

# WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT PRINCIPLES

NOVEMBER 2020

## WEPS IN ACTION



PRINCIPLE 3

**Ensure the health,  
safety and well-being of  
all women and men workers**

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## CASE STUDY: SCHNEIDER ELECTRIC A HOLISTIC AND GENDER-BALANCED APPROACH TO HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

### LESSONS LEARNED

- Building a global and standardized definition of health coverage that makes sense in each country requires patience and sensitivity to cultural norms.
- Gender equality in the workplace is not just about providing employees with equal pay, it encompasses a holistic approach to employee well-being and health, to empower a diverse and inclusive workforce.
- Part-time employees are just as valuable to a company as full-time employees and should be extended the same health and well-being programmes.
- Providing women with quality health care and well-being can improve recruitment and retention of women employees throughout their employment.
- Consulting with employees and implementing a global health care plan proves that a large organization can be fully committed to all employees during uncertain times.
- Extending partnerships with third-party providers allows for an unbiased perspective and the knowledge to resolve difficult health care questions.

### CONTEXT

Schneider Electric is a company focused on the digital transformation of energy management and automation in homes, buildings, data centres, infrastructure and industries. The company has a presence in more than 100 countries. The company's motto, "Great people make Schneider Electric a great company", exemplifies its commitment to its employees and it has been implementing measures to make diversity and inclusion an integral part of its culture.

Under the Schneider Sustainability Impact (SSI), which is closely linked to the United Nations Sustainability Development Goals, employees are entitled to a robust life-insurance plan, an equal pay plan and family leave. The company introduced its SSI nearly 15 years ago, and its current impact report is available on the company's website.

Schneider Electric joined the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs) with its first signatory in 2013 and since then has reached 100 per cent commitment from all country leaders.

In 2014, Schneider Electric began to close the company's gender pay gap. It exceeded its initial target by 2018; implementing the pay equity review process in all countries and reaching 92 per cent of the total workforce. It joined the UN Women HeForShe IMPACT 10x10x10 group in 2015 as a corporate champion for advancing gender equality and women's empowerment.

## ACTIONS

A spokesperson for the company said: "In developing countries, human health will be increasingly affected by climate change. Other countries will face increased stress and lifestyle-based disorders. We intend to offset this with proactive policies to support employees around the world."

Implementing a global standard for health and well-being for women and men employees was key to ensure the company's diverse global workforce is treated in a fair and ethical way. Hence, the programme was designed to provide access to health care and well-being training and was rolled out between 2018 and 2020 to all active women and men employees, full-time and part-time.

### Access to medical coverage

Schneider Electric ensures that it provides a standard level of health care coverage irrespective of status, to all employees, as well as access to coverage for their eligible dependents. Access to coverage is defined by local regulations and employment agreements. Cost of the standard level of coverage may be borne by the company and/or the employee.

The company's strategy is to ensure that coverage coincides with country-level policies and business practices. To do this, the company collaborates with teams around the world to see what kind of health care could exist on a global scale, as well as creating an inclusive definition of dependents (all spouses/partners, and children up to the age of 21).

The reward and well-being teams also looked at essential components for the health plan, such as:

- Access to certain prescriptions.
- Medical procedures involving inpatient and outpatient hospital care covering all key health risks.
- Chronic conditions.
- Maternity care.
- Children's care, including vaccinations.

The company also sees equal access to health care and well-being as vital for all women and men employees. It believes that providing women with quality health care and well-being will improve recruitment and retention of women employees throughout the employment lifecycle. Although it has always promoted decent work environments and access to health it has embarked on a systematic review of its global health care provision and well-being at work programme.

The company also wanted to ensure that women were supported with appropriate maternity coverage for both the mother and the child that would also extend to coverage for any type of congenital conditions. Schneider Electric took it a step further and is investigating policies on mental health and preventive care.

### Training employees to leverage their well-being

Well-being training allows employees to address physical (sleep, nutrition, exercise, rest and renewal), emotional, mental and social aspects.

Women and men employees can attend training provided by the global HR well-being team, or a local, company approved, training. Specific topics include:

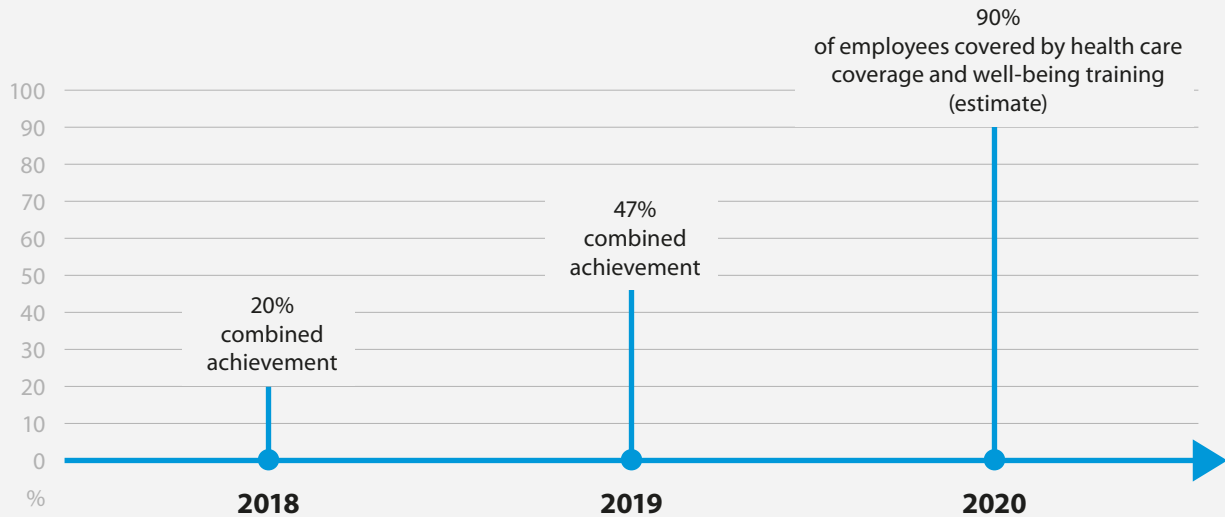
- New and smarter ways of working
- Well-being for workers
- Emotional intelligence
- Positive psychology
- Resilience strategies
- Understanding stress
- Mental health awareness
- Positive parenting
- How to help a person in distress

Training delivery methods vary and can be done on site, live online or via self-paced e-learning.

A comprehensive well-being programme was launched in 2015 with the ambition to "create an environment where employees feel empowered to manage their unique life and work by making the most of their energy." There are two dimensions to this:

- Empowering individuals starts with awareness, learning and practice.
- The company's leaders have an important impact on how they drive not only the cultural environment, but core policies and programmes to support that.

## TIMELINE – PERCENTAGE OF EMPLOYEES WHO HAVE ACCESS TO A COMPREHENSIVE WELL-BEING AT WORK PROGRAMME



The health and well-being plan was a part of continuing efforts from company leaders within their SSI to provide a decent work environment for employees. Well-being training was made mandatory for all employees.

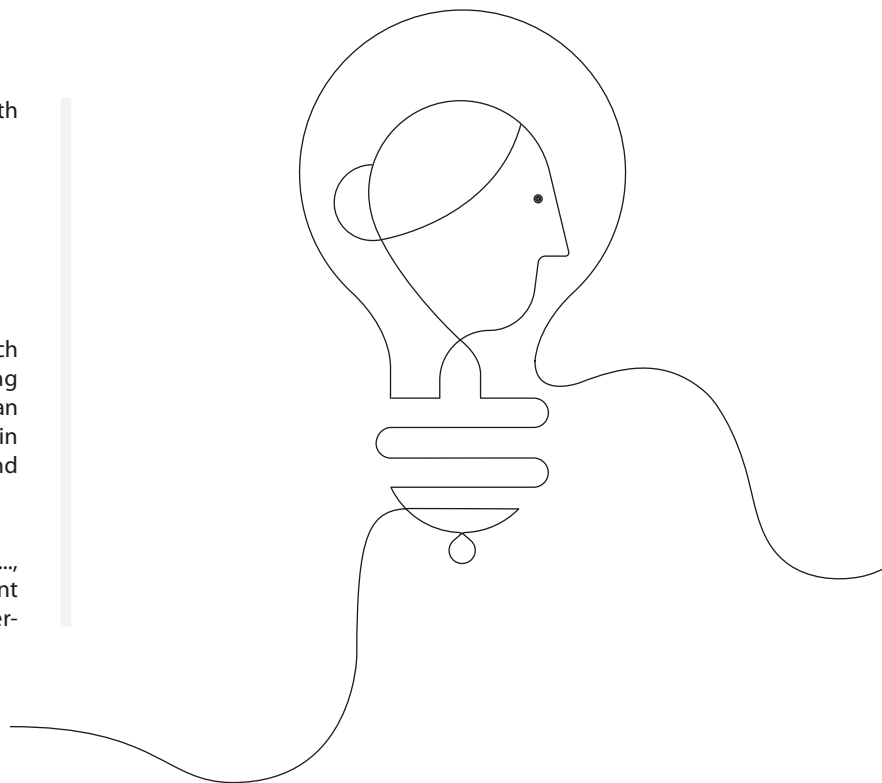
### CHALLENGES

The company found three major challenges in developing its health care plan:

- Finding a consistent language that was relevant and made sense to each country.
- Tracking the approach on an annual basis.
- Utilizing a third party to monitor the progress.

Health care and how a company contributes to it depend very much on a country's culture and its own health care system. Navigating cultural norms when defining a spouse/partner or a dependent in an inclusive way was also a challenge. The company needed to remain committed to its goal and to exercise patience while trying to find common ground with local teams at country offices.

A spokesperson for the company said: "It's a time-intensive process... and it's important as a global team to ask questions in a few different ways to ensure what we mean is actually being heard and understood. It is a highly interactive process."



CHALLENGE

Developing a global standard and definition of health care for women and men employees.

Interdepartmental teams collaborated with country offices to ensure the plan made sense locally and could exist globally. The company also partnered with an external broker with expertise in health care to help define and audit the plan.

Creating an inclusive definition for a spouse/partner and dependent on a global scale.

Collaboration with country offices ensured definitions were culturally appropriate.

Ensuring well-being learning is accessible for women and men employees.

Options of on-site well-being training and remote/online learning were offered.

HOW IT WAS ADDRESSED

## RESULTS

The health and well-being plan succeeded in reaching 90 per cent of employees by the end of 2020. The company's global standard ensures that all women and men employees are equally equipped to manage their basic health and well-being for themselves and their dependents. The plan has demonstrated that a large organization can be fully committed to employees with a set of standards that can be agile at a time of major change such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Schneider Electric was able to immediately share valuable health and well-being resources tailored to women and men employees' specific situations in their home countries during the pandemic. The company had already put significant focus on telemedicine and employee assistance programmes in countries where it was culturally appropriate to do so, offering employees virtual access to health care.

The spokesperson added: "The comprehensive set of health standards and safety nets we already had in place were a huge benefit when the [COVID-19] pandemic hit and allowed us to adapt to the situation based on an existing structure."








## RECOMMENDATIONS


The spokesperson said that support from the top of the company had been crucial to the success of the health and equity plan, and added: "Working with a third-party broker helped us during a pandemic to ensure that we're [providing] telemedicine and employee assistance programmes. Wherever possible, companies could partner with a third-party broker to ensure progress."

Schneider Electric's actions as a global company ensure that their diverse workforce is treated ethically, fairly, and from a holistic perspective.


## THE ROLE OF WEPs

The spokesperson said: "The WEPs are consistent with existing Schneider Electric practices and goals. One of the company's core values is inclusion, which it exhibits in part through ongoing efforts to improve the attraction and retention of women employees at every stage of the employment lifecycle. Our business leaders own and locally translate our ambition to provide equal chances of success to women and men. They help them to learn and grow in their professional journey, they partner with like-minded external organizations, and they extend their efforts to society at large. We are aligned on building long-term gender equality across our markets and operations." This commitment exemplifies Schneider Electric's practices of inclusion and furthers the company's goals of advancing gender equality across its global footprint.

- Principle 1  Establish high-level corporate leadership for gender equality.
- Principle 2  Treat all women and men fairly at work- respect and support human rights and nondiscrimination.
- Principle 3  Ensure the health, safety and well-being of all women and men workers.
- Principle 4  Promote education, training and professional development for women.
- Principle 5  Implement enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practices that empower women.
- Principle 6  Promote equality through community initiatives and advocacy.
- Principle 7  Measure and publicly report on progress to achieve gender equality.

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