

Women's Empowerment Principles – Equality Means Business

Frequently Asked Questions



1. What are the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs)?

The Women's Empowerment Principles offer seven steps to guide business on how to empower women in the workplace, marketplace and community. Subtitled ***Equality Means Business***, the Principles emphasize the business case for corporate action to promote gender equality and women's empowerment and are informed by real-life business practices and input gathered from across the globe. Rather than being prescriptive or a new initiative to which business is asked to subscribe, the WEPs seek to point the way to best practice by elaborating the gender dimension of good corporate citizenship, the UN Global Compact, and business' role in sustainable development.

2. Who developed the Women's Empowerment Principles?^[1]

The WEPs are the result of a collaboration between the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) and the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC). The Principles were developed through a year-long international multi-stakeholder consultation process and launched to the global community on International Women's Day 2010 (8 March).

3. Who Can Use the Women's Empowerment Principles?

The WEPs were primarily developed for the business community. However, they have been taken up by other civil society stakeholders, international organizations and governments as a platform and used as input to policy. They are being utilized as a basis for dialogue and action to advance and empower women.

4. What is the CEO Statement of Support for the Women's Empowerment Principles?

The CEO Statement of Support for the Women's Empowerment Principles offers business leaders an opportunity to signal their support for the overall goal of advancing and empowering women and specifically, the guidance offered by the WEPs. It also provides a platform for corporate executives to encourage fellow business leaders to support the Principles by signing the Statement. Signers of the CEO Statement underscore that equal treatment of women and men is not just the right thing to do—it is also good for business and should be a corporate priority.

The Principles were developed as a *voluntary* framework and resource for companies dedicated to advancing gender equality. Signing the CEO Statement of Support does not constitute any type of binding obligation. However, signing the CEO Statement is a great way to demonstrate the first Principle, which is: "Establish high-level corporate leadership for gender equality", and it has now been signed by over 250 chief executives of companies around the world.

5. Once a company's CEO signs, is there a way to become more involved or get assistance to develop more gender-sensitive approaches and programmes within a company?

The CEO Statement of Support encourages business leaders to use the seven Principles as guideposts for actions that advance and empower women in the workplace, marketplace and

^[1] The Women's Empowerment Principles, the product of a collaboration between UN Women and the UN Global Compact informed by an international multi-stakeholder consultation, are adapted from the Calvert Women's Principles®. The Calvert Women's Principles were originally developed in partnership with UNIFEM (now part of UN Women) and launched in 2004 as the first global corporate code of conduct focused exclusively on empowering, advancing and investing in women worldwide.



community, and communicate progress through the use of sex-disaggregated data and other benchmarks. UN Women and the UN Global Compact Office will continue to provide opportunities for companies to share experiences, expertise and knowledge and to work together via a virtual network of 'interested persons' and an annual Women's Empowerment Principles event in New York City scheduled to coincide with International Women's Day in March. The WEPs team strives to bring opportunities and resources to increase knowledge and engagement.

All participants are encouraged to follow the Women's Empowerment Principles on Twitter (@WEPrinciples) and on Facebook.

6. Does my company need to be a member of the UN Global Compact in order to sign the CEO Statement of Support?

No, all companies, from all sectors and regions of the world are invited to sign the CEO Statement of Support. Signers represent the largest companies and some quite small businesses.

7. Is there a financial commitment associated with signing the CEO Statement?

No, there is no financial commitment associated with the CEO Statement or the Principles. The WEPs are a tool available to all companies free of charge. However, contributions are welcome to help fund activities to assist companies with implementation. Suggested annual contributions are USD 5,000 for large companies and USD 500 for small companies.

Can my company support the WEPs programme on a broad scale?

Yes, to advance the partnership initiative and serve WEPs companies and stakeholders, broader project support is being sought in the areas of communication and outreach, research, reporting and documenting WEPs implementation best practices. Contact Lauren Gula for further information at gulal@unglobalcompact.org.

8. Are there reporting and disclosure requirements associated with signing the CEO Statement of Support?

There is no formal reporting or disclosure requirement associated with signing the CEO Statement. However, since the importance of results and impact cannot be overstated, companies are strongly encouraged to set specific benchmarks and targets for progress towards gender equality and to use sex-disaggregated data when possible to report on progress to their stakeholders and many companies are doing just that. Companies are also welcome to participate in UN Women/UNGC consultations and any other learning mechanisms (webinars, etc.) with companies on their experiences with using and implementing the Principles. Further, members of the UN Global Compact are encouraged to communicate their efforts to implement the Principles into their core business and in their annual Communication on Progress (COP).

As companies have indicated particular interest in receiving further guidance and suggestions on how to track and report on progress towards implementation, the WEPs partnership team in New York is currently working to produce reporting guidance that takes into consideration the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) framework and the UN Global Compact Communication on Progress (COP) requirement. The first draft will be released in March 2012 at the WEPs annual meeting in New York.

9. What happens if there is a change in company leadership?

If a new CEO is appointed to the company, it is assumed that she/he will carry on the work of her/his predecessor and uphold the company's commitment to promote and implement the Women's

Empowerment Principles. Therefore, it is not necessary to fill out a new form. However, we ask that when a change in leadership takes place that notification is sent to the WEPs team so that the CEO list can be updated accordingly. Of course, if a new CEO would like to sign to reaffirm the company's commitment to the goals of the WEPs, and provide a new leadership quote, she/he is very welcome to do so.

10. Which companies have signed the CEO Statement thus far?

The current list of signers can be viewed online at:

http://www.unglobalcompact.org/docs/issues_doc/human_rights/WEPs_CEO_Statement_of_Support_Signatories.pdf

To view the 39 *lead signers* of the CEO Statement, visit:

http://www.unglobalcompact.org/docs/issues_doc/human_rights/WEPs/WEP_CEO_Statement_Release_21June.pdf

11. How can civil society leaders and other non-corporate stakeholders demonstrate their support for the Women's Empowerment Principles?

While the CEO Statement of Support is strictly for signature by leaders of *corporate* entities, civil society leaders – including heads of business associations, non-governmental organizations, human rights organizations, women's organizations and academic institutions – are invited to demonstrate their support for the Women's Empowerment Principles and encourage business leaders to implement the Principles by making the WEPs part of a programmatic approach to engagement with the private sector, as well as with government leaders, the UN and other advocates.

12. How can I learn more about the WEPs – what resources are available?

Resources and updated information about the Women's Empowerment Principles can be found on the:

UN Women website:

http://www.unifem.org/partnerships/womens_empowerment_principles/

UN Global Compact website:

http://www.unglobalcompact.org/Issues/human_rights/equality_means_business.html

Twitter: The WEPs are now tweeting! Follow us at: [@WEPrinciples](https://twitter.com/WEPrinciples). To learn more about Twitter or to set up an account, go to www.twitter.com.

Facebook: We have also created a Facebook page to keep the WEPs community updated on relevant news, events and engagement opportunities. Take a look and spread the word!

<http://www.facebook.com/#!/pages/Womens-Empowerment-Principles/201423406555824>.

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