

UNDERSTANDING INTERSECTIONALITY

TARGETING ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION IN THE WORLD OF WORK

Guidance Note

THE ISSUE

Gender equality in the world of work is linked to improved economic outcomes as countries and companies stand to prosper when everyone fully participates in the economy.

Despite the benefits of gender equality, women and people with diverse gender identities and expressions face a multitude of challenges related to full and equal economic participation. Women have limited access to decent work and their employment tends to be restricted to low-paying roles or industries with already high representation of women. They often experience corporate cultures that de-value their contributions and that associate leadership and ambition with masculinity. As a result, gender pay gaps persist and women aspiring to leadership roles and positions on boards face systemic barriers. Many women are subject to various forms of harassment and microaggressions.

Policies, strategies and programmes established to increase women's participation and leadership tend to treat women as a homogeneous group with little recognition of the different backgrounds, identities, and lived experiences that exist *among* women. These measures fail to consider the experiences of women from different backgrounds and identities linked to ability, age, citizenship, class, ethnicity, race, religion and sexual orientation, among others. Instead, such measures tend to be geared toward white, cisgender, heterosexual, non-disabled women.¹ The results are multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination against women

in the workplace that are revealed when applying an intersectional lens.

Intersectionality² refers to the ways in which multiple forms of inequality exacerbate one another to create obstacles not often widely understood or visible by conventional ways of thinking.³ For example, the experiences of racism and sexism intersect and create unique experiences for women of colour, leading to compounded, systemic barriers in the workplace.⁴

Box. 1 WEPs Tool Kit

Many opportunities exist for companies to address all forms of discrimination in the workplace, marketplace and community to ensure that the perspectives and talents of women in all their diversity are equally valued. This guidance note provides illustrative examples and recommendations for companies to address discrimination and foster diversity, equality and inclusion with a specific focus on intersectionality. It complements the information and recommendations of the other guidance notes in the [WEPs Toolkit](#).

AN INTERSECTIONAL PERSPECTIVE

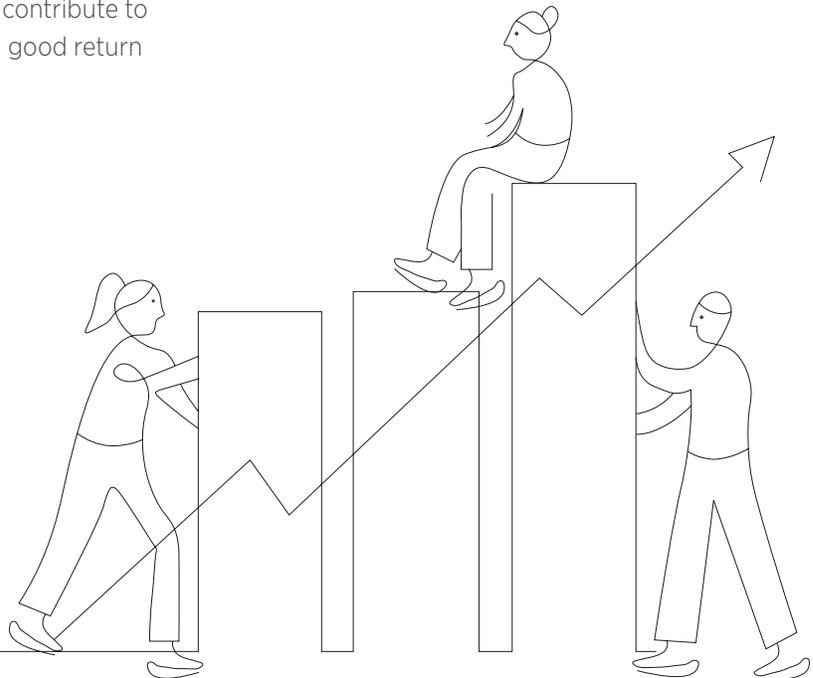
A resilient and successful business is one that recognizes women in all their diversity and establishes an inclusive corporate culture and mechanisms for transparency and accountability. It ensures all employees are represented and treated equally at all levels from entry-level positions to executive-level roles. Companies should respect human rights standards, as all workers have the right to work in environments free from discrimination, judgement and harassment.

Committing to diversity, inclusion and anti-discrimination, and ensuring that women from diverse backgrounds with different identities and abilities are welcomed and valued in the workplace are morally right. These values also have positive impacts for companies.

Implementing diversity and inclusion measures increases employee satisfaction and commitment, attracts new talent, and can lead to heightened productivity, reduced levels of groupthink, decreased absenteeism and decreased turnover.⁵ When companies show prospective employees that diversity, equity, and inclusion are priorities, they attract new talent. Overall, a diverse and inclusive workplace can contribute to increased competitiveness and demonstrate a good return on investment to stakeholders.⁶

When implementing the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs), applying an intersectional lens to underpin diversity, inclusion and anti-discrimination strategies is crucial. The goal is to eliminate any form of bias and discrimination that marginalizes any worker.

All current and future WEPs signatories are encouraged to implement measures to ensure that the perspectives, skills and talents of women from different backgrounds, with different abilities and identities, are represented and valued in company initiatives, programmes and decision-making. Taking an active and vocal stand against discrimination and committing to valuing and respecting the experiences and insights of women in all their diversity is a first step in fostering corporate cultures that represent, value and respect all workers.



Box. 2 Definitions

These definitions and the experiences of women in all their diversity vary across regions and contexts. It is important to note the ways in which identities are socially constructed, yet the discrimination that individuals and groups experience have real and devastating impacts.

1. **Ableism:** “A set of beliefs or practices that devalue and discriminate against people with physical, intellectual or psychiatric disabilities.”⁷
2. **Ageism:** The stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination against people on the basis of their age.⁸
3. **Disability:** Under the medical model, this term refers to a limitation or loss of physiological abilities, whether apparent or not.⁹ These can be physical, cognitive, learning or visual.”¹⁰ “Socially, disability is identified as a disadvantage or restriction of activity caused by systemic barriers, negative attitudes and exclusion by society.”¹¹
4. **Discrimination:** The intended or accomplished distinction, exclusion or restriction of certain individuals based on gender identity, gender expression, race, skin colour, lineage, national or ethnic origin, sexual orientation, social status, religion, age, disability or any other individual trait, with the purpose or effect of preventing or hindering the recognition and/or exercise, on an equal basis, of nullifying or impairing the recognition of human rights and fundamental freedom in all spheres, including public, private, political, economic, cultural or civil.¹²
5. **Cisgender:** “A person whose gender identity, gender expression and sex assigned at birth align.”¹³
6. **Diversity in the workplace:** An effort to employ a diverse team of people that is reflective of the society in which it exists and operates.¹⁴
7. **Equality:** “The right of different groups of people to have a similar social position and receive the same treatment.”¹⁵ Gender equality is where “access to rights or opportunities is unaffected by gender.”¹⁶
8. **Equity:** While equality focuses on providing all individuals and groups with the same starting point and treating all people the same, equity takes peoples’ differing experiences, needs and abilities into account and works to ensure all individuals and groups of people are afforded the same finish line.¹⁷
9. **Ethnicity:** “A socially defined category or membership of people who may share a nationality, heritage, language, culture, and/or religion.”¹⁸
10. **Gender:** “Whereas “sex” refers to biological and physiological characteristics, “gender” refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for individuals based on the sex they were assigned at birth.”¹⁹
11. **Heteronormativity:** “Refers to the commonplace assumption that all people are heterosexual and that everyone accepts this as “the norm.”²⁰
12. **Homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia:** “Fear or hatred of gay or lesbian people, of homosexuality, of bisexuality or of transgender individuals. May manifest in exclusion, discrimination or violence.”²¹
13. **Inclusion:** “An organizational effort in which different groups or individuals having different backgrounds are culturally and socially accepted and welcomed, and equally treated.”²²
14. **Intersectionality:** The ways in which multiple forms of inequality exacerbate one another to create obstacles not often widely understood or visible within conventional ways of thinking.²³ For example, we often consider racial inequality as separate from gender inequality, yet women of colour are subject to *both* forms of inequalities and the experience is not simply a sum of its parts.²⁴ As such, women with multiple identity intersections of race, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, ability and others, can experience different, mutually reinforcing barriers to equality, and may not be directly targeted in mainstream company policies, programmes and efforts for justice.²⁵

15. **Institutional racism:** “Racially discriminatory policies and practices within organizations and institutions.”²⁶
16. **Microaggression:** “A comment or action that subtly and, intentionally or unintentionally, expresses a prejudiced attitude generally directed towards a member of a marginalized group.”²⁷
17. **Prejudice:** “A preconceived opinion that is not based on reason or actual experience, or a dislike, hostility or unjust behaviour deriving from preconceived and unfounded opinions.”²⁸
18. **Racism:** An ideology that assumes that different races possess distinct and inherent characteristics, abilities or qualities, especially to distinguish them as inferior or superior to one another.²⁹ Racism occurs in relation to, and between, people and groups, in the design and development of public policies, in government structures and in the forms of organization of states.³⁰ It covers a wide and complex scope, penetrating culture, politics and ethics.³¹ It moves processes in favour of maintaining and perpetuating privileges and hegemonies.³² Racism implies or clearly states that pure races exist, that these are superior to the others and that such superiority authorizes political and historical hegemony, points of view against which considerable objections are raised.³³
19. **Racial discrimination:** Any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, ancestry, ethnic or national origin with the purpose or effect of preventing or hindering the recognition and/or exercise, on an equal basis, of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.³⁴
20. **Religious discrimination:** The act of treating a person unfavourably because of their religious beliefs.³⁵
21. **Stereotype:** “A generalized view or preconception about attributes or characteristics that are, or ought to be, possessed by members of a particular social group or the roles that are, or should be, performed by members of a particular social group.”³⁶ A gender stereotype is a “generalized view or preconception about attributes or characteristics that ought to be possessed by women and men or the roles that are, or should be, performed by women and men.”³⁷
22. **Transgender:** Used by some people whose gender identity and, in some cases, gender expression, differs from what is typically associated with the sex they were assigned at birth.³⁸

SYSTEMIC BARRIERS TO EQUALITY – the impact on women in the world of work

Women from diverse backgrounds with different identities and abilities experience systemic barriers related to, for example, biases, stereotypes or discriminatory practices, when entering the workforce and advancing their careers. These barriers often result in women’s unequal workforce participation rates, the pay gap, unequal representation in leadership roles, harassment in the workplace and discrimination and microaggressions, among others.

Meaningful action, rather than symbolic and performative measures, are necessary for achieving truly inclusive workplaces.

Data often does not highlight or capture the ways in which multiple forms of oppression and discrimination intersect in the workplace and result in systemic barriers and unequal opportunities for women in all their diversity.

Box. 3 ILO Convention No. 111

The ILO Convention on Discrimination in Employment and Occupation (No. 111) requires states to enable legislation which prohibits all discrimination and exclusion on any basis including of race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, and national or social origin in employment and repeal any provisions that are contrary to the convention.³⁹

The following sections contain non-exhaustive statistics and illustrative examples highlighting the discrimination experienced by women with different identities, backgrounds and abilities that can be revealed when applying an intersectional lens.

UNEQUAL LABOUR-FORCE PARTICIPATION RATES

– race and religion

- In the United Kingdom (UK), Muslim women are three times as likely as women generally, to be unemployed and looking for a job.⁴⁰
- In Canada, statistics from 2016 highlight that unemployment rates among Black women were approximately twice that of non-racialized women.⁴¹ In fact, Black Canadian women are more likely to be represented in low-paid precarious and part-time work, and experience long periods of unemployment and difficulty advancing in their careers.⁴²

THE PAY GAP

– race, ethnic background and disability

Globally, women earn 23 per cent less than men for work of equal value.⁴³ This wage gap typically results from a multitude of factors including occupational segregation which may channel women into certain industries or roles that are lower paid, as a result of women's higher rate of unpaid caregiving responsibilities.⁴⁴

- In 2018, white women in the United States (US) earned approximately 79 cents for every dollar earned by white men.⁴⁵ These same statistics highlight that, in 2018, the earnings of Black women, American Indian and Alaskan Native women, and Hispanic or Latina women equaled 62 cents, 57 cents and 54 cents respectively for every dollar earned by white men.⁴⁶ In fact, on average, Black women in the US are paid 20 per cent less than white women.⁴⁷
- In Brazil, in 2019 the pay gap was 26 per cent between white men and white women. This gap reached 56 per cent between white men and Black women, illustrating the compounded effects of racism and sexism.⁴⁸
- Wage gaps persist for women living with disabilities. As of 2015 in the US, full-year women workers with disabilities earn only 60 cents to every dollar earned by able-bodied men and 72 cents to every dollar earned by men with disabilities.⁴⁹ Compared to able-bodied women, women with disabilities earn only 80 cents to the dollar, highlighting the compounded inequalities.⁵⁰

Box. 4 ILO Convention No. 100

The ILO Convention on Equal Remuneration for Men and Women Workers for Work of Equal Value (No. 100) was adopted in 1951 and states that member states shall ensure equal remuneration for men and women workers for work of equal value which may be achieved through national laws and legislation, collective agreements, a system for wage determination, and others.⁵¹

UNEQUAL ACCESS TO LEADERSHIP ROLES

– race and ethnic background

Efforts to increase women's representation in leadership positions and on boards tend to treat women as a homogeneous group and therefore are not aimed at ensuring women in all their diversity are represented.

- A study of 317 companies across the United States and Canada in 2020 highlights that white men made up 66 per cent of C-Suite roles, while white women made up 19 per cent, men of colour made up 12 per cent, and women of colour made up 3 per cent.⁵²
- In 2019, across the US, white women held approximately 32 per cent of management positions while Latina women, Black women, and Asian women made up 4.3 per cent, four per cent and 2.5 per cent respectively.⁵³
- A Canadian study of major cities reveals that in Toronto, as of 2019, while racialized women outnumber non-racialized women in the general population, they are represented on corporate boards at the ratio 12 to 1.⁵⁴
- In Brazil, 13 per cent of companies have women CEOs (with only 27.3 per cent medium-level management positions occupied by women), while only eight per cent of Black Brazilian women in the formal market occupy manager, director positions, or are founders of their own companies.⁵⁵ Twenty-three per cent of Black women employees work as assistants, 18 per cent as administrative or operational professionals, eight per cent as analysts and five per cent were interns or trainees.⁵⁶

HARASSMENT IN THE WORKPLACE – age, race and sexual orientation

Harassment and violence in the workplace come in many forms, including sexual harassment and psychological or emotional abuse. However, many women experiencing harassment and violence in the workplace do not report these instances, thus the actual rates may be higher than what is illustrated in the available data. Research shows that in many cases, young women, women of colour and women from the LGBTIQ+ community experience higher rates of sexual harassment in the workplace.

- A survey from The Young Women’s Trust found that young women in the UK in particular are hesitant to report sexual harassment – one in four fear losing their job and one in five fear having their hours cut.⁵⁷
- Between 2012 and 2016, Black women in the US filed workplace sexual harassment complaints at approximately three times the rate of white women.⁵⁸
- 2018 research in the US, representing 279 companies and 64,000 employees, highlights that 35 per cent of women in corporate America experience sexual harassment, with the instances rising to 48 per cent for lesbian women.⁵⁹
- In the UK, a 2018–2019 study revealed that more than half of LGBT women surveyed had experienced unwanted sexual jokes, more than a third had experienced unwanted touching, and more than one fifth had experienced sexual assault in the workplace.⁶⁰

Box. 5 ILO Convention No. 190

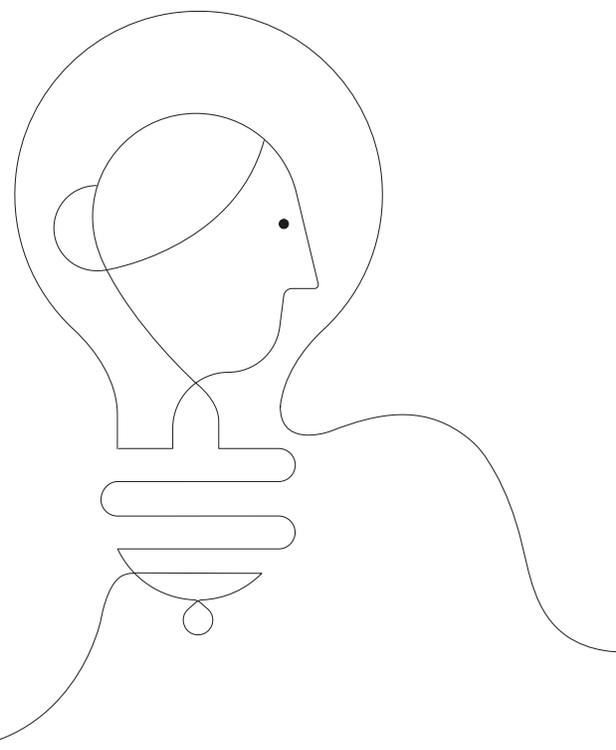
On 25 June 2021, the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention on Eliminating Violence and Harassment in the World of Work of 2019 (No. 190) came into force.⁶¹ It is the first international treaty recognizing the right of all individuals “to a world of work free from violence and harassment, including gender-based violence and harassment.”⁶²

Violence can be perpetuated in both physical and virtual contexts. With the shift to virtual working given the pandemic, it is crucial to note that harassment and violence experienced in the workplace can manifest itself and be perpetuated in online spaces.

DISCRIMINATION AND MICROAGGRESSIONS – sexual orientation

Microaggressions undermine women’s work and value in the workplace. Examples include automatically assuming a woman holds an entry-level position or a support role. Women who are members of the LGBTIQ+ community are often subject to harmful and demeaning microaggressions.

- According to a US Lean In study, 71 per cent of lesbian women have experienced this behaviour at work, typically in the form of demeaning remarks.⁶³
- In the EU, a report on discrimination related to sexual orientation found that 21 per cent of surveyed lesbian women experienced discrimination at work or when looking for employment.⁶⁴



WHAT CAN COMPANIES DO?

Organizations of all sizes can show their respect for their employees' human rights and take an intersectional approach to promote equality and eliminate discrimination by adopting

the following non-exhaustive recommendations and adapting them to their own company contexts.



PRINCIPLE 1

CREATE AND MAINTAIN INCLUSIVE CORPORATE CULTURES

Ensure executive commitment

Strong commitment of the CEO and the executive team is critical to ensure that the values of diversity, equity and inclusion, and the commitment to anti-discrimination, are clearly articulated to all employees and workers, as well as external stakeholders. Managers at all levels should lead by example, modelling the actions expected of employees, codifying commitment in writing, and attending anti-discrimination and anti-racism company training.

Review the corporate culture

Dismantling unequal and discriminatory corporate cultures can lead to transformative change and ensure all employees feel welcomed and valued in the workplace. Companies can encourage workers to celebrate their differences, talk about their identities and refrain from generalizing about groups of people.

While it is important to understand the broad systemic barriers that women from diverse backgrounds, identities and abilities experience, it is equally important to respect diverse experiences within larger communities and refrain from using generalized, harmful stereotypes.

Evaluating corporate cultures, stereotypes and the status quo that associates leadership with particular identities can inform efforts to centering equity at the heart of company culture and operations. This could include assessments of who makes decisions about policies and procedures, how information is shared, who is missing from the conversations, and how

decisions are impacting specific staff. This requires company-wide reflection and assessment that can be carried out internally or by an external agency. All workers should be aware of anti-discrimination policies and workers' rights to set expectations around acceptable conduct.⁶⁵

Adopt a long-term holistic approach

A long-term holistic approach to addressing all forms and dimensions of discrimination is important as helps ensure organization-wide adoption. This means examining all company efforts (policies, programmes, initiatives, research, etc.) and tailoring programmes to the specific needs of employees to recognize the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination that many employees may face. This requires top level commitment to set the right tone for implementing this holistic approach.

This commitment can be operationalized by middle managers who can support efforts of diversity, inclusion and anti-discrimination in day to day activities.⁶⁶ In doing this work, managers can rely on internal and external allies, adapt proven best practices and tools for their environments, and engage in conversations about diversity, inclusion, and anti-discrimination.⁶⁷

Protect worker privacy

Companies can create an inclusive corporate culture while protecting and respecting workers' rights to privacy around their identities.

Use inclusive language

Stereotypes and bias in the workplace are perpetuated by language, metaphors and euphemisms. Inclusion can be fostered in the workplace by:⁶⁸

- Using gender-neutral language (e.g. “everyone”) rather than terms that enforce gender binaries (e.g. “ladies and gentlemen”), assume an individual’s gender, or reinforce the universal male (e.g. “you guys”).
- Normalizing that all employees state their pronouns to avoid misgendering individuals, and encourage all employees to include their pronouns in e-mail signatures.
- Using empowering language and refraining from harmful metaphors, such as those about people’s mental health.
- Using a person-first language when speaking about disability (e.g. use “woman with a disability”).



PRINCIPLE 2

ESTABLISH AND IMPLEMENT ANTI-DISCRIMINATION POLICIES

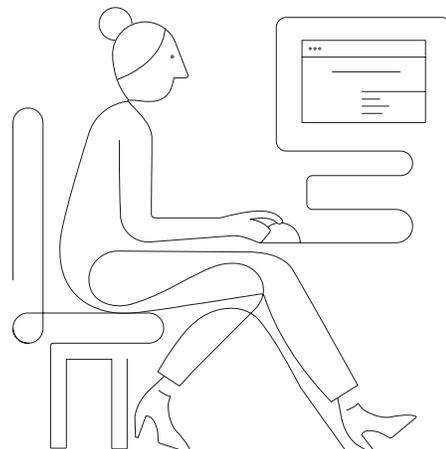
Internal policies to eliminate discrimination and harassment, and promote diversity and inclusion, show employees company commitment to equal and inclusive workplaces. This includes human rights and living wage policies in line with international standards that take a “do no harm” and “leave no one behind” approach, as well as ensuring that internal conduct and business relationships do not infringe upon anyone’s human rights.⁶⁹

Accountability is of utmost importance. Continuously evaluating existing policies and grievance mechanisms allows for adjustments, and clear reporting structures and targets promote swift and effective action.

When national laws are lacking, companies play a particularly important role in protecting people from unfair treatment and in challenging discriminatory practices in the workplace, marketplace and community.⁷⁰ This includes policies related to parental, sick and annual leave.⁷¹ Parental leave policies, for example, often exclude people in same-sex relationships, those who adopt or conceive via surrogacy,⁷² or gender non-binary, gender non-confirming and transgender individuals.

Companies can broaden policy coverage to include same-sex parents, single parents, those who adopt or use surrogacy, and other familial types,⁷³ as well as promoting the equal uptake of care responsibilities among parents. Establishing health and safety councils or groups can help ensure that employee needs are taken into consideration for insurance plans, wellness packages and general safety measures within the company.

Similarly, the norm in many western countries is to provide employees with leave during Christmas, Easter, and Thanksgiving. However, workers who do not celebrate these holidays are not necessarily given the opportunity to take leave during their holidays.⁷⁴ Companies can revisit holiday policies to ensure that employees from various religious backgrounds are supported in celebrating their respective holidays.⁷⁵





PRINCIPLE 2

ENSURE EQUALITY IN RECRUITMENT AND PROMOTION

Diversity helps eliminate ‘groupthink’ and homogeneous decision-making.⁷⁶ It enables employees with diverse backgrounds to bring their own personal experiences, unique ideas and solutions to the organization.⁷⁷

The recruitment, retention and promotion of women from diverse backgrounds, with differing abilities and identities, are core elements of diversity, inclusion and anti-discrimination in the workplace. It is crucial for workers to know that their contributions and perspectives are valued.

Promoting equal recruitment and promotion requires diversified recruitment channels and practices. For board positions, this requires going beyond candidates with previous CEO or board experience, and diversifying hiring channels and recruitment teams.⁷⁸

- Hiring from within the company pipeline.
- Gathering shareholder and stakeholder referrals.
- Using executive search firms with an expertise in gender-diverse candidates.

Companies can ensure that recruitment efforts are accessible by providing postings in various formats and including only necessary qualifications and skills in job requirements.⁷⁹

Intentional efforts to identify gaps in the participation of women in all their diversity at different points along the corporate ladder would be required. Other strategies for retaining and promoting women include employee resource groups, skill-building, mentorship and sponsorship opportunities.

Coupling the strategies for inclusive recruitment, retention, and promotion with shifts in corporate cultures is essential for ensuring that employees of all backgrounds are *welcomed* and *equally valued* in the world of work.



PRINCIPLE 2

PROVIDE EQUAL PAY

The gender pay gap is both a source and result of discrimination in the workplace. Companies should adhere to ILO Convention No. 100 on equal Remuneration, as well as implement a range of policies to achieve equal pay for equal work or work of equal value. Eliminating the practice of requesting pay history during all hiring processes, which perpetuates the existing pay gap, is a good place to start.

Regular analysis of pay and compensation practices disaggregated by, for example, gender and race, sexual orientation and gender identity, age, and ability can be used as the basis for informed solutions that tackle pay discrimination.⁸⁰ Salary disclosures and salary grids during recruitment are other effective measure to ensure transparency during the hiring process.

Box. 6 Equal Pay International Coalition

Led by the ILO, UN Women, and the OECD, the Equal Pay International Coalition (EPIC) aims to achieve equal pay for women and men everywhere. By bringing together a diverse set of actors with different areas of focus and expertise, EPIC supports governments, employers, workers, and their organizations to make concrete and coordinated progress towards this goal.⁸¹



PRINCIPLE 3

CREATE SAFE AND ACCESSIBLE WORKPLACES

Creating safe and accessible workplaces require companies to develop and enforce comprehensive health and safety policies, procedures and training that consider the diverse needs of all stakeholders – employees, customers and partners alike. Such measures should be built on a culture of diversity, inclusivity and gender equality and proactively identify hazards or risk factors, including gender-based violence and harassment.

Ensuring that the needs of all workers and other stakeholders are met also require accessible building and workspace facilities, layouts, and safety policies. Physical accessibility features include car parking lot spots for those with disabilities, ramps, automatic doors and accessible and gender-neutral washrooms with accessibility features,⁸³ along with adjustable desks and monitors, suitable lighting, screen-reader software, close captions, transcripts and sign language apps, among others.⁸⁴ Company policies and handbooks should be presented in accessible formats.

Box. 7 Tackling sexual harassment

The WEPs guidance note on “Tackling sexual harassment in the world of work” illustrates to WEPs signatories how they can prioritize, establish and implement robust sexual harassment policies and practices which promote the physical and emotional health, safety and wellbeing of all employees. It offers concrete recommendations for action.⁸²



PRINCIPLE 4

INVEST IN COMPANY-WIDE TRAINING

Discrimination in the workplace can be individual and interpersonal and often manifests in microaggressions and stereotyping. This ultimately leads to unequal treatment and a devaluation of employee talent and expertise. There is a strong correlation between an employee who feels valued and a happy and engaged employee, and thus retained by the company.⁸⁵

Discrimination cannot be solved through short, sporadic training courses. It requires effective and sustained training that deepens the understanding and outline steps for change. Mandatory training addressing unconscious (and conscious) bias and all forms of discrimination can be integrated in employee onboarding and regular professional development

training. For effective results, trainings should move beyond raising awareness to include strategies for addressing and responding to discrimination.⁸⁶

Training can further promote allyship and equip all employees with strategies for addressing discrimination in the workplace. According to a 2020 study of companies in the US and Canada, while 61% of men and 65% of women state that they are allies of women of colour in the workplace, only 32% of men and 35% of women state that if they see discrimination against women of colour that they actively work to confront it.⁸⁷ Coupling high-level commitment with strategies to ensure these values are upheld during all interactions in the workplace is necessary for promoting inclusive, anti-discriminatory workplaces.



PRINCIPLE 5

ENSURE INCLUSIVE SUPPLY CHAINS

By diversifying their supply chains and source products and services from minority-owned businesses, companies support diverse communities, enhance their economic opportunities and show their commitment to combating discrimination. Companies that use diverse suppliers position themselves for more sustainable and long-term success.⁸⁸

Eliminating bias in supplier diversity policies and practices involves companies proactively recruiting women in all their diversity to procurement roles, embedding performance indicators on gender equality, diversity, and anti-discrimination for all staff as well as suppliers, contractors and vendors, conducting research on current procurement practices, and devoting a percentage of procurement to minority-owned businesses.⁸⁹



PRINCIPLE 5

DEVELOP INCLUSIVE MARKETING METHODS

Although improvements have been made, many companies still perpetuate gender norms and stereotypical imaging of women in their marketing and advertising.⁹⁰ Marketing practices that reflect the diversity of the society is important, reflecting images of women in all their diversity, including age, body types, skin tone and other characteristics, depicting them as empowered and intelligent persons.

Companies can involve women from diverse backgrounds, with different identities and abilities, in the creation of advertisement concepts and that they are hired to direct, cast, produce and film advertisements.

It is important that organizations create advertising that reflects the full and rich diversity of communities and promotes progressive portrayals of all, to help deconstruct the harmful stereotypes and beliefs that limit people's potential. Companies can adopt inclusive marketing practices and processes, to enable the creation of authentic, unsteretyped advertising. This approach should involve diverse external partners and agencies across the entire creative production supply chain including casting, director selection and producers.

Box. 8 Unstereotype Alliance

The Unstereotype Alliance, convened by UN Women, aims to eradicate harmful stereotypes from advertising and media to help create a more equal world. The Alliance acts to empower people in all their diversity (including gender, race, class, age, ability, ethnicity, religion, and sexuality) by using advertising as a force for good to drive positive change all over the world. WEPs signatories are invited to become a member of the Unstereotype Alliance and help build a world without stereotypes.⁹¹





PRINCIPLE 6

ENGAGE WITH DIVERSE COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS

Companies can act as role models in local communities through external initiatives that align with the values of diversity, inclusion and anti-discrimination. This includes:

- Ensuring that women, in all their diversity, are engaged and included in external activities, including public events and public briefs.
- Investing in scholarship programmes and paid internships for women and girls with an emphasis on intersectionality to ensure that women and girls in all their diversity are included in such programmes.⁹²
- Adequately compensating diversity champions for their work.⁹³
- Purchasing goods and services from minority-owned businesses.⁹⁴

Companies can support the local community efforts of women from diverse backgrounds with different identities and abilities, with mentorship, sponsorship, networking opportunities and grants and funding for local initiatives.

Engaging in community partnerships in a reciprocal way can also create pathways for civil society organizations to serve as accountability partners and external reviewers of company policies, procedures and protocols. Companies can work with organizations with similar goals and initiatives and thereby amplify each other's work.



PRINCIPLE 6

ENGAGE WORKERS ORGANIZATIONS, TRADE UNIONS AND WORKERS RIGHTS GROUPS

Companies can meaningfully engage with trade unions through information-sharing and consultations around effective equality and antidiscrimination action plans.⁹⁵ Trade unions, such as the Canadian Union of Postal Workers

and the Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro, have been instrumental in advocating for anti-discrimination protection, particularly for the LGBTIQ+ community.⁹⁶



PRINCIPLE 7

PROMOTE TRANSPARENCY AND SEEK CONTINUOUS FEEDBACK

To ensure that all workers have agency and feel respected and valued in the workplace, companies can regularly seek feedback on workers' perceptions, experiences, and concerns about discrimination. This could be done through anonymous surveys, third party organizations to ensure employee privacy, or regular meetings to encourage ongoing dialogue about effective and timely solutions and ensure employee satisfaction.

Companies can ensure that all policies and initiatives geared towards diversity, equality and inclusion are publicly disclosed and that good practices are shared both internally and externally with business partners.

ENDNOTES

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Promoting Economic Empowerment of Women at Work through Responsible Business Conduct in G7 Countries (WE EMPOWER—G7 Programme) is funded by the European Union (EU) and jointly implemented with the International Labour Organization (ILO). The Programme (2018-2021) convenes stakeholder dialogues in the EU, Canada, Japan and the US to exchange knowledge, experiences, good practices and lessons learned in the context of the changing world of work. Under the Women’s Empowerment Principles (WEPs), WE EMPOWER is working to equip companies to go beyond making commitments on gender equality and women’s empowerment, to strengthening their implementation, data collection and reporting on the WEPs.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

This guidance note was prepared by UN Women as part of the WE EMPOWER – G7 programme funded by the European Union and jointly implemented with the ILO. The brief was led by Anna Falth, Stephanie Dei, and Nancy Mitchell of UN Women with substantive contributions from Sophie Browne, Sara Denby, Elysha Enos, Anna Gollub, Elspeth Ianson, Carla Kraft, Tayna Leite and Michael Stewart-Evans of UN Women; Gurchaten Sandhu of ILO; Navya Baradi, Wadi Ben-Hirki, Aamna Hassan and Keitumetse Pule of the Fora Network for Change; Chisina Kapungu of ICRW; Anjum Sultana of YWCA; and Mischa Thompson of the US Helsinki Commission.

DISCLAIMER:

This guidance note was produced with the financial support of the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union, the United Nations and their member States.

Edit: Proseworks

Design: Oliver Gantner

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT PRINCIPLES

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- | | | |
|-------------|---|---|
| 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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