

# HOW TO STRENGTHEN GENDER EQUALITY IN THE WORKPLACE



## What is the **global gender gap** and why should your business address it?

### **The global gender gap**

Including women in the labour market and recruiting men and women without bias allow companies and women to harness new opportunities. The global participation rate for women in the labour force is 50%, which is 26 percentage points lower than for men. This difference is known as the global gender gap. In many developing countries the gap is wider, as in the South Asia and MENA regions, where it is around 50%. In other regions, such as Sub-Saharan Africa, the gap is narrower at around 10%. For women, the gender gap results in fewer job opportunities and less economic security. Unfortunately, progress has been slow for years, which means that women continue to face barriers to decent work<sup>1</sup>.

### **Barriers to women's employment**

Globally, and particularly in developing countries, one of the major barriers for women to access the labour market is the unconscious cultural bias against women. Women are seen as less productive than

men and as such less valuable to businesses. Women are especially underrepresented in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics fields due to gender stereotypes and a cultural perception that these are 'masculine sectors' not fit for women<sup>2</sup>.

Another major issue is the overrepresentation of women in unpaid household work. This is especially true for developing countries partly due to poor access to basic infrastructure. This increases time spent on unpaid housework and limits the time women have to work a full-time job. It is also an outcome of traditional gender roles that maintain a view of women as housewives and not as workers. As some hiring managers live in these traditional households, they bring their gender bias with them to work. In this way, the gender bias and gender roles are reinforced<sup>3</sup>.

### **Respecting human rights principles**

Companies can and should address gender equality in their core business. Equality,

including gender equality, is a central principle in realising human rights, and it is a business responsibility to respect key human rights principles and regulations protecting these.

### THE GLOBAL **GENDER GAP**

- Female labour force participation rate is 50% against men's 76%
- Women do 250% more unpaid care and household work than men
- On average, women earn 77% of what men do
- Almost 60% of female employees do not have a statutory right to maternity leave
- Less than 5% of CEOs in the world's largest companies are women

Source: ILO (2016) "Women at Work: Trends 2016"

1) ILO (2016) "Women at Work: Trends 2016"

2) World Economic Forum (2017) "The Global Gender Gap Report"

3) <http://sdg.iisd.org/commentary/policy-briefs/achieve-gender-equality-to-deliver-the-sdgs>

# Investing in **gender equality** unlocks **human potential** for your business and for society

Giving women access to decent work is an opportunity for companies to contribute to and benefit from sustainable development.

## Gender equality drives development

Narrowing the global gender gap will add percentage points to the growth rates of most countries and can potentially add \$12 trillion to global GDP and 240 million workers to the global workforce by 2025. Developing countries in particular can gain from advancing gender equality. For example, India alone will be able to boost its GDP by 16% or \$0.7 trillion<sup>4</sup>.

Research shows that women are more likely than men to invest a portion of their income in their local communities and in their family's health and education. Consequently, advancing women's access to decent work contributes to stronger, more sustainable and peaceful societies with healthy and well-educated citizens.

This again broadens companies' future talent pool of healthy and well-educated employees<sup>5</sup>.

## Benefits of employing women

Strategic investments in gender equality make business sense. They contribute to higher productivity, fewer sick days and a higher rate of retention. All of this supports company growth. It is also worth emphasising that when people are healthier and depend less on their family to care for them, workers take fewer days off to care for sick family members.

As a result, businesses with a more equal representation of men and women perform better financially. Particularly, companies with many female leaders have a 47% higher return on equity and achieve operating results 55% higher than companies with only male managers. This is because they combine different leadership styles.

Businesses that employ many women generally become:



More productive because they utilise talent better.



More innovative because talent diversity enhances creative thinking.



Better at teamwork, as different insights combined improve decision-making.



Better at adapting to change through innovative solutions.

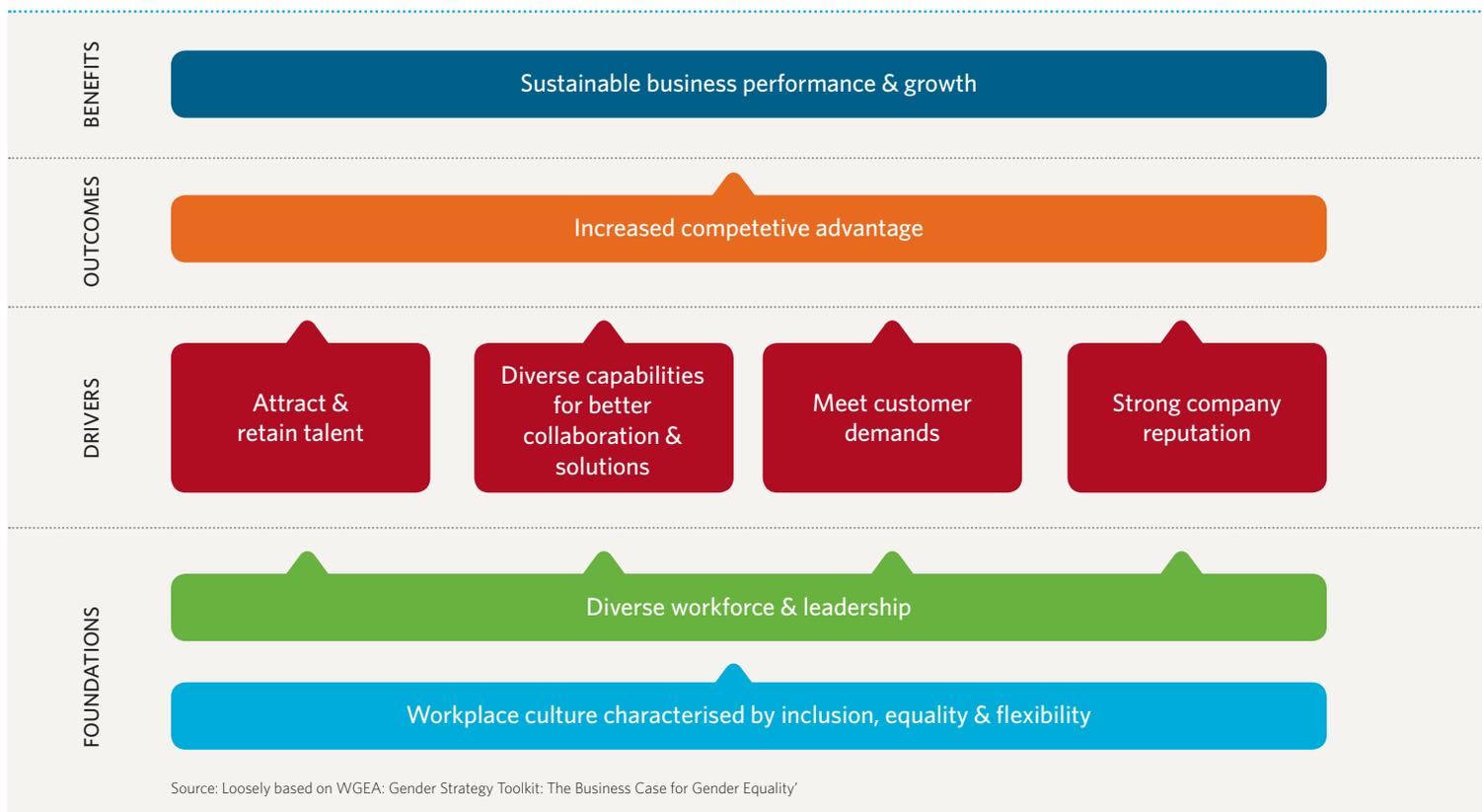


Better at addressing consumer needs, as women are responsible for most purchases.



Rewarded with stronger relations with local communities, new talent and business partners<sup>6</sup>.

## How gender equality drives sustainable business performance



Source: Loosely based on WGEA: Gender Strategy Toolkit: The Business Case for Gender Equality

4) McKinsey Global Institute (2015) "The Power of Parity: Advancing Women's Equality in India"

5) Goldman Sachs (2009) "The Power of the Purse: Gender Equality and Middle-Class Spending"

6) McKinsey & Company (2017) "Women Matter: Time to Accelerate. Ten Years of Insights into Gender Diversity"

# Tools and guidelines for working with gender equality in your company

## Preconditions for gender equality

In your gender equality strategy, you need to address leadership and culture. You must ensure top-level commitment to your strategy. This requires that leaders develop a workplace culture in which everyone's ideas are valued equally to promote innovative, creative and diverse thinking. You can develop a supportive workplace culture by creating awareness of the benefits of gender equality among your employees and providing ongoing training for managers

and employees to raise awareness of the unconscious bias against women.

## Checklist for addressing gender equality

Flexibility at work allows women to relieve the double burden of managing work and family demands concurrently. Building a robust talent pipeline helps your company support women's career advancement. This allows you to better capitalise on both female and male talent. Finally, ensuring women's safety, health and rights in the

workplace is necessary for women to be able to participate fully in the labour market. This adds value to your company, as it increases women's productivity<sup>7</sup>.

You can use the list below to review your company's status in relation to gender equality and to be inspired to implement new initiatives. To understand and address the most pressing issues, you should discuss the issues with employees and managers across the company.

### Flexibility and work-life balance

- Does your company offer flexible work-arrangements such as part-time work, working from home and working odd hours?
- Does your company ensure that flexibility is compatible with career advancement?
- Does your company support access to childcare, e.g. by having onsite childcare or an agreement with a childcare facility?
- Does your company provide paid maternity and paternity leave?
- Does your company have a return-to-work policy for women, e.g. with reduced and flexible working hours?

### Inclusion and retention in the talent pipeline in your company

- Does your company adopt a gender-sensitive approach to recruitment?
- Does your company provide skills development to encourage women to work in non-traditional roles and sectors?
- Do you provide equal access to all company-supported training and education programmes?
- Do you employ role models/mentors to support female employees in actively pursuing their career ambitions?
- Do your performance reviews recognise the skills of female employees, e.g. by measuring outputs rather than inputs?
- Do you proactively recruit and appoint women to leadership positions?
- Do you support female participation in decision-making at all levels of business?

### Health and safety

- Does your company have an anti-(sexual)harassment policy?
- Does your company have an effective grievance mechanism?
- Does your company provide safe travel to/from work?
- Does your company provide health insurance covering sexual and reproductive health issues?
- Does your company provide access to sanitary facilities, e.g. clean washrooms?

Source: McKinsey & Company (2017) "Women Matter: Time to Accelerate. Ten Years of Insights into Gender Diversity", UNGC & UN Women (2011) "Women's Empowerment Principles: Equality Means Business", PwC (2017) "PwC Women in Work Index: Closing the Gender Pay Gap", IPPF (2015) "Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights - the Key to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment"

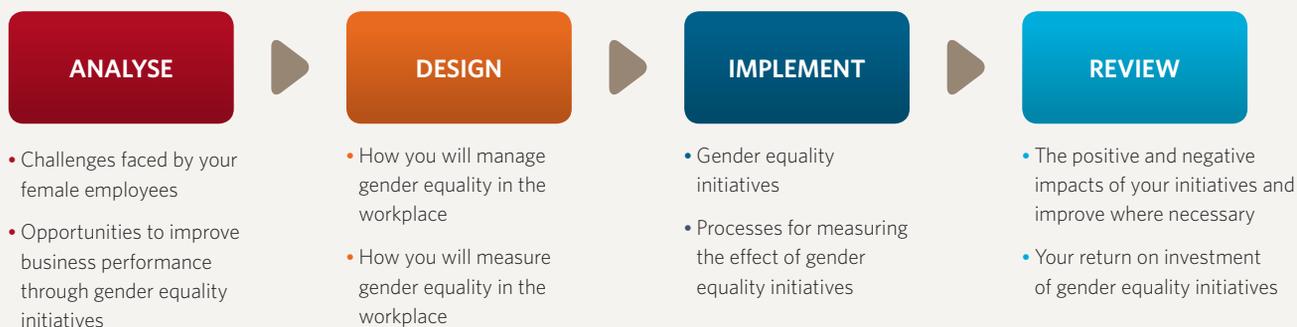
7) UNGC & UN Women (2011) "Women's Empowerment Principles: Equality Means Business"

Achieving success within your work with gender equality requires a strategic and systematic approach.

A 4-step approach to more gender equality in the workplace:

1. Analyse your current status of gender equality and identify opportunities and challenges in this area.
2. Design the best strategy to achieve gender equality goals in your company.
3. Implement your strategy by developing action plans for all desired initiatives.
4. Review your process continually based on relevant key performance indicators.

### A 4-step approach to gender equality



### HOW TO MEASURE AND DOCUMENT YOUR COMPANY'S PROGRESS ON GENDER EQUALITY

To implement successful initiatives, it is important that your company uses relevant data to measure your baseline, review your progress and hold your managers accountable for the targets. Suggested key performance indicators are:

- Rate of female employment in white and blue collar positions
- Rate of women in management positions
- Level of equal pay (including benefits) for work of equal value
- Level of equality in recruitment and career advancement
- Level of male engagement, e.g. as mentors for women or stakeholders in designing and implementing gender equality initiatives

It is important that your company ensures that human resource data is available on a gender-disaggregated basis to monitor women's positions in your company and evaluate your gender equality targets.

Source: Cofides (2017) "Cofides' Gender Approach: DFI Workshop on Gender Equality and Women Empowerment", BCG (2017) "From Intention to Impact: Bridging the Diversity Gap in the Workplace"

To read more about how your company can strengthen gender equality and health in the workplace, see the IFU/DFPA publications "Why and How Companies Decide to Invest in the Health of Their Employees & Gender Equality" and "How to Integrate Employee Health & Gender Equality in Your Business Operations".

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:



This publication is a part of the project "The Win-Win Case: How Workplace Investments in Women's Health and Rights Benefit both Women and Businesses", which is a collaboration between the Danish Investment Fund for Developing Countries (IFU) and the Danish Family Planning Association (DFPA).

