UN WOMEN

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Gender equality means good business

COVID-19 & GENDER
RAPID SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT PRINCIPLES

FOREWORD

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The COVID-19 pandemic has been one of the most disruptive forces in a generation and its enormous consequences could reverse limited progress that has been made on gender equality. UN Women's analysis shows that inequalities are widening and specific gender-based biases, discrimination and vulnerabilities could unravel past development gains. To reduce the gendered impacts of COVID-19 and ensure that women are not left behind, we need to shape the recovery with a strong gender lens.

This *COVID-19 and Gender Rapid Self-Assessment Tool*, developed by UN Women and our partners, will help companies track progress and identify pathways to apply gender-sensitive measures across their value chain. All businesses stand to benefit from greater gender equality and that is within reach if we take conscious and positive actions towards women's economic empowerment. I commend this assessment tool and its guiding recommendations to all businesses determined to create a more gender-inclusive economy by committing to the *Women's Empowerment Principles*. This is even more important in times of COVID-19 as it will ensure a gender perspective is not left out in our pandemic response and recovery strategies. This is the opportunity to "build back better and more equal".

Aditi Mohaprata
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The COVID-19 crisis has caused companies across the globe to reassess their business strategy and make critical decisions about how to best support their workforce. The impacts of the crisis and businesses' response will be felt differently by women, potentially exacerbating existing inequalities and threatening business performance and resilience. BSR is committed to working with its members during this time to identify ways to mitigate the risks to women and respond appropriately. We believe this can be a unique opportunity for business to reinforce their commitments to gender equality through targeted gender-responsive measures.
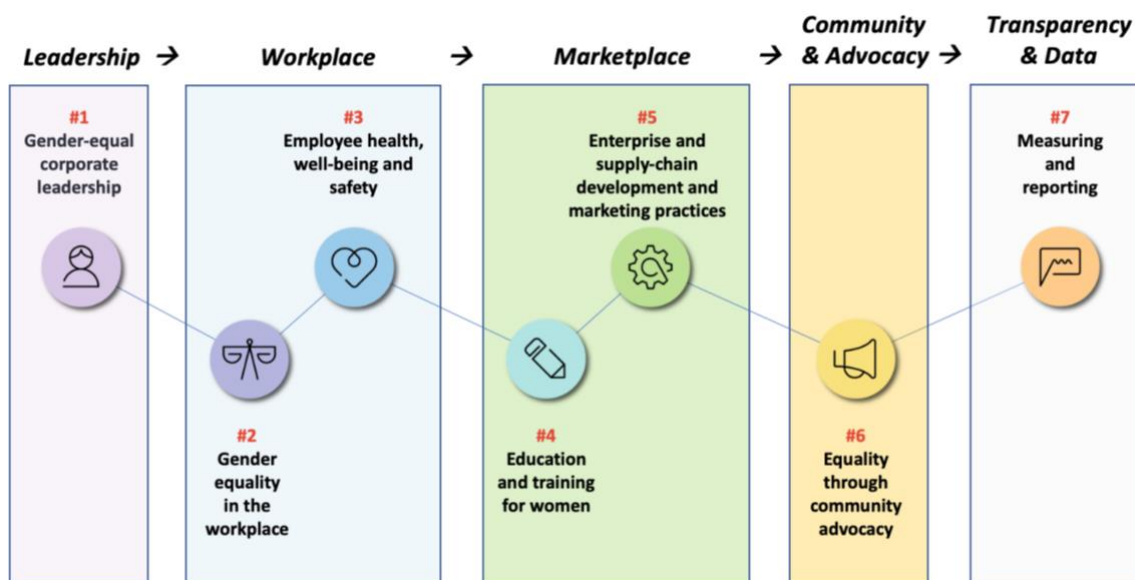
The Women's Empowerment Principles provide a comprehensive framework for companies to understand where and how women intersect with business across the workplace, marketplace and community and relevant guidance to support women throughout their value chain. Building on the seven Principles, the *COVID-19 and Gender Rapid Self-Assessment Tool* enables companies to assess their response to the crisis and ensure they are supporting women during and beyond the crisis with both short-term and long-term actions. We hope this will catalyse action as companies rebuild towards an inclusive recovery that works for women.

Introduction

Women's economic empowerment will be essential if we are to ensure that the economic recovery from COVID-19 in Asia and the Pacific is as rapid as possible and includes all members of society. Emerging numbers indicate that the COVID-19 may be more lethal for men, but women are taking the bigger socio-economic hit from the global pandemic. The societal and economic consequences are not impacting everyone equally but are hitting the most vulnerable the hardest and exacerbating existing social and economic inequalities. Women are disproportionately affected because they are most exposed to risks at both health and economic levels. They make up the majority of front-line workers in care and other professions that are based on personal interaction, exposing them to higher risks of contagion. They are also overrepresented in precarious employment, including in the informal sector, where their benefits and protection are inadequate or lacking.

Developed in 2010 by UN Women and UN Global Compact, the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs) are a set of seven guiding principles that provide a holistic value chain approach to creating gender-inclusive companies through a focus on leadership, workplace, marketplace, community and transparency. Informed by international labour and human rights standards and grounded in the recognition that businesses have a stake in, and a responsibility for, gender equality and women's empowerment, they WEPs acts as a powerful tool to drive private sector accountability and action for gender equality. By joining the WEPs community, the CEO signals commitment to this agenda at the highest levels of the company and to work collaboratively in multi-stakeholder networks to foster business practices that empower women. These include equal pay for work of equal value, gender-responsive supply chain practices and zero tolerance against sexual harassment in the workplace.

The Women's Empowerment Principles value chain approach

Overview of the Rapid Self-Assessment Form

This Rapid Self-Assessment Form is based on the Women's Empowerment Principles, and includes questions and proposed actions across the value chain in 5 focus areas: leadership, workplace, marketplace, community, and sex-disaggregated data.

How to respond: Under each focus area there are a series of questions. For each question, there are the following options: i) not yet considered or ii) beginner/achiever. If the answer to the question is 'no' select 'not yet considered'. If the answer to a question is 'yes' tick the box in the designated level: either beginner or achiever. The actions are designated beginner or achiever based on what is considered an entry-level response versus a more advanced response. Beginner level actions that are not yet taken should be prioritized. For each question, there are associated immediate and long-term actions.

An Excel-based version of the self-assessment exists that can be used to develop a personalized action plan based on your company's actions to date. This version of tool also prioritizes actions into low, medium, and high, providing a clear path forward.

This self-assessment form should be filled out by someone on a company's internal Covid-19 taskforce and/or human resources department with input from procurement, supply chain and sustainability colleagues as needed. Information may also be needed from senior leadership.

It is important to note that undertaking the self-assessment in this guidance tool is not mandatory for signatories of the WEPs or any other company. The questions, results and recommended actions are intended to provide guidance for companies to ensure that gender is incorporated in COVID-19 responses and to provide concrete action that can be taken while responding to and recovering from the pandemic.

1. LEADERSHIP

Questions	Level of response		
	No Action yet	Beginner	Achiever
1.1 Has your company integrated gender concerns into its leadership commitments, strategy, and support for COVID-19?	☐	☐	
1.2 Has your company established a COVID-19 task force team with women as part of this group?	☐		☐
1.3 Has your company engaged local or national government to advocate for gender responsive measures to COVID-19 in your community?	☐		☐
SUB-TOTAL (tally the number of responses in each column):			

➔ Review the recommended actions for Leadership.

2. WORKPLACE

Questions	Level of response		
	No Action yet	Beginner	Achiever
2.1 Does your company have a non-discrimination and equal opportunity policy that can be implemented as part of a gender sensitive approach to the COVID-19 pandemic response as well as in the wake of the pandemic to ensure the continued professional development and promotion of women?	☐	☐	
2.2 Does your company have policies, approaches to ensure an environment free of violence, harassment, and sexual exploitation and offer adequate support to victims while employees work from home during the COVID-19 pandemic response?	☐	☐	
2.3 Does your company have an approach to address the specific health, safety, and hygiene needs of women required to come into work and commute to work during the COVID-19 pandemic (such as access to PPE and menstrual hygiene products)?	☐	☐	
2.4 Does your company have an approach to support women and men as parents and caregivers during the COVID-19 pandemic response such as paid parental	☐	☐	

Questions	Level of response		
	No Action yet	Beginner	Achiever
leave, access or monetary support for childcare and flexible working arrangements given the increase need for childcare and caregiving?			
2.5 Does your company have an approach to encourage shared care work and support all employees, including men, to take on more care work including awareness raising and a paid parental leave policy for men to care for children.	☐		☐
SUB-TOTAL (tally the number of responses in each column):			

➔ Review the recommended actions for Workplace

3. MARKETPLACE

Questions	Level of response		
	No Action yet	Beginner	Achiever
3.1 Does your company have a proactive procurement plan to expand relationships with women-owned businesses in the value chain and when contracting vendors during and after the COVID-19 pandemic?	☐	☐	
3.2 Is your company encouraging suppliers and vendors to advance performance on gender equality and protect the health, safety and job security of women workers during the COVID-19 pandemic?	☐	☐	
3.3 Is your company supporting the reskilling and/or digital upskilling of women workers and women entrepreneurs?	☐		☐
3.4 Is your company seeking opportunities for collaboration and industry-wide solutions that supports suppliers and supply chain workers during COVID-19 and mitigates the impact on suppliers and supply chain workers when normal trade resumes?	☐		☐
SUB-TOTAL (tally the number of responses in each column):			

➔Review the recommended actions for Marketplace

4. COMMUNITY

Questions	Level of response		
	No Action yet	Beginner	Achiever
4.1 Does your company have an approach to embed gender in COVID-19 community responses including corporate social responsibility activities, philanthropy, public advocacy, and partnerships?	☐	☐	

	No Action yet	Beginner	Achiever
4.2 Does your company have an approach to provide support to local services focused on women's need such as domestic violence support and women's rights organizations during and in the aftermath of COVID-19?	☐		☐
SUB-TOTAL (tally the number of responses in each column):			

→ Review the recommended actions for Community

5. SEX-DISAGGREGATED DATA

Questions	Level of response		
	No Action yet	Beginner	Achiever
5.1 Is your company collecting sex-disaggregated data of all employees, impacts and measures taken during COVID-19?	☐	☐	
5.2 Does your company currently or plan to publicly report this data?	☐		☐
SUB-TOTAL (tally the number of responses in each column):			

➔ Review the recommended actions for Sex-Disaggregated Data

TOTAL (tally the sub-totals from each focus area):

Focus area	Total responses		
	No Action yet	Beginner	Achiever
1. Leadership			
2. Workplace			
3. Marketplace			
4. Community			
5. Sex-disaggregated data			
TOTAL:	/	/	/

This table will give you guidance at what stage of your journey you are to embed a gender-lens into your COVID-19 Recovery plans.

Total Responses	Result
0-4 beginner actions and 0-3 achiever actions	Beginner – prioritize beginner actions
0-4 beginner actions and 4-6 achiever actions	Intermediary – review missing actions and prioritize missing beginner actions
5-8 beginner actions and 0-3 achiever actions	
5-8 beginner actions and 4-6 achiever actions	Achiever – review missing actions and prioritize any missing actions
8-10 beginner actions and 0-3 achiever action	
8-10 beginner actions and 4-6 achiever actions	Leader – consider advocating your network

Recommended Actions

1. LEADERSHIP

1.1 Integrate gender concerns into your company's COVID-19 response and internally and/or publicly acknowledge the relevance of gender equality and women's empowerment issues during COVID-19 pandemic response. This can include:

   a. Circulating an internal communication(s) and/or informal acknowledgement of the relevance of gender equality and women's empowerment during COVID-19 pandemic response.
   b. Releasing a public written statement or commitment outlining your company's commitment to gender equality and the WEPs during the COVID-19 pandemic response and beyond.

   Long-term consideration: If not already one, consider becoming a signatory to the
   Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs)

1.2 Ensure that women participate in COVID-19 leadership decisions and embed gender concerns and gender expertise within response plans and budget resources to build gender expertise into response teams. Companies should aim for a minimum of 40% representation of women on the task force. This can include:

   a. Establishing a COVID-19 task force ensuring women are included as active members with decision-making power. If your company already has a COVID-19 task force without women, ensure to add women members and review existing COVID-19 responses with all new members. Companies should aim for a minimum of 40% representation of women on the task force.

   Long-term consideration: Ensuring that women participate in COVID-19 and other emergency response leadership decisions and embed gender dimensions and gender experts within emergency response plans and budget resources to build gender expertise into response teams.

1.3 Join public advocacy campaigns or advocate in public forums for gender considerations to be included in COVID-19 responses including stimulus packages, funding for NGOs and relief funding for the private sector. This can include:

a. Reviewing your national and local context for any public advocacy campaigns or private sector consultation processes to join.

b. Identifying local and national government members or initiatives, including women and gender ministries to engage or lobby for the inclusion of gender considerations in COVID-19 responses.

2. WORKPLACE

2.1 Acknowledge the increased care burden on women and encourage male employees to take their share of the care burden during this time and commit to non-discrimination and equal opportunity for women during COVID-19. This can include:

a. Releasing an internal statement that acknowledges the increased care burden on women and men during this time and commits to upholding the principles of non-discrimination and equal opportunity for women during COVID-19.

b. Raising awareness with managers and senior leaders on the gendered impact of COVID-19 on women's performance and working hours through internal briefings.

c. Making professional development opportunities available for women during and after COVID-19 such as training, mentoring and coaching, to maintain or build a pipeline of qualified women for management/senior leadership level positions despite the enhanced burden of care work during COVID-19 on women.

d. Adjusting your annual review processes and employee KPIs to consider the gendered impact of COVID-19 so that women and men are not penalized for taking time off during the crisis. This will require awareness raising with managers and senior leadership to ensure they understand the differentiated impacts of the crisis on women and men and how that may manifest in terms of working hours and productivity.

Long-term consideration:

Establishing a non-discrimination and equal opportunity policy to ensure the appropriate approach to gender equality in your company beyond COVID-19

Reviewing and comparing promotion, wages and bonuses data for women and men for the 24 months following the crisis to ensure it does not have negative impacts on women's outcomes in the workplace. Where negative impacts are found, take proactive measures to redress these outcomes.

2.2 Raise awareness on domestic violence as part of the company's COVID-19 response and review policies to support victims of domestic violence, including by providing information on how to access local and national support services. This can include:

a. Becoming familiar with the issue: domestic violence impacts employees and workforces under "normal" circumstances, and in the COVID-19 context, reports have risen dramatically. Messages from employers that support staff safety on this issue are extremely valuable, and **guidance** is available with sample steps to take.

b. Releasing information for all employees about domestic violence during COVID-19, recognizing that this can happen to anyone and that domestic violence reports have increased dramatically at this time. Information should include information on local helplines, support centers, emergency services, legal support, accommodation/shelters, and counselling.

c. Adapting existing policies to support victims in remote working situations.

d. Creating an emergency policy to support victims of domestic violence through enhanced flexible work arrangements for both schedule and location, temporary protection against dismissal as appropriate, and access to counselling services.

Long-term consideration:

Creating a long-term policy to support victims of domestic violence beyond COVID-19 through enhanced flexible work arrangements for both schedule and location, temporary protection against dismissal as appropriate, and access to counselling services.

Gain support of senior leaders to show support for anyone experiencing domestic violence, which the company asserts through practical actions.

Partnering with and support local gender-based violence and domestic violence organizations to raise awareness among employees and provide access to support services.

2.3 Provide all workers, women and men, with the necessary protective equipment material, in the correct size, and training on how to use it. This material should be adapted to pregnant workers as needed. Provide reliable and safe transportation to all frontline workers as needed, especially when public transportation is not available. This can include:

a. Ensuring a safe transportation system for essential frontline workers including where necessary providing temporary private transportation or additional funding for private transportation.

b. Providing accessible and safe accommodation, with separate facilities for women and men, if essential frontline workers cannot go back home because of lockdowns.

c. Providing wellness and well-being sessions during the pandemic.

d. Providing emergency childcare for essential frontline workers.

e. Providing personal protective equipment and hand hygiene facilities for frontline workers, especially taking into consideration the needs of pregnant and nursing women.

f. Providing sick leave and ensuring no wage penalties for women workers who contract COVID-19 or are required to self-quarantine, particularly for women at the base of supply chains who are unlikely to have social protection and insurance.

g. Providing access to mental health support and expanded health insurance and sick leave arrangements to account for both the mental and physical impact of COVID-19.

Long-term consideration: Implementing a gender-responsive employee health and safety program based on employee needs e.g. WASH, or mental health care.

2.4 *Expand or enhance parental and caregiver benefits and services, and work-life balance policies to all employees during COVID-19.* This can include:

a. Issuing an immediate policy that provides extra paid leave days for women and men forced to take time off for home childcare or taking care of elders and sick family members

b. Expanding work-life balance policies such as flextime, staggered working hours or compressed work weeks for women and men with care responsibilities

c. Releasing a supporting statement to the policy expansion to all employees that assures women and men they will not be financially penalized for working fewer hours during the outbreak.

d. Offering emergency childcare or monetary support for employees to seek the help of a family member of professional childminder.

2.5 Ensure that women and men employees receive equal parental and caregiver benefits during COVID-19 and raise awareness on the role of men in care work. This can include:

a. Providing extra paid leave days when forced to take time off for home childcare or taking care of elders and sick family members.

b. Emphasizing the company's policies and initiatives to support and encourage the sharing of care work between men and women.

3. MARKETPLACE

Identify where women-led SMEs are in your supply chain, and actively reach out to support them. This can include:

a. Reviewing your supply chain to identify where women-led SMEs are in your supply chain, and actively reaching out to support them by guaranteeing payments and orders, providing advanced payments where possible, and supporting them to shift production to in-demand products.

b. Partnering with industry groups to identify larger scale efforts to support women-led SMEs, including efforts to address unpaid care and domestic work and access to credit and training.

Long-term consideration:

Assessing procurement practices to ensure a gender-responsive approach that actively reaches women-led SMEs, sets goals and targets to procure from them (e.g. 30%), and regularly report on progress.

Partnering with industry groups to identify larger scale efforts to support women-led SMEs, including efforts to address unpaid care and domestic work and access to credit and training. Ensuring representation of women suppliers and supply chain workers in industry consultations.

3.1 Engage suppliers to help them support women, provide COVID-19 training, and remain focused on gender equality during COVID-19. This can include:

a. Exploring with suppliers how to support their employees, especially women, to avoid that they carry the financial burden during and after the pandemic, for example through digital wage payments, supply chain financing structures etc. Ensure to extend efforts to home-based workers.

b. Supporting your suppliers in providing digital training to workers on prevention of Covid-19 and broader health topics e.g. through existing mobile-based communications systems used in factories.

    c. Issuing a communication to all suppliers and vendors that emphasizes gender equality as a key requirement during COVID-19 and continue to monitor and require non-discrimination, equal pay for equal work, and health and safety of women workers in your supply chain.

3.2 Seek opportunities to digitally upskill or reskill women workers and/or entrepreneurs in your supply chain so that they can continue to work from home, engage in important information online or seize new business opportunities presented by COVID-19.

    a. Reviewing your supply chain and partnering with any suppliers and/or industry partners to enable digital upskilling and/or reskilling women workers or women entrepreneurs that enables them to better respond to the employment and business challenges and opportunities presented by COVID-19.

3.3 Seek industry-wide solutions to support your suppliers. This can include:

    a. Reaching out to other organizations in your industry, the International Labour Organization, trade unions, industry associations, and other stakeholders to participate in or initiate industry-wide solutions that support your suppliers.

4. COMMUNITY

4.1 Embed gender in community responses related to COVID-19. This can include:

    a. Reviewing community responses with a view to embed gender into all activities and outcomes for corporate social responsibility, philanthropy, public advocacy, and partnerships related to COVID-19.

    b. Engaging your current community partners and require that they track the number of beneficiaries from community projects and initiatives, disaggregated by sex, and setting goals and targets for the number of women and men you aim to reach.

4.2 Provide financial or pro-bono support for programmatic gender equality work and/or civil society organizations undertaking gender equality work during COVID-19 at the global and/or grassroots level. This can include:

    a. Reviewing your local and national context and identifying programs and civil society organizations to support that provide gender equality work during COVID-19 at the global and/or grassroots level including domestic violence and mental health care.

    b. Partnering with local or global organizations or other companies on gender equality and women's empowerment as part of COVID-19 responses.

5. DISAGGREGATED DATA

5.1 Ensure that all data collected during COVID-19 is disaggregated by sex and factors to account for marginalized groups such as migrant workers, ethnic minorities etc. This can include:

a. Collecting sex-disaggregated data for COVID-19 measures and impacts such as layoffs, reduced salaries, health and safety measures and training, procurement, and community outreach.

b. Collecting data for COVID-19 measures and impacts disaggregated by factors such as contract type, ethnicity, disability, age and nationality to account for marginalized groups such as migrant workers, ethnic minorities etc.

c. Conducting rapid response surveys to employees (ensure data is gender-disaggregated and include questions on increased care burden).

5.2 Report publicly to company stakeholders all COVID-19 sex-disaggregated data and data disaggregated by factors that account for marginalized groups such as migrant workers. This can include:

a. Including sex-disaggregated data and data disaggregated by factors such as contract type, ethnicity, age, disability and nationality in all public reporting and statements related to COVID-19 including future annual reports.

UN Women

Publications:

- *Women as a Force for Accelerated and Inclusive Economic Recovery Post-COVID-19 in Asia-Pacific,* UN Women, 2020: https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/03/wea-post-covid-19-in-asia-pacific

- *Gender-Sensitive Private Sector Response to COVID-19 for Accelerated and Inclusive Economic Recovery*, UN Women, 2020: https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/04/guidance-for-action-gender-sensitive-private-sector-response-to-covid-19

- *Supporting SMEs to Ensure the Economic COVID-19 Recovery is Gender-Responsive and Inclusive*, UN Women, 2020: https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/04/guidance-note-for-action-supporting-smes-to-ensure-the-economic-covid-19-recovery

- *Addressing the Emerging Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Migrant Women in Asia and the Pacific for a Gender-Responsive Recovery*, UN Women, 2020: https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/04/guidance-for-action-addressing-the-emerging-impacts-of-the-covid-19-pandemicnder-responsive-recovery

Tools:

- *UN Women WEPs and COVID-19 Response Guidance,* UN Women and BSR, 2020: https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/05/covid-19-and-gender-rapid-self-assessment-tool

Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs):

- https://www.weps.org

WeEmpowerAsia (WEA) Regional Programme:

- http://weempowerasia.org

BSR

Publications:

- *Women's Empowerment and Business: 2020 Trends and Opportunities*, BSR and UNGC, 2020: https://www.bsr.org/en/our-insights/report-view/womens-empowerment-and-business-2020-trends-and-opportunities-weps

- *Making Women Workers Count: A Framework for Gender Responsive Due Diligence*, BSR, 2019: https://www.bsr.org/en/our-insights/report-view/making-women-workers-count-gender-responsive-due-diligence-report

Blogs:

- Women in Supply Chains: On the Frontlines of COVID-19's Impact, BSR Covid-19 Content Hub, 2020: https://www.bsr.org/en/our-insights/blog-view/women-in-supply-chains-on-the-frontlines-of-covid-19-impact