

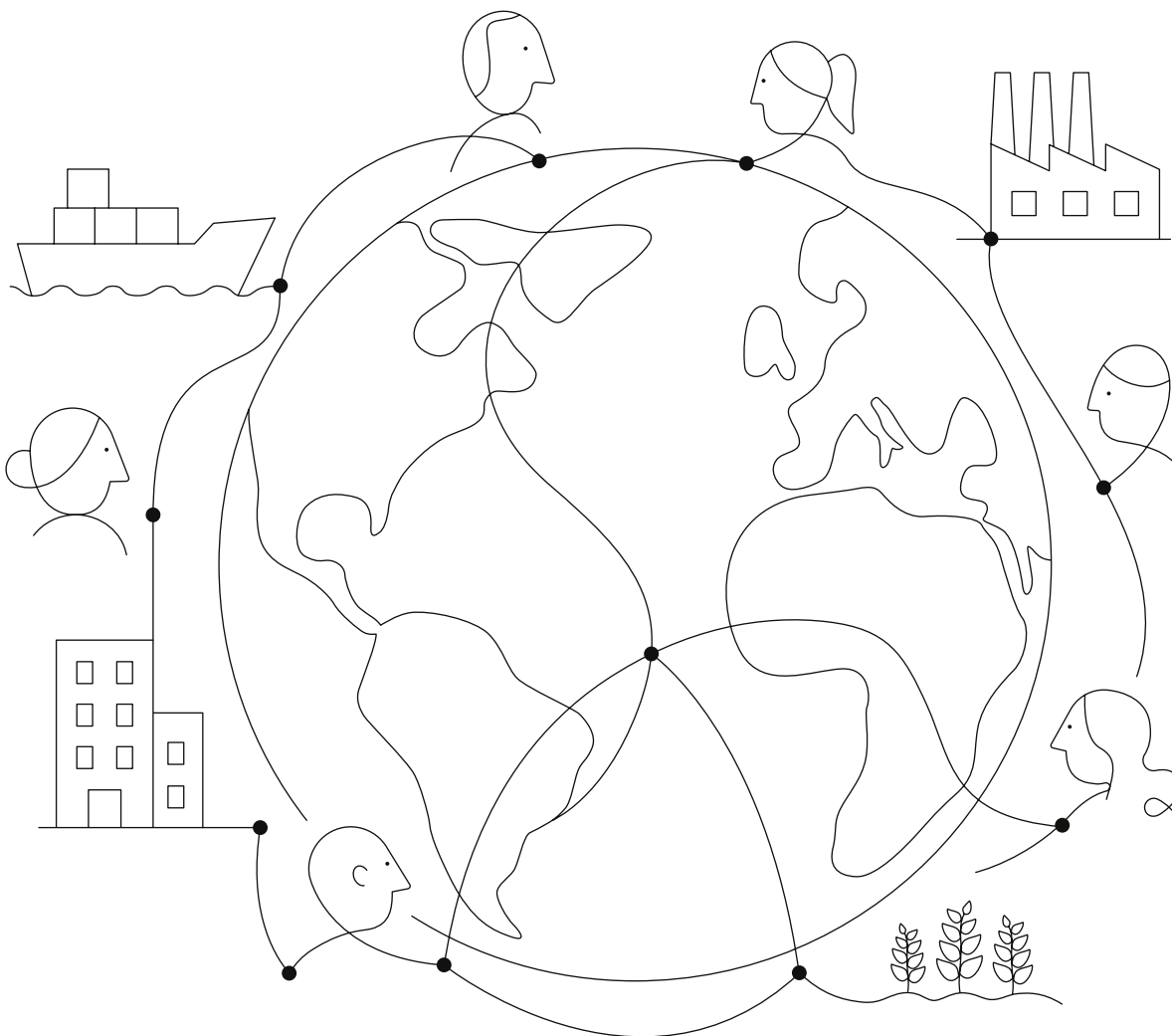
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ISSUE

2

ENGAGING COMPANIES TO ADVANCE GENDER EQUALITY IN GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAINS



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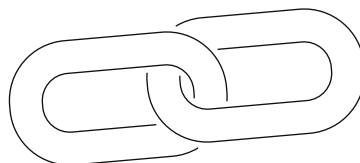
Unlocking the full potential of women in global supply chains

Almost two hundred million women work in global supply chains, producing, processing and delivering the goods and services that power the global economy. Across many industries, women represent a significant share of the workforce and contribute essential skills, knowledge and expertise that support productivity, quality and business performance.

Yet barriers to women's full participation and advancement persist across sectors and markets. Women are often concentrated in lower-value or lower-visibility roles and may face unequal access to opportunities, leadership positions, skills development and economic resources. Many women also encounter workplace challenges such as discrimination, violence and harassment, inadequate support for caregiving responsibilities and insecure forms of employment.

These barriers restrict women's opportunities while depriving companies of the full range of available talent, skills and innovation. When women are unable to participate, advance and lead on equal terms, businesses face higher turnover, constrained labour supply, diminished productivity and heightened operational and reputational risks. The result: a substantial and largely untapped source of value left unrealized.

Gender equality in supply chains is therefore both a human rights concern and a business issue. Companies that create more inclusive, safe and equitable supply chain ecosystems are better positioned to attract and retain talent, strengthen supplier performance, enhance resilience and contribute to sustainable long-term growth.





Regulations are necessary but not enough

Laws and regulations are essential and set a minimum standard. Yet alone, they are not sufficient to guarantee women's rights and advance gender equality in supply chains. Their effectiveness depends on active compliance from both companies and their suppliers. Enforcement becomes increasingly challenging further down the supply chain, where operations often span multiple national jurisdictions and regulatory oversight is limited.

Companies have an obligation to comply with all laws and regulations. They can also drive change beyond the reach of regulations by leveraging their market power to reshape supplier behaviour.

Large companies already influence supplier behaviour – and by extension, conditions across supply chain tiers – through their sourcing and procurement practices. Many large companies spend billions of dollars annually on goods and services and define the criteria suppliers must meet to be selected. By linking purchasing decisions to human rights and gender equality expectations, companies can influence supplier behaviour at scale and drive meaningful improvements for women throughout their supply chains.

Collective action to change markets and drive accountability

No single company can reshape entire supply chains on its own. But together, companies can align expectations, incentives and purchasing practices, and shift the way entire market segments function.

The [Global Supply Chain Coalition](#) (GSCC), developed by UN Women in partnership with the German Agency for Business and Economic Development (AWE), was created to provide this collective platform for action.

The Coalition translates gender equality commitments into practical procurement, sourcing and supplier engagement actions across supply chain tiers, helping companies reach the workers, suppliers and communities where gender inequalities are the most pronounced. The GSCC also builds shared expectations, tools and accountability, so that good practices can be developed, tested, refined and scaled across sectors.



Three ways the GSCC is unique:

1. A unique bridge between policy, business and implementation

As the lead United Nations entity on gender equality and women's empowerment, UN Women brings global leadership on gender equality, public-private sector convening power, and trusted presence across the Global South. Through its country and regional networks, UN Women serves as a credible partner in the communities where supply chains operate.

The Agency for Business and Economic Development (AWE) is the central point of contact for the German and European business community interested in engaging with development cooperation. It specifically promotes partnerships in countries of the Global South. With over 40 experts in industry and leading business associations, chambers of commerce and trade unions, AWE has a broad network worldwide. The organization brings deep expertise in responsible business conduct, sustainable supply chains, and private sector engagement.

Together, the GSCC founders create a unique bridge between policy and practice, connecting governments, companies, suppliers and communities while helping align corporate action with evolving expectations on gender equality and responsible business conduct.

2. Gender equality integrated into core supply chain performance

Gender equality is too often treated as a subset of social compliance, a workforce issue, or not considered at all. The GSCC integrates gender equality into the core drivers of supply chain performance, recognizing its impact on supplier productivity, workforce stability, talent retention, risk management, resilience and business continuity. Gender equality thus serves as a strategic lever for sustainable, long-term growth.

The Coalition helps companies embed gender equality into procurement, sourcing, supplier engagement and supply chain management practices. This helps ensure that gender considerations are reflected in everyday commercial decisions.

3. Practical implementation and shared tools co-developed

Gender equality commitments mean little without the tools, incentives and accountability mechanisms to act on them. Members co-create practical resources that translate high-level commitments into specific supplier expectations, procurement practices and implementation approaches.

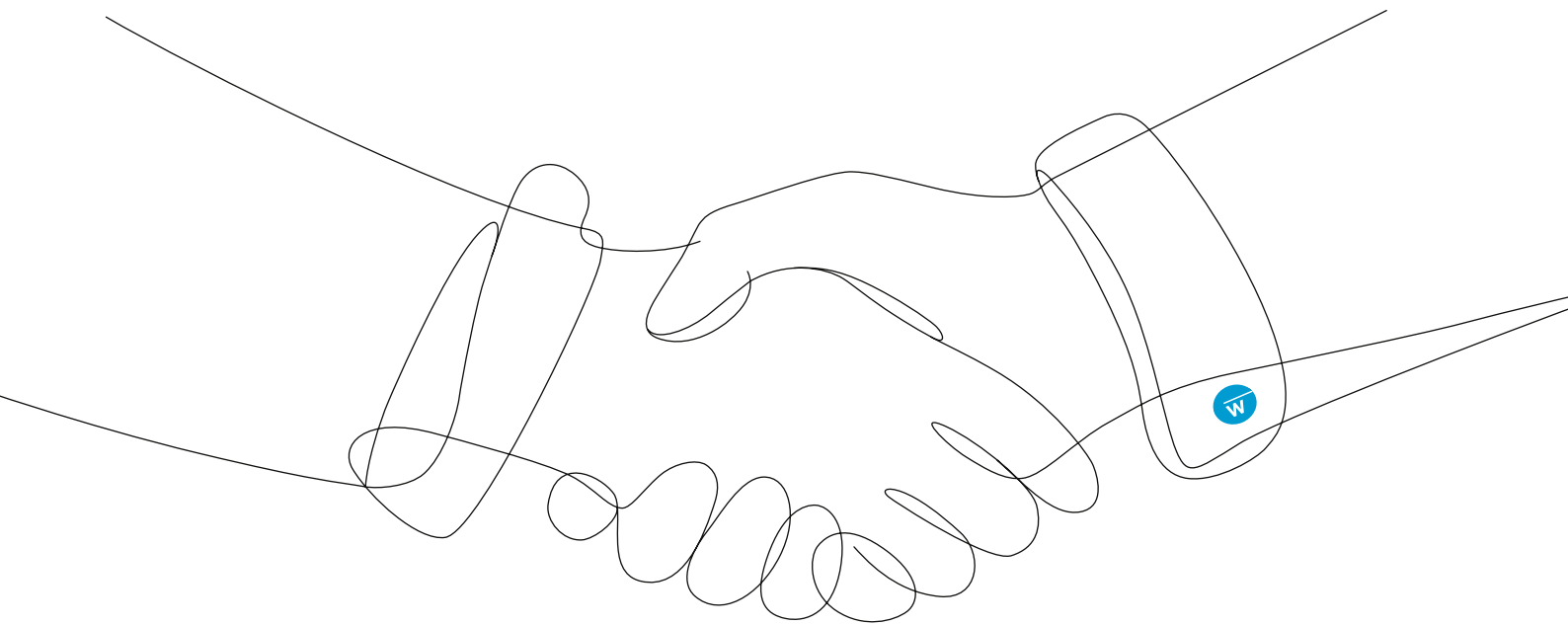
By aligning around shared expectations and tools, companies can reduce fragmentation and send more consistent signals to suppliers. As a cross-sectoral initiative, insights developed in one industry can be adapted and applied in others, accelerating impact beyond any single company or sector.



Shape the future of global supply chains

Join the Global Supply Chain Coalition and help drive meaningful change for women while strengthening the resilience, sustainability and competitiveness of global supply chains.

By aligning expectations and actions across buyers, suppliers, governments and other stakeholders, the GSCC aims to make gender-responsive supply chains the norm rather than the exception.



Learn more:

www.weps.org/global-supply-chain-coalition

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