Women’s Empowerment

GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN ARE HIGH ON THE INTERNATIONAL AGENDA, NOT ONLY FROM A HUMAN RIGHTS PERSPECTIVE, BUT ALSO FROM A SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC POINT OF VIEW.

Furthermore, gender equality and women’s empowerment are a focus of the Millennium Development Goals and therefore contribute to sustainable development.

It is vital to remove obstacles to women’s advancement and to aim for gender equality at all levels of society around the world - ensuring that women have a say in all government institutions, from the judiciary to the civil service, in the private sector and civil society, so that they can participate equally in public dialogue and decision making, and influence the future of their families, countries and the economy.

Why is the empowerment of women important for business?

THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY HAS A KEY ROLE TO PLAY IN PROMOTING WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT AS WE WORK TOGETHER TO SHAPE OUR WORKPLACES OF THE FUTURE.

The business community recognises that gender equality contributes to business efficiency, productivity and sustainability, and positively impacts economic performance and society as a whole.

How can business engage?

BUSINESS CAN ENGAGE BY EMPOWERING WOMEN IN THE WORK PLACE, LABOUR MARKET AND THE COMMUNITY BY MAKING A STRONG COMMITMENT FROM THE TOP LEVELS OF MANAGEMENT DOWN TO NON-DISCRIMINATORY PRACTICES AND POLICIES.

Business can also demonstrate leadership to ensure full access to equal opportunities, as well as the participation and integration of women in the workforce.

Companies can support and promote the UN Global Compact Women’s Empowerment Principles (WEPs) by engaging in the business platform these principles offer to catalyse best business practices for women’s advancement and gender equality.

Launched by the United Nations Development Fund For Women (UNIFEM, part of UN Women) and the United Nations Global Compact on International Women’s Day 2010, the WEPs (subtitled Equality Means Business) emphasize the business case for corporate action to promote gender equality and women’s empowerment and are informed by actual business practices and input gathered from across the globe. They also seek to inform other stakeholders, including governments.

The 7 WEPs are:

1. Establish high-level corporate leadership for gender equality.
2. Treat all women and men fairly at work – respect and support human rights and non-discrimination.
3. Ensure the health, safety and well-being of all women and men workers.
4. Promote education, training and professional development for women.
5. Implement enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practices that empower women.
6. Promote equality through community initiatives and advocacy.
7. Measure and publicly report on progress to achieve gender equality.
How is the IOE engaging?

IN OUR COLLABORATION WITH THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL WOMEN (BPW INTERNATIONAL), WE ACTIVELY PROMOTE THE WEPS ACROSS OUR RESPECTIVE MEMBERSHIP NETWORKS.

In particular, we are bringing together key business and trading stakeholders such as the Commonwealth Business Council, the UN Global Compact and the UN Sustainable Stock Exchanges to create better awareness and promotion of the WEPs across the business community, working strategically to maximise the potential of women and their economic influence through inclusive workplaces, market places and communities.

Additionally, in our engagement in international policy debate, we advocate for measures that will improve the environment for women to achieve equal access to:

- jobs and opportunities in the market place;
- education and training;
- skills and career development
- equal pay for equal work

The IOE supports the implementation of ILO Convention on Discrimination (Employment and Occupation), No. 111 and promotes the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, which includes the non-discrimination in respect of employment and occupation and informs the labour principles of the UN Global Compact.

For more Information and Answers to your Questions

Please visit our website www.ioe-emp.org. If you do not find what you are looking for, please contact the IOE’s Adviser on gender: Amelia Espejo: espejo@ioe-emp.org, or call +41 22 929 00 19.