



GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT AT WORK

This gender-based violence and harassment Policy Template aims to assist WEPs signatories in recognizing and assessing the risks of workplace-based violence and harassment on the basis of gender. It also aims to help signatories establish clear guidelines for employees to report incidents of violence and harassment. The text can be used as is or customized according to your company's requirements.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Company recognizes that in all organizations, there is a risk of workplace-based violence and workplace-based harassment on the basis of gender. The company acknowledges the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and its impact on experiences of violence and harassment, and that gender-based violence and harassment disproportionately affects women and girls, and LGBTQ+.

This Policy is intended to set out the Company's guidelines for recognizing and assessing the risks of workplace-based violence and harassment on the basis of gender. It also addresses ways to report incidents of potential or actual incidents of workplace-based violence and harassment on the basis of gender (To explore UN Women resources for WEPs signatories, please visit the WEPs [website](#)).

- The Company is a signatory of the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs) since 20__.
- Signing the WEPs was part of our overall goal to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in the workplace, marketplace and community.
- As part of this commitment, we believe strongly in safety and security of all our employees whether at work or at home.

II. SCOPE

This Policy applies to all Company workers as well as the Company's agents, guests, customers, vendors, and other third parties. This Policy applies to conduct in the workplace and in any work-related settings outside the workplace, such as during business trips, tours and Company-sponsored or authorized social events and other functions. This Policy applies to the Company worldwide, except where compliance with this Policy would cause an operating unit or divisions to violate any law in the country in which it is located.

Explanatory Note: The specific contractual status of a target/victim/affected individual should not constitute a barrier to filing a complaint.

III. DEFINITIONS

In this policy the following terms have the following meanings:

Bystander is a person who is present at/a witness of an incident of violence or harassment but does not take part.¹ A Bystander approach is used to promote victim empathy and notions of how the workplace community is responsible for preventing sexual harassment. An empowered bystander is somebody who observes an act of violence, discrimination or other unacceptable or offensive behaviour and takes action (e.g. speak out against violence and harassment; intervene to support a colleague being targeted; talking privately to a colleague exhibiting this behavior).

Impacted individuals may include the target/victim/affected individual as well as witnesses and persons who intervene in the situation involving inappropriate behaviour and possible violence and harassment.

Report refers to formal and/or informal reporting unless otherwise specified.

Sexual harassment is any unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature that might reasonably be expected or be perceived to cause offense or humiliation, when such conduct interferes with work, is made a condition of employment or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment. Sexual harassment may occur in the workplace or in connection with work. While typically involving a pattern of conduct, sexual harassment may take the form of a single incident. In assessing the reasonableness of expectations or perceptions, the perspective of the person who is the target of the conduct shall be considered.

Sexual harassment can take a variety of forms – from looks and words though to physical contact of a sexual nature. Examples of sexual harassment (non-exhaustive list) include:²

- Unwelcome touching, including pinching, patting, rubbing, or purposefully brushing up against another person
- Staring in a sexually suggestive manner

- Repeatedly asking a person for dates or asking for sex
- Rating a person's sexuality
- Making sexual comments about appearance, clothing, or body parts
- Name-calling or using slurs with a gender/sexual connotation
- Making derogatory or demeaning comments about someone's sexual orientation or gender identity
- Sending sexually suggestive communications in any format
- Sharing sexual or lewd anecdotes or jokes
- Making inappropriate sexual gestures, such as pelvic thrusts
- Sharing or displaying sexually inappropriate images or videos in any format
- Attempted or actual sexual assault, including rape

Target/victim/affected individual is the person or persons in the workplace or in connection with work towards whom the conduct constituting possible harassment and violence is directed.

Offender/alleged offender is the person or persons in the workplace or in connection with work whose conduct constitutes harassment and violence, if established under applicable policies.

Violence and harassment in the world of work refers to a range of unacceptable behaviours and practices, or threats thereof, whether a single occurrence or repeated, that aim at, result in, or are likely to result in physical, psychological, sexual or economic harm, and includes gender-based violence and harassment. Gender-based violence and harassment, including sexual harassment, means violence and harassment directed at persons because of their sex or gender or affecting persons of a particular sex or gender disproportionately.³

Worker includes employees, independent contractors and consultants who provide services to the Company.

Workplace means any land, premises or location in or for which a worker works.

Workplace violence means: (a) the exercise of physical force by a person against a worker, in a workplace, that causes or could cause physical injury to the worker; (b) an attempt to exercise physical force against a worker, in a workplace, that could cause physical injury to the worker; and (c) a statement or behaviour that it is reasonable for a worker to interpret as a threat to exercise physical force against the worker, in a workplace, that could cause physical injury to the worker.

Workplace harassment means engaging in a course of vexatious comment or conduct that is known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome. Harassment also includes discriminatory, abusive, or offensive verbal, visual, or physical conduct directed at a person due to their gender, gender identity or sexual orientation. Examples of behaviours that may be considered harassment include, but are not limited to, direct or indirect comments, actions, or tactics such as verbal or psychological abuse used to harm an individual or an attempt to harm an individual. Harassment or bullying can involve repeated incidents or can be one single incident.

IV. WORKERS' RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Workers are entitled to work free from workplace violence and workplace harassment.

Workers are responsible for working together in a professional manner and resolving issues in a non-violent manner.

Formal reports of possible violence and harassment may be made by persons who consider that they were the targets/victims/affected individuals or by persons who have direct knowledge of possible violence and harassment or by any third-party. Formal reports may be made anonymously and are not subject to deadlines.

Targets/victims/affected individuals may prefer and are encouraged to discuss their situation with a confidential informal resource, such as [e.g. confidential provider of advice/assistance] who can assist the targets/victims/affected individuals by explaining the applicable legal framework and the options available under a company's policies and practices and indicate resources available for support purposes.

Workers who observe or become aware of inappropriate behaviour or a situation of possible violence and harassment should, with training, ideally be able to support the affected individual with unbiased listening, information and referrals; confidentially report the incident or incidents to human resources, welfare officer), and take other actions that could help mitigate hostility in the environment or harm to individuals.

Workers should cooperate in the investigation of a violent or harassing incident. Anyone who gives evidence or information in an investigation or is involved in the process, must keep this information confidential, except when it is necessary to deal effectively with the issue. Appropriate steps will be taken to ensure the safety of the worker in the workplace. Workers shall complete all workplace violence or harassment training required of them by the Company.

V. MANAGEMENT'S RESPONSIBILITIES

Management must ensure, as much as reasonably possible, that no workers are subjected to workplace violence or harassment.

Targets/victims/affected individuals who believe they may have been subject to inappropriate behaviour or instances of possible violence and harassment may raise this with their supervisor or other workers in their workplace if the situation allows, and they feel comfortable doing so. Any manager approached by a target/victim/affected individual shall inform that person that confidential advice, assistance and information about the options available under the company's legal framework to address such possible conduct may be obtained from [office that provides confidential advice/assistance and support such as welfare officer, staff counsellor, helpline or other trusted point of contact].

Managers should provide advice, assistance and/or information in a timely, sensitive and impartial manner by [list possible mechanisms provided in the company's policies for managerial intervention such as providing an opportunity for facilitated discussion among colleagues about the conduct in question; also refer to the possibility of enlisting support from company units providing advice/assistance on such matters]. The intervention may allow for the matter to be addressed promptly at the managerial level. A record will be maintained consistent with and as specified in the company's policy about the matter, and any managerial intervention taken.

Management will not disclose the name of a complainant or the circumstances of the complaint to anyone except where disclosure is: (i) necessary to investigate the complaint; (ii) required to take corrective action; or (iii) required by law.

Management will ensure that all workers are aware of the risks of workplace violence and harassment and are properly trained and equipped to protect themselves.

Management will undergo regular training on violence and harassment, including on raising awareness about the issue within the workforce, communicating commitments to supporting employees, spotting and acting on warning signs, building trust, and providing confidential, non-judgmental listening, workplace supports and referrals.

VI. POLICY

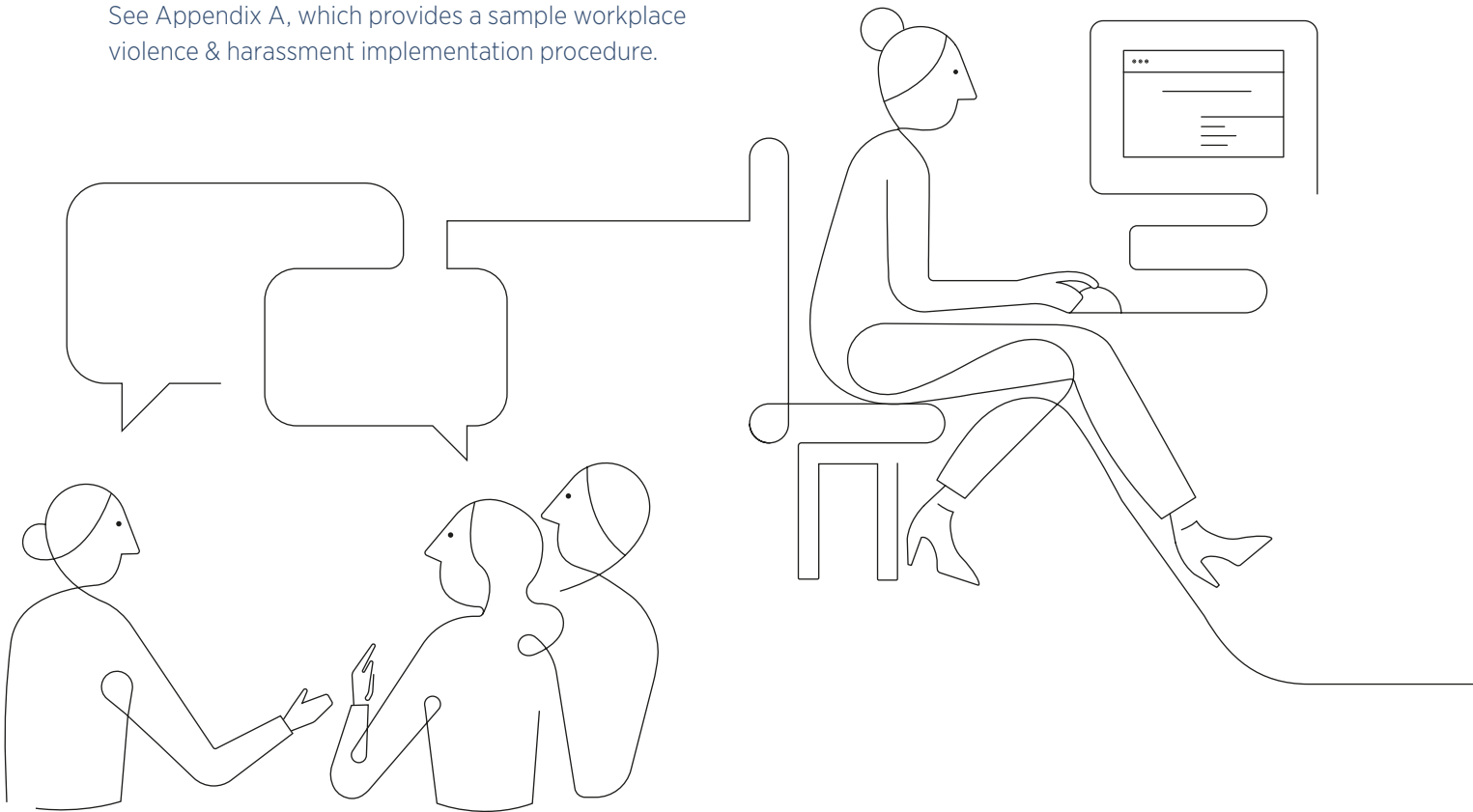
1. All workers are prohibited from engaging in violence or harassment as defined in this Policy and are expected to report all incidents of violence or harassment.
2. All workers are prohibited from any unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature that might reasonably be expected or be perceived to cause offense or humiliation, when such conduct interferes with work, is made a condition of employment or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment.
3. In the event that a worker is subjected to actual or threatened harassment or violence in the workplace, the worker can report to the following:
 - I. a trusted manager or supervisor;
 - II. human resources;
 - III. a trusted individual on the senior management team;
 - IV. a joint health & safety representative or committee, if applicable;
 - V. a sexual harassment committee, if applicable; or
 - VI. a trade union, if applicable. Nothing in this policy prohibits the worker from making a report or complaint directly to a human rights tribunal or commission, a court, or another applicable external administrative body within the jurisdiction of employment.

4. Management must inform the target/victim/affected individual that the information will be handled as confidentially as possible, but that it must be disclosed to the extent necessary to conduct an appropriate investigation. Management must act promptly and decisively to investigate and stop any known or suspected violence or harassment that occurs within their unit. Management must not ignore or otherwise condone any act of violence or harassment.
5. Agents, guests, customers, vendors and other non-workers are also prohibited from engaging in violence or harassment as defined in this Policy. Workers may refuse to work with any non-worker who engages in violence or harassment. Any non-worker who, in the sole opinion of the Company, violates this Policy, may be barred from the Company's premises and the Company may seek to terminate its relationship with the offender.
6. Any worker who is determined to have engaged in violence or harassment will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including suspension without pay and/or termination of employment. Records of all disciplinary action will be retained in the worker's personnel file. In addition, the offender may be required to participate in appropriate training or counselling.
7. Complaints may be written or verbal and may be made in person, by email, by telephone, to a company hotline, or other means.⁴ Every complaint will be investigated and resolved as expeditiously as possible, having regard to such things as the nature of the complaint, the number of witnesses and whether the investigation should be conducted internally or externally. Where the conduct complained of is extremely serious, or where the conduct is alleged to have been made by senior management, an external and independent investigation will be preferred. In the event that there were witnesses to the complained about behavior, witnesses will be interviewed. Every effort will be made to prevent disclosure of confidential and/or sensitive information, while at the same time ensuring that each incident is carefully and completely investigated. In particular, any party interviewed during an investigation will be reminded in writing prior to their interview of the need to keep the investigation and their evidence confidential, as well as the fact that retaliation is strictly prohibited.
8. Subject to the laws of the jurisdiction where the alleged conduct takes place, consideration may be given to shifting the burden of proof to the alleged harasser.
9. The target/victim/affected individual as well as the alleged offender will be provided with updates from time to time through the investigation process. Both parties will be advised in writing of the results of the investigation as well as next steps, at the conclusion of the investigation
10. The Company will not tolerate any retaliation against a worker who makes a good faith report of violence or harassment under this Policy or anyone providing information on a good faith basis as part of any related investigation, even if after the investigation no violence or harassment is found to have occurred. Any worker who subjects another worker to such retaliation will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. Likewise, a known or proven false accusation of violence or harassment will not be tolerated and any individual who makes a false accusation may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.
11. Notwithstanding all of the above, in situations where both the target/victim/affected individual and the alleged harasser wish to try to resolve matters, mediation, training, counselling and/or restorative justice may be considered ("alternative forms of justice"). The target/victim/affected individual should have the final word in determining whether or not alternative forms of justice will be undertaken.

12. In the event of harassment or violence against a worker, the Company will inform the worker about all available support during and after the complaints process, including trade unions or worker representatives, if applicable, EAP (Employee Assistance Programmes), or other internal or external resources (including community services).
13. The target/victim/affected individual has the right to be accompanied by a staff member or other third party in accordance with the company's policy during the formal or informal processes provided such person is reasonably available for the provision of support to the target/victim/affected individual.
14. The Company will provide training to all managerial and supervisory workers with respect to understanding how to handle complaints.
15. This Policy does not affect the rights of workers to pursue complaints under the relevant laws of the appropriate jurisdiction.
16. A complaint can be made at any time. There is no statute of limitations.
17. In the event of any questions in relation to this Policy, please contact **[Human Resources]**.

V. IMPLEMENTATION

See Appendix A, which provides a sample workplace violence & harassment implementation procedure.



APPENDIX A

SAMPLE PROCEDURE: WORKPLACE VIOLENCE & HARASSMENT

1. RISK IDENTIFICATION

Prevention and mitigation of the risk of workplace violence and harassment can be addressed by identifying workplace conditions or personnel issues which may contribute to the likelihood of workplace violence and harassment as indicated in this procedure. In identifying factors which may contribute to the risk of workplace violence and harassment, consider evaluation of the following:

- Previous incidents of verbal or physical violence or harassment
- Situations where workers interact with members of the public
- Staffing levels, particularly for early starts and late finishes
- Integrity of site security, equipment and lighting
- Effectiveness of emergency procedures
- Procedures in place and used for consultation and communication with violence in case of emergency
- Procedures used in cash handling
- Design of premises (e.g. location of pay office, cash sales, car parks)
- Procedures for releasing contact phone numbers, names and addresses of workers only to authorized individuals
- Training of workers who deal with customers
- Results of regular facility safety and security inspections
- Follow-up and implementation of recommendations from previous audit reports
- Gender-responsive procedures in place to deal with grievances and conflicts
- Gender-responsive procedures in place for disciplinary action
- Availability of an immediate response team
- Support of workers at risk of domestic violence in the workplace (see further guidance [here](#)).

2. RISK ASSESSMENT

A gender-responsive workplace violence and harassment risk assessment must be performed as often as necessary to protect workers and to provide a safe working environment. Relevant stakeholders should be involved and consulted, including representatives of affected groups of workers. When evaluating any required actions to eliminate or reduce the probability of workplace violence and harassment, it is important to be able to quantify the level of the associated risk as this will assist in determining the safeguards or control strategies which should be established.

When completed, the results of the risk assessment must be provided to management and any occupational health and safety committee or representative within the Company. This reporting requirement also applies to any repeated risk assessments performed to assess and prevent workplace violence and harassment incidents.

3. RISK CONTROL

The development of safeguards or control strategies will emerge from the risk identification and assessment process. Where the risk of workplace violence or harassment has been identified, safeguards or control strategies shall be established commensurate with the identified risk level. These may include but are not limited to the following prevention-related activities:

Policy planning and execution

- Promote workplace culture of trust
- Document safe operating procedures for at risk tasks.
- Put in place or update emergency procedures that include means to mobilize assistance if required.
- Develop gender-sensitive safeguards and control strategies by consulting representatives of affected groups, particularly women.
- Take corrective action where deficiencies are identified.
- Equipment and safety measures
- Upgrade site security equipment or arrangements.
- Install adequate lighting in and around premises.
- Ensure access to transport is safe for very early morning and late evening or night shifts.
- Change to electronic transfer of funds for worker payment.
- Providing personal protective equipment where indicated.

Training and awareness raising

- Conduct a capacity assessment to identify the gaps in knowledge and skills that your team and employees have on gender-based violence at the workplace
- Select the methodology or tool that is adapted to your context:⁵
 - **Bystander training:** Training individuals on how to safely intervene in cases where they may observe sexual harassment and other forms of violence against women is important. This training can enable staff to be able to identify inappropriate behavior and attitudes at work that contribute to a culture of gender inequality and discrimination.
 - **Training on unconscious and implicit bias:** This approach unpacks how unconscious bias influences decisions about recruitment, career advancement, and harmful attitudes about women and men, which result in negative behaviors.

- **Civility training:** A positive form of training based on prevention that can help reduce bullying or conflict, while promoting respect in the workplace. Training activities have a strong focus on interpersonal skills, communication and negotiation, conflict resolution, and positive supervisory techniques.
- Identify a safe location where you can guarantee privacy and confidentiality to conduct the training sessions. Set the training sessions for a time that accommodates employees' availability and preferences
- Conduct multiple and in-person training and awareness raising so that workers understand the risks and the controls which must be followed for preventing exposure and responding to workplace violence and harassment. Training sessions should be interactive, prompt critical reflections, challenge adverse social and cultural norms, and tailored for the given audience.
- Engage women and men employees, managers, supervisors in training and education to deal with customers or clients.

Data and monitoring

- Collect gender disaggregated data for informed decision-making.
- Monitoring the uptake and effectiveness of control measures through safety inspections, seeking feedback from workers and analysis of incident reports.
- Evaluate the quality and uptake of the referral services; adjust partnerships or service providers accordingly.
- Collect post-training feedback and use it to enhance future training.

4. NOTICES

In the event that a worker is critically injured or killed due to workplace violence, immediate notice must be given to the **[Ministry of Labour]** and the company's occupational health and safety committee or representative. In addition, as required by applicable occupational health and safety legislation, a written report describing the circumstances of the fatality or injury must be submitted to the **[Ministry of Labour]** within <> hours of the occurrence.

When documenting an incident, the following information is to be included:

Type of Incidents as follows:

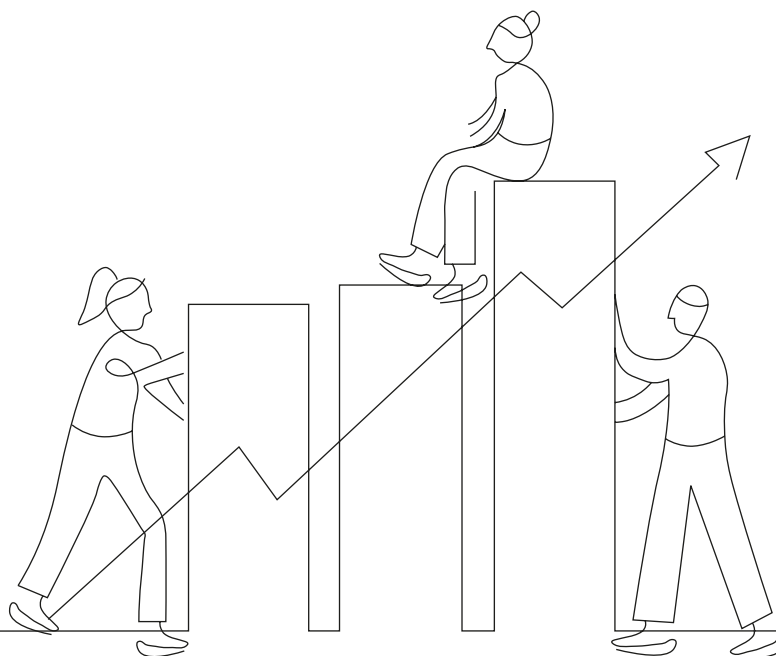
- **Threat** – verbal, verbal threat by phone, written threat (including e-mail), throwing objects, possessing and or displaying knives or other weapon, or other similar threat.
- **Physical Assault** – Struck, pushed, bitten, pinched or other incidents pertaining to physical assault.
- **Harassment** – Bullying, vexatious comments, humiliation, gestures, abusive or offensive verbal, visual or physical conduct directed at a person due to their sex, gender identity or sexual orientation.

When describing the incident ensure that you have answered all of the questions:

- Who? – What? – Where? – When? – Why? – How?

For workplace violence incidents, describe immediate actions taken:

- What actions were taken for the victim and the perpetrator?
- What actions were taken to secure the scene? (including any photos taken)
- Police Notification
- Company Notification
- Have statements been taken from the victim, perpetrator and any witnesses?
- If applicable, has the victim been provided with transportation and encouraged to seek medical help?



ENDNOTES

1. Read more about bystander interventions in UN Women, 2019. What Will it Take? Promoting Cultural Change to End Sexual Harassment. Available [here](#).
2. United Nations, 2018. UN System Model Policy on Sexual Harassment. Available [here](#).
3. ILO Convention 190. Convention concerning the elimination of violence and harassment in the world of work, pg.8. Available [here](#).
4. Please note that multiple grievance mechanisms, procedures and channels trusted by employees increases the likelihood of employees reporting the incidences of violence and harassment. See further [here](#) (page 25).
5. See further in UN Women & ILO, 2019. Handbook on Addressing violence and harassment in the world of work. Available [here](#).

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DISCLAIMER:

The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the European Union, UN Women, International Labour Organization or the United Nations and their Member States.








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WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT PRINCIPLES

 weps.org
 [@WEPrinciples](https://twitter.com/WEPrinciples)
 empowerwomen.org
 [@Empower_Women](https://twitter.com/Empower_Women)

- 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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