

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT PRINCIPLES



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SPOTLIGHT • WEPs ALLY



IMPROVING THE FOOD SYSTEM FOR WOMEN: SOME LESSONS FROM OXFAM'S BEHIND THE BRANDS INITIATIVE

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Olga Rosine Adou, a cocoa farmer and coop leader living in Agboville, Côte d'Ivoire, describes what so many women face in value chains: *"It's very difficult to do this work as a woman. Women have so much to do at home – cleaning the house and keeping up the courtyard, preparing meals, etc. Women are the first to get up in the morning and the last to get to bed at night. They are educating their children... They need help to survive."* Olga went on to explain: *"There are many things we want,"* and, when asked what international companies could do to help women cocoa farmers in Côte d'Ivoire, she said: *"We want these conditions to get better."*

Olga Rosine Adou's story, along with those of so many others in global food supply chains, is why Oxfam started Behind the Brands.¹ These stories needed to be amplified and the change needed was urgent. We began with a campaign with a scorecard, followed by company commitment roadmaps² and then country implementation plans. We also conducted benchmarking exercises³ with the agribusiness sector, key suppliers to food and beverage companies, to see how they compared to their customers. Within that time there has been progress, setbacks and a ton of learning along the way.

In March, we reflected on the broader campaign and journey⁴ and where we go next. Today, we take a deeper look at women's empowerment and highlight where there are signs of positive change and where we need to invest energy.

Oxfam conducted two robust independent evaluations to help us answer the question: Did the food system change for women? Well, yes and no. Here are our main takeaways:

1. Learn from specific supply chains



When we launched Behind the Brands, we took a deeper look at women's empowerment in the cocoa supply chain and secured ambitious commitments from the top chocolate companies – Mars, Mondelez and Nestlé. Women working in the cocoa industry provide most of the labour – paid and unpaid – and yet see little of its value. For example, the African Development Fund⁵ reported that, in Côte d'Ivoire, women in the cocoa sector constitute 68 per cent of the workforce yet earn just 21 per cent of the income generated. The cocoa sector is unique, but it provides key lessons for implementing broader gender equality in food supply chains. In 2014, Oxfam commissioned an independent evaluation⁶ of the commitments made by Mars, Mondelez and Nestlé,⁷ including the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs), that companies needed to truly embed the commitment in long-term implementation.

We released a report⁸ in March 2021 to gauge company progress in the eight years since the original commitments.⁹ We found that some companies make gender equality a priority, but not all companies publish their work. All companies conducted gender assessments in key cocoa sourcing countries (Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Indonesia), but there was a notable gap between those assessments and the action plans produced.

We also noted in our most recent Agribusiness Scorecard¹⁰ that only one of the seven agribusinesses we assessed have signed the WEPs. Based on the evaluation, more effort is needed to tackle the inequities and discrimination experienced by women cocoa farmers, both waged and unwaged. The companies have the technical capacity and genuine commitment to address the challenges faced by these women but, for it to be successful, those voices and perspectives need to be prioritized in any programme intervention or design.

2. Take that first step and keep going



As of 2021, nine of the Big 10 companies – Coca-Cola, Danone, General Mills, Kellogg's, Mars, Mondelez, Nestlé, PepsiCo and Unilever – have endorsed the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs),¹¹ which we applaud. In our recent independent evaluation¹² of how the WEPs have been implemented, we found that almost all those companies took action to promote women's empowerment, which includes embedding gender within codes of conduct, publishing overall long-term strategies with measurable indicators, strong parental leave practices, supplier codes and social investment programmes that address the empowerment of women, girls or entrepreneurs. Taking these steps to lay the groundwork for a long-term commitment to gender equality is essential, but it also requires the long-term investment and the commitment needs to be embedded throughout the company's operations or it will not take hold.

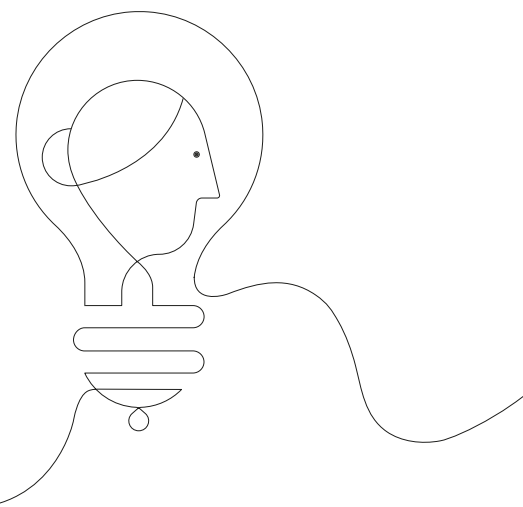
We found that some companies sign up to the WEPs but, for different reasons, fail to communicate what signing onto the WEPs means in practical terms to subsidiaries, country offices or throughout the supply chain. That initial step, while significant, lacks resources for staff and supply chain partner development or monitoring mechanisms, leading to a lack of traction. Therefore, tracking progress remains uneven. UN Women has already started to address these types of challenges with the new WEPs Reporting framework to help track progress.¹³

3. Lead by example



Some companies charted a new path and used the WEPs and/or a broader corporate commitment to gender equality to shape policy. Others had already made commitments before we launched Behind the Brands such as The Coca-Cola Company's 5by20 initiative,¹⁴ which aimed to enrich the lives of more than 5 million women around the world by 2020 – from fruit farmers, retailers and restaurant owners, to artisans, recyclers and distributors – through access to business skills training, financial services, peer networks, mentors and other resources. The company now reports it has supported 6 million women – way in excess of its goal.

Through our evaluation process, we found that PepsiCo is one of the few companies to offer on-site or near site childcare facilities in many of its international offices including those in Egypt, India, Mexico and Pakistan, and is continuing to expand this programme to other countries. In more than half of its locations, PepsiCo has provided wellness rooms, mothers' rooms or alternate space available for nursing mothers. Unilever reports that it uses a third party to evaluate women's participation and representation throughout all levels of its workforce. Olam, one of the main agribusiness traders, is currently the only one among the top three cocoa traders to have signed the WEPs. This is a major step and shows other agribusinesses that change requires all actors to get involved. These examples show that progress can take many shapes and each company has a different path to follow.



4. Embrace collaboration and report often



One major takeaway from this entire process is that there are so many reasons to be working more closely together, while we are testing solutions and scaling them for greater impact. Yes, it is complicated, but our evaluations tell us that embracing collaboration is critical to achieving women's economic empowerment. As an immediate next step, more companies can and should use the WEPs as a mechanism to track and report progress. We are excited to see how UN Women is expanding the WEPs Reporting framework¹⁵ so that good work is getting measured and captured.

The more information UN Women makes available through this platform the more useful the WEPs become as a framework for companies, investors and stakeholders.

Companies can advance women's economic empowerment in their agricultural supply chains by:

- Promoting gender equality throughout the supply chain
- Encouraging their suppliers to commit to the WEPs
- Sourcing goods from women farmers and agribusiness entrepreneurs
- Ensuring women have equal access to resources, inputs, services, trainings, finance and decision-making
- Supporting business models in their supply chains that benefit women
- Recognizing women in commercial relationships
- Integrating feedback of women's rights organizations in company commitments and plans
- Prioritizing women in company climate response efforts
- Advancing a culture across value chains free of sexual harassment and violence, following practice identified in ILO Convention 190.

ENDNOTES

1. See www.behindthebrands.org (accessed on 9 May 2021).
2. See www.oxfamitalia.org/scopriilmarchio/women-cocoa-roadmap (accessed on 9 May 2021).
3. See www.oxfam.org/en/research/companies-spoke-did-their-suppliers-listen (accessed on 9 May 2021).
4. <https://views-voices.oxfam.org.uk/2021/03/the-food-fight-continues> (accessed on 9 May 2021).
5. African Development Bank, 2015. Economic Empowerment of African Women through Equitable Participation in Agricultural Value Chains, Abidjan 01, Côte d'Ivoire.
6. Oxfam, 2014. Oxfam analysis and recommendations to Mars, Mondelez, and Nestlé on gender equality in the cocoa sector (31 October).
7. See www.oxfamamerica.org/press/chocolate-companies-offer-mixed-bag-on-womens-rights
8. Ritu Mahendru, 2021. Behind the Brands Independent Evaluation on the Implementation of Gender and Cocoa Commitments, Oxfam.
9. See www.oxfamitalia.org/scopriilmarchio/women-cocoa-roadmap (accessed on 9 May 2021).
10. See https://webassets.oxfamamerica.org/media/documents/Agribusiness_Scorecard_2020_-_FINAL.xlsx?_gl=1*136j38c*_ga*NjQyNjE4Nzk1LjE1NTkxMzk3NDk*_ga_R58YETD6XK*MTYxOTczMjc4Ny40MC4wLjE2MTk3Mzl3ODcuMA (accessed on 9 May 2021).
11. See www.weps.org/companies (accessed on 9 May 2021).
12. See www.oxfamamerica.org/explore/research-publications/implementation-of-weps (accessed on 9 May 2021).
13. See UN Women, 2021. Equality means business: WEPs Brochure www.weps.org/resource/equality-means-business-weps-brochure (accessed on 9 May 2021).
14. See www.coca-colacompany.com/shared-future/women-empowerment (accessed on 9 May 2021).
15. See UN Women, 2021. Guidance note on how to report progress, www.weps.org/resource/weps-guidance-note-how-report-progress (accessed on 9 May 2021).

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT PRINCIPLES

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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