



United Nations Global Compact



Advancing Women, Advancing Business and Supporting International Development Goals: Guiding Principles for the Corporate Sector

There is consensus that empowering women to participate fully in economic life across all sectors and throughout all levels of economic activity is essential to build strong economies, more stable societies, and achieve internationally agreed goals for development and human rights. Experience shows that crafting approaches and policies that result in empowering women requires a particular understanding of the gender dimensions of the context and impact sought. Yet, until recently, guiding principles for business to advance women in the global marketplace have not been articulated.

In 2004, the investment firm Calvert, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Fund for Women--UNIFEM, developed the first global voluntary code of conduct guiding business on how to empower, advance and invest in women worldwide.¹ The Calvert Women's Principles® bring together a variety of ways in which business can contribute to the advancement of women. While the response to the Women's Principles has been strong and positive, many have suggested bringing together an array of global stakeholders to discuss how to promote and implement these goals around the world.

Consultative Process with Business and Stakeholders

On 5-6 March, the UN Global Compact and UNIFEM convened *Advancing Women in the Global Marketplace*, a meeting and consultation which explored the role of business in improving the status of women around the world. Held just prior to International Women's Day, the day-long event at UN Headquarters and the following day's workshop brought together representatives of business, civil society, academia, labour, governments and the UN to develop a more coherent vision of the many ways in which business can help to empower women and advance gender equality. The meeting addressed issues such as creating the optimal workplace, women and entrepreneurship, and public-private partnerships to advance women.

(See http://www.unglobalcompact.org/Issues/human_rights/5March2009_main.html for background, speeches, and more information.)

Based on interest from companies and others, the UN Global Compact and UNIFEM have launched an international consultative process around opportunities and obstacles for business in working with such a set of Women's Principles, especially in the current context of the global economic crisis. The process features dialogue around the potential global application of the Women's Principles, and how they might be operationalized, including what business would need in the way of guidance materials and other assistance to support their implementation. Importantly, it also seeks input on the current content of the Women's Principles to further enhance their international impact and reach. In collaboration with business and other stakeholders worldwide, the process will develop a robust global business case for the Women's Principles, illustrated with examples of good business practice.

¹ The Calvert Women's Principles are the property of Calvert Group, Ltd. and may not be reproduced or disseminated without the express written permission of Calvert Group, Ltd.

Broad participation in the process is sought to ensure that it captures global and local perspectives from large and small businesses in a variety of industries, as well as other societal actors. Subject to business interest in further engagement on the Principles, the UN Global Compact and UNIFEM together with Calvert, are keen to explore opportunities for developing a voluntary engagement platform, with concrete guidance to support company implementation of the Women's Principles in order to empower, advance and invest in women world-wide. Participation in the process will not commit any participant to adopt the Principles.

As a starting point for the discussion, a copy of The Calvert Women's Principles follows.

1. EMPLOYMENT AND COMPENSATION

Corporations will take concrete steps to attain gender equality by adopting and implementing employment policies and practices that eliminate gender discrimination in areas such as recruitment, hiring, pay, and promotion.

Key elements of this principle include:

- a. Pay the legal wage to all women.
- b. Ensure fair and comparable wages, hours, and benefits, including retirement benefits, for all employees for comparable work.
- c. Undertake concrete, verifiable actions to recruit and retain women and candidates from traditionally underrepresented groups.
- d. Eliminate all forms of discrimination based on attributes such as gender, race, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, or cultural stereotypes in all work-related privileges or activities, including wages, hours, benefits, job access and qualifications, and working conditions.
- e. Prohibit discrimination based on marital, parental or reproductive status in making decisions regarding employment or promotion, including ensuring employment security that allows for interruptions in work for maternity, parental leave, and family-related responsibilities.
- f. Implement equitable policies for non-salaried employees regarding contract work, temporary work, and layoffs that do not disproportionately affect women.
- g. Strive to pay a living wage to all women.

2. WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Corporations will take concrete steps to attain gender equality by adopting, implementing, and promoting policies and practices that enable work-life balance and support educational, career, and vocational development.

Key elements of this principle include:

- a. Undertake concrete, verifiable actions to make professional and private life more balanced, by implementing and promoting flexible work options, family leave, dependent care, wellness programs, and workforce exit and reentry opportunities.

- b. Support access to childcare either by providing childcare services or by providing information and resources regarding childcare services.
- c. Provide gender equitable opportunities for and access to literacy training, education, and certified vocational and information technology training.
- d. Provide professional development opportunities that include formal or informal networking, client development activities, and mentoring programs that include women at all levels, including those women working in non-traditional fields.

3. HEALTH, SAFETY, AND FREEDOM FROM VIOLENCE

Corporations will take concrete steps to attain gender equality by adopting and implementing policies to secure the health, safety, and well-being of women workers.

Key elements of this principle include:

- a. Prohibit and prevent all forms of violence in the workplace, including verbal, physical, or sexual harassment.
- b. Ensure the safety of female employees in the workplace, in travel to and from the workplace, and on company-related business, and ensure the safety of vendors in the workplace.
- c. Provide and promote policies and programs addressing domestic violence.
- d. Eliminate and disclose unsafe working conditions and provide protection from exposure to hazardous or toxic chemicals in the workplace, particularly when those substances have known or suspected adverse effects on the health of women, including reproductive health.
- e. Allow time-off from work for employees seeking medical care or treatment, for themselves or their dependents, including family planning, counseling, and reproductive health care, and support return to positions of equal pay and status.
- f. Prohibit discrimination in hiring and employment based on health status, such as individuals with HIV/AIDS positive status or persons with disabilities.
- g. Strive to provide gender equitable health services and insurance.

4. MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

Corporations will take concrete steps to attain gender equality by adopting and implementing policies to ensure equitable participation in management and governance.

Key elements of this principle include:

- a. Establish policies and undertake proactive efforts to recruit and appoint women to managerial positions and to the corporate board of directors.
- b. Establish policies and undertake proactive efforts to assure participation by women in decision-making and governance at all levels and in all areas of the business, including budgetary decision-making.

- c. Include gender equality as a factor in performance measures, strategic planning goals and objectives, and budgetary decisions.

5. BUSINESS, SUPPLY CHAIN, AND MARKETING PRACTICES

Corporations will take concrete steps to attain gender equality by adopting and implementing non-discriminatory business, supply chain, contracting, and marketing policies and practices.

Key elements of this principle include:

- a. Maintain ethical marketing standards by respecting the dignity of women in all sales, promotional and advertising materials, and excluding any form of gender or sexual exploitation in marketing and advertising campaigns.
- b. Encourage and support women's entrepreneurship, and seek to enter into contractual and other business relationships with women-owned businesses and vendors, including micro-enterprises, and work with them to arrange fair credit and lending terms.
- c. Clearly forbid business-related activities that condone, support, or otherwise participate in trafficking, including for labor or sexual exploitation.
- d. Ensure that these Principles are observed not only with respect to employees, but also in relation to business partners such as independent contractors, sub-contractors, home-based workers, vendors, and suppliers.
- e. Take these Principles into consideration in product and service development and major business decisions, such as mergers, acquisitions, joint venture partnerships, and financing.

6. CIVIC AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Corporations will take concrete steps to attain gender equality by adopting and implementing policies to promote equitable participation in civic life and eliminate all forms of discrimination and exploitation.

Key elements of this principle include:

- a. Encourage philanthropic foundations associated with the entity to adhere to these Principles through their donations, grant-making, programmatic initiatives, and investments.
- b. Encourage women and girls to enter non-traditional fields by providing accessible career information and training programs designed specifically for them.
- c. Respect female employees' rights to participate in legal, civic, and political affairs — including time off to vote — without interference or fear of repercussion or retaliation in the workplace.
- d. Respect employees' voluntary freedom of association, including the voluntary freedom of association of female employees.
- e. Work with governments and communities where the company does business to eliminate gender-based discrimination and improve educational and other opportunities

for women and girls in those communities, including support for women's non-governmental organizations and other community groups working for the advancement of women.

- f. Exercise proactive leadership in its sphere of influence to protect women from sexual harassment, violence, mutilation, intimidation, retaliation, or other denial of their basic human rights by host governments or non-governmental actors and refuse to tolerate situations where cultural differences or customs are used to deny the basic human rights of women and girls.

7. TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Corporations will take concrete steps to attain gender equality in operations and in business and stakeholder relationships by adopting and implementing policies that are publicly disclosed, monitored, and enforced.

Key elements of this principle include:

- a. Publicize commitment to these Principles through a CEO statement or comparably prominent means, and prominently display them in the workplace and/or make them available to all employees in a readily accessible and understandable form.
- b. Develop and implement company policies, procedures, training, and internal reporting processes to ensure observance and implementation of these Principles throughout the organization.
- c. Establish benchmarks to measure and monitor progress toward gender equality and report results publicly.
- d. Conduct periodic self-evaluations through data collection and analysis, audits, public disclosure, and reporting on status and progress made in the implementation of these Principles.
- e. Establish a clear, unbiased, non-retaliatory grievance policy allowing employees to make comments, recommendations, reports, or complaints concerning their treatment in the workplace.
- f. Engage in constructive dialogue with stakeholder groups, including employees, non-governmental or non-profit organizations, business associations, investors, customers, and the media on progress in implementing the Principles.
- g. Be transparent in the implementation of these Principles, and promote their endorsement and implementation by affiliates, vendors, suppliers, customers and others with whom it does business.
- h. Strive to ensure that government relations and corporate political spending policies and practices incorporate these Principles.