequisite for inclusive and sustainable growth.

The WEPs are the primary vehicle for business to deliver on the gender equality dimensions of the 2030 Agenda and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.



Goal 5 GENDER EQUALITY

Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

The Sustainable Development Goal 5 aims to achieve gender equality and empowerment all women and girls. Gender equality is also key to the achievement of all other Goals.



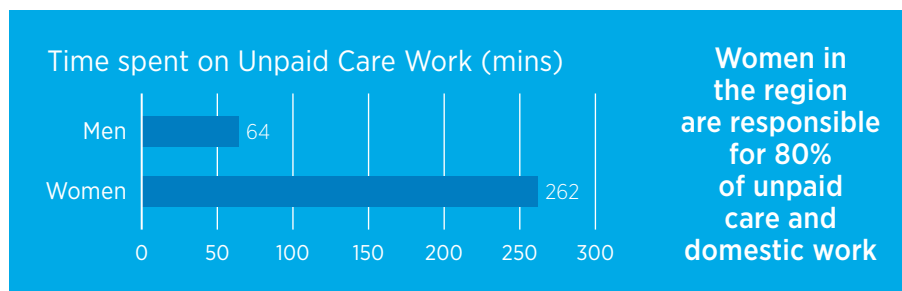
Women face multiple barriers to realizing economic empowerment in the Asia-Pacific region

Women are present throughout the business value chain in the Asia-Pacific region as producers, business owners, executives, employees, distributors, and consumers. In some industries in the region, such as apparel, women represent up to 90% of the workforce.⁵ Women own and manage approximately 30% of the region's businesses, mainly in self-employed, micro, and small enterprises.⁶

However, women face deep inequalities and discrimination in the economy leading to poorer outcomes for women, their families, and communities. Discriminatory gender stereotypes, violence and harassment at work, among other issues, all impact women's access to resources, finance, training and their ability to advance in the workplace. Women in informal employment and women from marginalized groups, including migrants, are particularly vulnerable but also have the most to gain in terms of economic empowerment.

The barriers facing women vary from country to country but generally include:

- East Asia and the Pacific is the only region where **women face declining employment** rates from 66.08% in 1991 to 58.19% in 2020.⁷
- Women are over-represented in **vulnerable and informal employment**: more than 64% of employed women in the region are in informal employment, and the female share of vulnerable employment was 78% in South Asia in 2017.⁸
- The **gender pay gap** in Asia is 15% on average, impacting women's ability to invest in their families, communities, and the economy.⁹
- Women in the Asia-Pacific region perform the most paid and **unpaid care work** in the world. Women in the ASEAN countries do up to 3.5 hours more unpaid care work than men. In extreme cases in the Asia-Pacific, women can spend as much as 11 hours a day on unpaid care work limiting the time and energy they have to participate in paid work. Unpaid care work is the primary reason why women are outside the labor force. Over 20% of women in the Asia-Pacific region see balancing their work and family responsibilities as a major challenge to participating in the labor force.¹⁰



- Women are **underrepresented in leadership**, holding only 23.3% of managerial positions in Asia and the Pacific¹¹ and only 20% of parliamentary seats.¹² When women are left out of decision-making, the policies and programs are unlikely to respond fully or effectively to their needs.
- The **gender gap in STEM skills** and resources is likely to become more visible as female-dominated sectors and jobs, such as manufacturing and teaching, automate or go online. Already, women are less likely to be connected to the Internet. In South Asia only 17% of women had access to the Internet in 2017.¹³

⁵ ILO (2014). Wages and working hours in the textiles, clothing, leather and footwear industries: Issues Paper for discussion at the Global Dialogue Forum on Wages and Working Hours in the Textiles, Clothing, Leather and Footwear Industries, Geneva, 23–25 September. International Labor Office.

⁶ ILO (2018). Game changers: women and the future of work in Asia and the Pacific. International Labour Organization.

⁷ Modeled ILO ESTIMATE <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.FE.ZS?locations=Z4>. International Labour Organization.

⁸ ILO (2018). Game changers: women and the future of work in Asia and the Pacific. International Labour Organization.

⁹ HRM Asia (2015). Two Cents: Mind the Gender Pay Gap.

¹⁰ ADB and UN Women (2018). Gender Equality and the Sustainable Development Goals in Asia and the Pacific Baseline and pathways for transformative change by 2030.

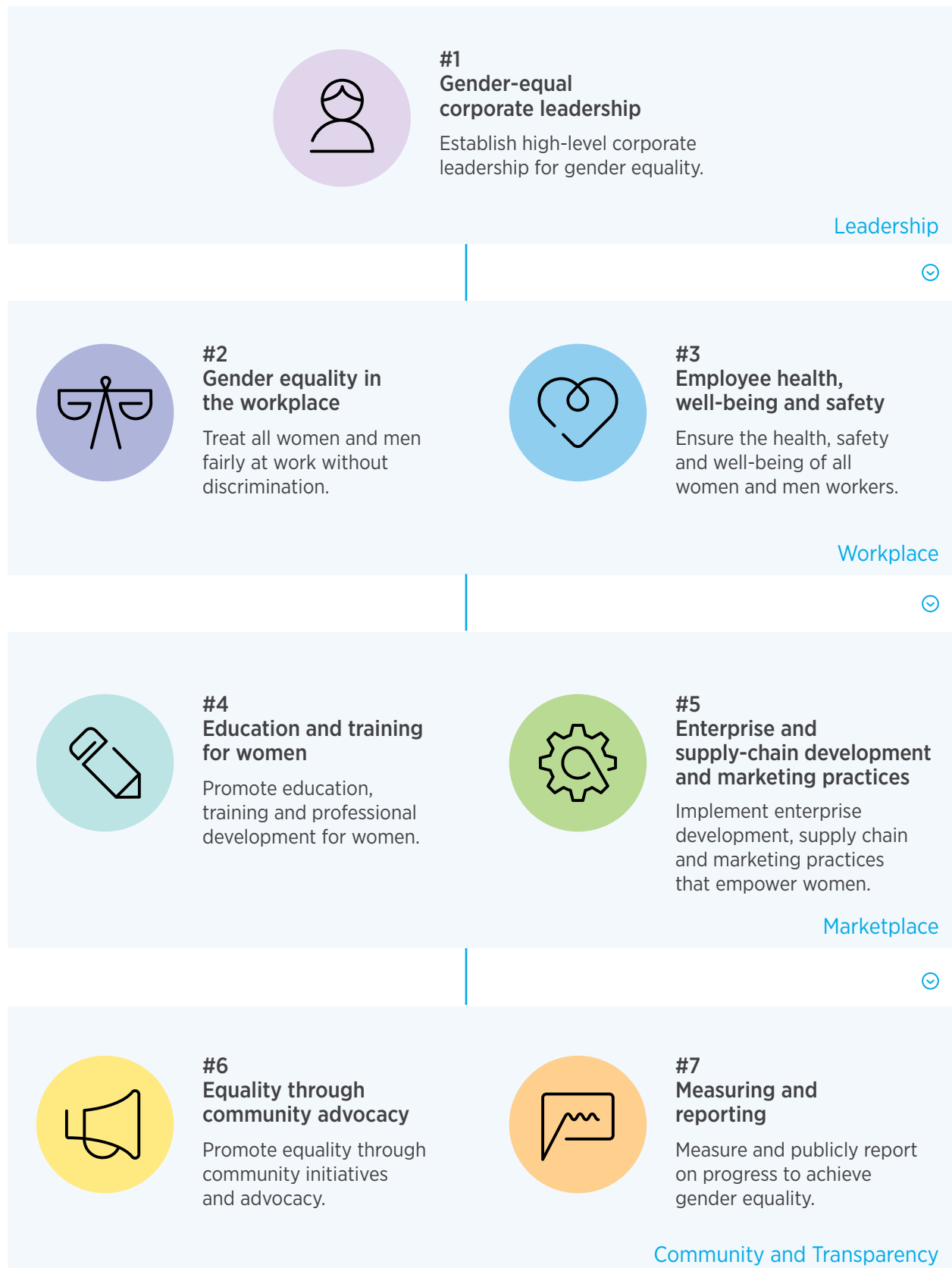
¹¹ ILO Stats (2019)

¹² UNESCAP (2019). Pathways to Influence: Promoting the Role of Women's Transformative Leadership to Achieve the SDGs in Asia and the Pacific.

¹³ ILO (2018). Game changers: women and the future of work in Asia and the Pacific. International Labour Organization.

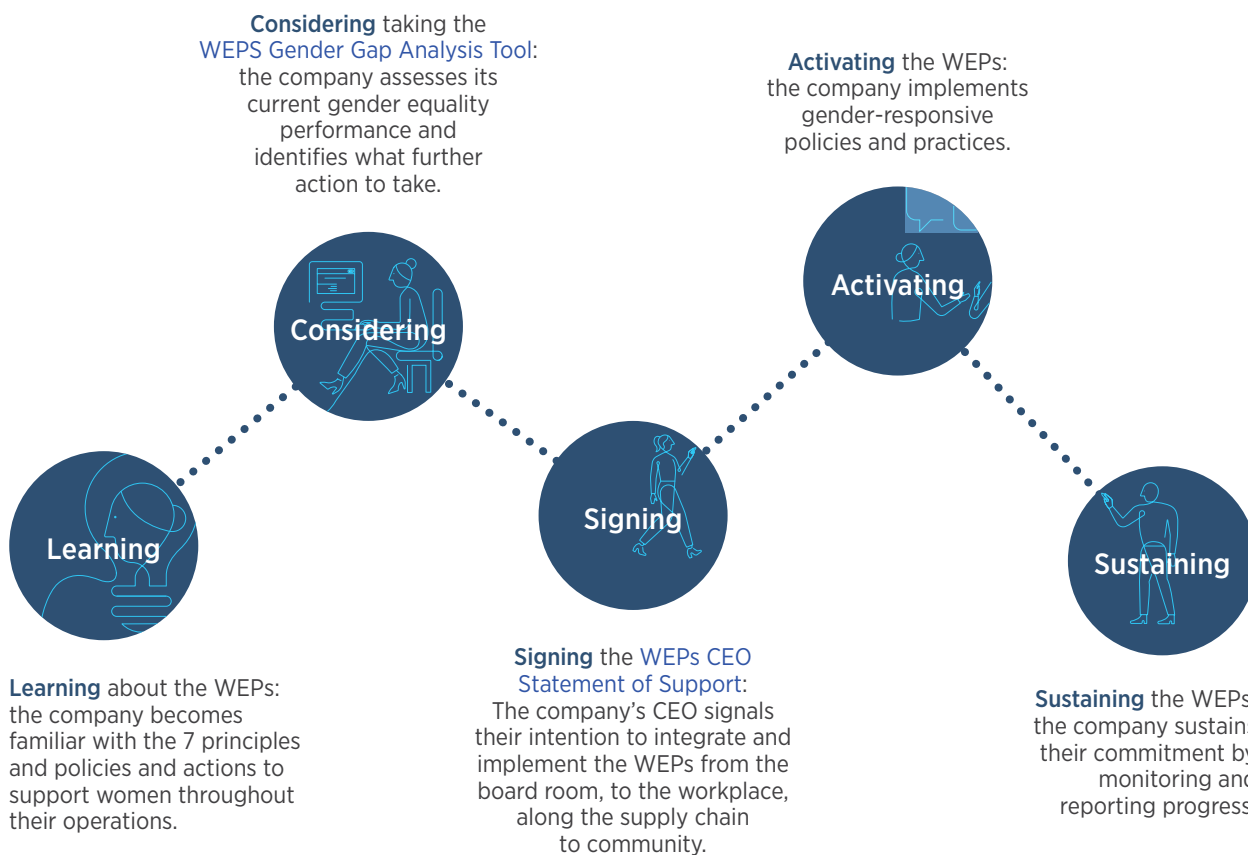
Introducing the seven Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs)

The private sector has a key role to play in breaking down barriers to gender equality and driving progress for women. The seven Principles provide a guiding framework for businesses to empower women across their value chain, in the workplace, marketplace, and community.



Implementing the Women's Empowerment Principles: A journey for businesses

Committing to the WEPs takes businesses through a journey that will allow them to put in place tailor-made impactful measures to drive gender equality across their industry and promote inclusive, sustainable growth.



WEPs Gender Gap Analysis Tool is an online tool for companies to anonymously assess their progress against the WEPs Principles. The tool scores companies overall progress from beginner, improver, achiever, and leader and across their value chain in leadership, workplace, marketplace and community.

- 🕒 To date, 2,067 companies in 117 countries have used the tool.
- 🕒 The top 5 industries represented: Financial Services; Energy and Extractives; Food, Beverage and Agriculture; Healthcare; Information and Communications Technology.
- 🕒 More than half of companies which took the assessment have over 250 employees.
- 🕒 Average global score for companies is 28% – ranking them at level 2 “Improver”.
- 🕒 On average, companies scored 33% in the workplace dimension, 31% in leadership, 22% in community and 17% in marketplace.
- 🕒 Only 5% of companies that used the tool are from Asia.

www.weps-gapanalysis.org

What does the WEPs community offer?

Companies (private, public, state-owned and cooperatives) of any size and industry, established under national law, industry associations and chambers of commerce committed to advancing gender equality and women's empowerment in the workplace, marketplace and community are invited to join the WEPs community. By joining us, you will be able to:

- ✓ **Become part of a community** of leading companies/peer-networks and exchange.
- ✓ **Accelerate your gender actions**, fast track your sustainability agenda and make your action visible to consumers and stakeholders.
- ✓ **Get access to training and support** to incorporate the WEPs into your strategy and implement impactful women's empowerment measures. In-person and virtual trainings are available for each stage of the WEPs Journey and cover the seven Principles. These trainings can help build internal awareness and support for women's empowerment and begin to implement the WEPs.
- ✓ **Participate in networking and exchanging events**, as well as have the chance to get recognized for your actions in the annual UN Women Asia-Pacific WEPs Awards.
- ✓ **Jointly develop and implement women's empowerment programs** with UN Women to address crucial areas and implement together programs in your own operations, ranging from factory to workplace programs and making your procurement more gender-responsive, or engaging larger industry platforms, such as the Unstereotype Alliance, to create wider change.
- ✓ **Co-create larger individual programs** and jointly run communications or advocacy campaigns advancing gender equality at large with UN Women.



WeEmpowerAsia is a UN Women programme funded by and in partnership with the European Union. The programme aims to catalyze action for gender equality and women's full and equal participation in the economy while creating a more gender-inclusive trade ecosystem between Asia and Europe. The program is active in 7 countries of Asia. For more, visit weempowerasia.org.



Join the UN Women 'WEPs Activator' – A 10-month training program that brings together companies to learn about the WEPs and assess their progress towards building gender-inclusive business and supply chains.



Join the UN Women 'Industry Disruptor' – A unique incubation and mentorship program that provides entrepreneurs of all genders with female-benefitting enterprises the chance to tackle key sustainability challenges in the fashion industry.

HOW TO PARTICIPATE?

Visit our [website](https://weempowerasia.org) for more information about joining the WEPs community or contact us:

Email: weempower.asia@unwomen.org

Email: katja.freiwald@unwomen.org

Funded by:



European Union

Produced by:



In support of:

**WOMEN'S
EMPOWERMENT
PRINCIPLES**
Established by UN Women and the
UN Global Compact Office