



United Nations
Global Compact

WOMEN AT WORK

Chinese companies taking action on gender equality

Guidance and good practices to advance ESG and the Sustainable Development Goals in the Second Half of the 2030 Agenda



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The inclusion of company names and/or examples is intended strictly for learning purposes and does not constitute an endorsement of the individual companies by the UN Global Compact.



Sanda Ojiambo
Assistant Secretary-General
CEO & Executive Director, United Nations Global Compact

Foreword

In the pursuit of equality for female workers around the world, I find myself constantly inspired by people I meet and challenged to keep demanding transformative action. On a recent visit to the People's Republic of China, I took part in a Women Business Leaders' Roundtable in Shanghai. This was an inspiring occasion where 18 exceptional business leaders gathered at the invitation of the UN Global Compact Liaison Office in China to share their stories, reflections and ideas.

Our discussions that day revolved around three crucial topics: Unraveling insights into the barriers obstructing women from reaching senior positions, spotlighting practices that can foster gender equality across the entire business value chain, and exploring avenues for the UN Global Compact to collaborate with Chinese companies in making impactful contributions to gender equality and, more broadly, the Sustainable Development Goals.

What transpired was not just dialogue; it was a resounding call to action. This publication is a testament to the collective wisdom and commitment that emerged from that extraordinary gathering—a snapshot of where things are at but also a roadmap towards gender equality in the Chinese and global workplace.

At the core of this publication lies a visionary guidebook, drawing inspiration from diverse industries and women in different jobs and working scenarios in China and beyond. This guidebook aspires to be a guiding light, illuminating the path toward creating gender-inclusive and family-friendly workplaces. It underscores the belief that the economic empowerment of women is intricately linked to the success of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the broader global pursuit of gender equality.

China's steadfast dedication to women's economic empowerment, exemplified by the 13th National Women's Congress and its ongoing collaboration with the United Nations, underscores the significance of this guidebook. As China prepares to host the Global Leaders' Meeting on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in 2025, I hope this guidebook can be a timely and practical resource, offering insights and ideas that can influence policies and practices globally.

I extend my thanks to all the leaders, male and female, who contributed to this initiative, recognizing that genuine progress necessitates collective efforts. Together, we can construct a future where equality is not merely an aspiration but a lived reality for all.

Sanda Ojiambo
Assistant Secretary-General
CEO & Executive Director, United Nations Global Compact

Acronyms and Abbreviations

AI	Artificial Intelligence
CoP	Communication on Progress
D&I	Diversity and Inclusion
DEI	Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
EAP	Employee Assistance Program
ESG	Environmental, social, and governance
IATA	International Air Transport Association
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
KPIs	Key Performance Indicators
SASAC	the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SMEs	Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
TGE	Target Gender Equality
UNGA	General Assembly of the United Nations
WEPs	Women's Empowerment Principles
WEPs Tool	Women's Empowerment Principles Gender Gap Analysis Tool



Photo credit: UN Global Compact

Overview of Global Business and Gender Equality in the Workplace

As we enter 2024, the global community has made another step closer towards the 30th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), when the progress on gender equality and the empowerment of women will be reviewed. The world is also at its critical half-way point to delivering Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2030, while the review on SDG progress has shown that the world is leaving women and girls behind.

Only two indicators under SDG 5 are close to target, and countries still lack 44% of the data required to track SDG 5.¹ More broadly, of the approximately 140 targets that can be evaluated, 85% of them are off track or even experienced regression below the 2015 baseline and none of the SDGs are on track for achievement by 2030, according to the *2023 Sustainable Development Goals Report*.²

Global economic development has not been inclusive and the growth achieved has not brought equal and shared benefits to women because of underinvestment in gender equality and lack of gender focus. Jobs created didn't bring enough women to participate in the labour force, and still women spend 2.8 more hours than men on unpaid care and domestic work. Women's share of managerial positions remains at the rate of 28.2%, while actions with concrete goals and policies are still needed from business.³



With the current slow pace of change, women's share of workplace management positions will reach only 30% by 2050.⁴

By 2025, women globally will still be spending 2.3 more hours per day on unpaid care work than men.⁵

¹ UN Women and United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: the Gender Snapshot 2023". <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/gender-snapshot/2023/GenderSnapshot.pdf>
² United Nations, "The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2023 (Special edition): Towards a Rescue Plan for People and Planet". <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2023/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2023.pdf>
³ UN Women and United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: the Gender Snapshot 2023". <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/gender-snapshot/2023/GenderSnapshot.pdf>
⁴ UN Women and United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: the Gender Snapshot 2023". <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/gender-snapshot/2023/GenderSnapshot.pdf>
⁵ UN Women and United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: the Gender Snapshot 2023". <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/gender-snapshot/2023/GenderSnapshot.pdf>

Reflection on Gender Equality in the Workplace in China

As the engine for jobs, growth, innovation and investment, business is a key stakeholder in advancing gender equality and the economic empowerment of women. As a country which has been leading the global average ratio of female-to-male labor force participation rate in the 21st century according to the SDG Index,⁶ Chinese businesses in the country stand to benefit from the full participation of women in the workplace. The advancement in alleviating poverty and reducing inequality to achieve the 2030 Agenda made by China couldn't have been achieved without the participation and economic empowerment of women.

Continuous development of policies and strategic planning at the national level has created an enabling environment and raised the awareness of gender equality in the workplace. In 2022, the *Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Women's Rights and Interests* was revised, with added and refined requirements on equal employment, special labor protection, and sexual harassment prevention, putting forward higher standards for management.

Businesses in China are increasingly recognizing gender equality, as outlined in Sustainable Development Goal 5, as a top global sustainability challenge and consider it an area where they can have a positive impact through the engagement with the UN Global Compact.

The launch of the UN Global Compact China Strategy in 2022, which identified "reduce inequality" and "SDG 5" as one of seven priority areas, has been guiding business in China to maximize their collective impact to accelerate the Sustainable Development Goals both in China and globally.⁷ Against this backdrop, UN Global Compact launched its Target Gender Equality Accelerator in China in 2022, attracting nearly 50 companies to join. By the end of 2023, many have become signatories of the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs) and committed to ambitious Gender Equality Targets through the Forward Faster Initiative.

Target 1

Equal representation, participation and leadership across all levels of management by 2030.

TAKE ACTION

Target 2

Equal pay for work of equal value by 2030.

TAKE ACTION

* The gender targets in the Forward Faster Initiative

⁶ Sachs, J.D., Lafortune, G., Fuller, G., Drumm, E, "Implementing the SDG Stimulus. Sustainable Development Report 2023". <https://dashboards.sdgindex.org/profiles/china>
⁷ UN Global Compact, "UN Global Compact China Strategy". <https://unglobalcompact.org/library/6052>



Target Gender Equality Accelerator Closing Event, Shanghai, China.
Photo credit: UN Global Compact

Businesses in China have made significant progress to ensure women are given equal access to economic opportunities, with a growing uptake in engagement with the UN Global Compact and the usage of WEPs Gender Gap Analysis Tool, allowing an entry point to invest in actions to build inclusive workplaces and enhance the implementation of WEPs. Key highlights are demonstrated through the aggregated results of the Women's Empowerment Principles Gender Gap Analysis Tool in the following section.

With rising level of interest and actions taken by business, it is important to share first-hand experience, leverage the collective impact of business not only within the country but also around the globe, and advocate for sustainable, scalable and result-oriented efforts to achieve the SDGs.

This guidebook contains a collection of case studies and business guidelines, compiled by the UN Global Compact Liaison Office in China, highlighting the good practices and lessons learned when businesses in China work to advance gender equality. Including China's company practices and personal stories of front-line women employees, as well as suggested gender roadmaps and key resources for business to contribute to the collective efforts towards SDG 5, this Guidebook aims to inspire more companies across China, Asia and the world, to move from commitment to action and advance gender equality.

The guidebook applies a special lens on the diversity of workplaces and the challenges of non-traditional workforce and male-dominated industries. The very different workplaces—from transport, factories, and laboratories to digital apps and sales offices—generate first-hand lessons learned and effective policies by business, providing practical guidelines and reflections under present economic conditions.

Snapshot of WEPs Tool Aggregated Data

The Women's Empowerment Principles Gender Gap Analysis Tool (WEPs Tool) is a business-driven tool designed to help companies from around the world assess gender equality performance across the workplace, marketplace, and community. The WEPs Gender Gap Analysis Tool is composed of 18 multiple choice questions across the 7 Women's Empowerment Principles. The tool also covers four management stages—commitment, implementation, measurement, and transparency—to ensure commitments are coupled with substantive action to implement the WEPs. The aggregated results presented in this report focus on gender equality in the workplace.



UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed speaks at meeting with women leaders in Beijing.
Photo credit: UN/Yun Zhao



Assistant Secretary-General, CEO & Executive Director, United Nations Global Compact Sanda Ojiambo Attends Women Business Leaders Roundtable, Shanghai, China.
Photo credit: UN Global Compact

Global WEPs Results Snapshot⁸

Promoting Equitable Workplace Outcomes

42% have a nondiscrimination and equal opportunity policy

39% take proactive steps to recruit women in traditionally underrepresented roles compared with 29% in 2020

32% regularly undertake a gender pay gap audit or evaluation

18% publicly disclose the gender pay gap

Supporting Working Parents

72% provide paid maternity and paternity leave

17% provide incentives to encourage men to take paternity leave, while 22% report publicly on the number of women who took maternity leave and on the return to work and retention rates

11% report publicly on the number of employees using parental or care benefits, disaggregated by sex

5% provide on-site childcare and/or referrals for off-site childcare compared with 18% in 2020

Ensuring Safe Workplaces

76% have a policy/commitment for zero tolerance of violence at work

44% track grievances related to workplace violence, disaggregated by sex

38% provide annual training on zero tolerance of violence to all employees compared with 28% in 2020

30% communicate publicly their approach to ensure an environment free of violence

⁸ The data of the "Global WEPs Results Snapshot" are from *WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AND BUSINESS 2022 TRENDS AND OPPORTUNITIES: Progress Amid Pandemic Challenges Across Regions*. The data presented in this report are the aggregate results of self-reported data that has not been verified or validated by any of the tool partners (United Nations Global Compact, UN Women or any member of the Inter-American Development Bank Group). It represents responses submitted by global businesses between the tool's launch in March 2017 and December 2021. The aggregated global data from December 2021 to December 2023 are still unavailable at the time of this publication.

1. More progress in Commitment and Implementation and more efforts needed in Measurement and Transparency in China are consistent with global trends

The WEPs Gender Gap Analysis Tool sets a high bar by encouraging businesses to employ a holistic approach to gender equality and women's empowerment. According to the report of *WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AND BUSINESS 2022 TRENDS AND OPPORTUNITIES: Progress Amid Pandemic Challenges Across Regions*, the average score for all companies that have used the tool globally is 32 percent.⁹

The average score of China's businesses is 39.9 percent,¹⁰ situated within the "Improver" category.¹¹ Though efforts are being made by companies, much of that progress is focused on company commitments and some in implementation. More endeavors are needed in the aspects of measurement and transparency, which is consistent with Asian and global trends in the past few years. This demonstrates the need for more accelerated, effective and impactful change.

2. Good practices of China's business actions to promote gender equality in the workplace are mainly demonstrated in three aspects

The top three areas where companies have an average score on gender equality in the workplace are maternity leave, elimination of violence, harassment, and sexual exploitation as well as female employees' health, safety, and hygiene, closely followed by non-discrimination equality in policy and recruitment. Specifically, though many companies attach great importance to the policies and the impact of maternity leave, more comprehensive actions to support working parents—such as extended paternity leave and caregiver benefits—are still needed. In terms of ensuring a safe workplace, there's a major uptake to commitment and policies, which lays a good foundation to move beyond and to enhance the implementation and tracking.

Similar to most of the companies in Asia and around the globe, the scores of Chinese companies accessing quality health service are relatively lagging behind.

⁹ The data are from *WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AND BUSINESS 2022 TRENDS AND OPPORTUNITIES: Progress Amid Pandemic Challenges Across Regions*.

¹⁰ This data and the data of "China WEPs Result Snapshot" are the aggregate result of self-reported data that has not been verified or validated by any of the tool partners (United Nations Global Compact, UN Women or any member of the Inter-American Development Bank Group). It represents responses submitted by businesses in China between December 2nd 2021 and December 1st 2023.

¹¹ Category Score: Beginner: <25%, Improver: 26-49%, Achiever: 50-75%, Leader: >75%.

China WEPs Results Snapshot

Promoting Equitable Workplace Outcomes

65% have a stand-alone policy or a commitment embedded in a broader corporate policy on non-discrimination and equal opportunity, that specifically addresses gender diversity in recruitment

44% offer mentoring programme(s) with specific support for women

37% undertake an objective gender pay gap audit or evaluation by internal or external parties at least every five years to ensure jobs of equal value are remunerated equally

44% report publicly to company stakeholders on the number and rate of new employee hires and employee turnover, disaggregated by sex

Supporting Working Parents

91% provide paid maternity and paternity leave

47% provide mentorship/ succession planning before going on maternity leave

77% track the number of women who take maternity leave, and 60% track the number of men who take paternity leave

23% offer on-site childcare facilities that are clean and safe or provides childcare subsidies for offsite care

Ensuring Safe Workplaces

84% have as a stand-alone policy or a commitment embedded in a broader corporate policy that states zero tolerance of all forms of violence at work

42% provide annual training on zero tolerance of all forms of violence to all employees, including sexual harassment, and engaging in acts of sexual exploitation of women and girls while on business travel

79% have confidential grievance, resolution, and non-retaliation mechanisms in place

47% track the number of grievances related to workplace violence, disaggregated by sex



Deep Dive of Business Practices in China

Photo credit: Esquel Group

COMPANY EXAMPLE—Beijing Prudence Interactive Co., Ltd.

Visionary company serving the visually impaired sets its sights on gender equality too



Photo credit: Beijing Prudence Interactive Co., Ltd.

Sector: Internet and Information Services

Employees: 40

UN Global Compact participation year: 2023

TGE participation year: 2023

Forward Faster Initiative Commitment: Equal representation, participation and leadership across all levels of management by 2030

Beijing Prudence Interactive is an innovative start up which was set out six years ago with a singular vision: To improve life for people who are blind or visually impaired.

Leveraging technologies such as the internet, 5G and artificial intelligence, the SME creates mobile internet communities, entertainment products, training and services for the 1.1 billion people around the world, including 17.5 million in China, who have little or no ability to see.

And now, after joining the UN Global Compact in 2023, the company has added another ambitious goal to its mission: To build a fully inclusive workforce with a 50-50 gender balance.

"We have a long learning journey ahead of us, but gender equality is important to us," said Wang Lu, the Deputy General Manager at Prudence Interactive, who goes by the English name Ice.

"Joining the UN Global Compact has helped us understand sustainability and follow the Ten Principles which will help us fulfill our environmental and social

responsibilities as a growing company," she said.

Currently, about 30 percent of staff are female and 70 percent of the total workforce are people with varying degrees of disability. They are employed in roles such as programmers, anchors, copywriters and product managers not only for their technical skills but also their knowledge of the customers they serve. Products include a mobile screen reader used in more than 100 countries, an online community platform, an online game called "Battle Against Darkness", on sale in the Apple store in 20 languages, as well as various training programmes to teach people life skills to help them get out and about.

"We shape the world with sound. Our customers cannot see the world, but we want the world to see them," said Ms. Wang.

The overlapping vulnerability of women with disabilities like Zhou Tong, the Head of New Media Operations, caught the attention of the company while implementing its HR policies.

"In my previous experience of job searching, I came across a lot of obstacles as a person with disabilities, not to mention that I am a female," said Ms. Zhou who had many part-time and short-term jobs before finding a full-time position at Beijing Prudence Interactive.

Therefore, to support its female employees, especially those with disabilities, the company adopts a flexible working policy that allows them to work both online and offline.

"Many of our positions and work are designed to be hybrid, so many of our employees, such as customer service, anchors, and product managers can work online," said Ms. Wang. "With this policy, we want to address a major difficulty for staff with disabilities—their commute to work."

"Another important purpose is to create flexible working hours to ensure a work-life balance, which allows both male and female colleagues to take care of family responsibilities," she added.

Such flexibility also applies to parenting. In addition to statutory maternity leave of 128 days and paternity leave of 15 days, the company also provides 14 days of extra maternity and paternity leave as well as flexible working hours for female employees during the post-natal period.

Just like other SMEs, Beijing Prudence Interactive faces the challenges of mobilizing resources to systematically design and deliver their plans in gender equality, but

PROFILE STORY—Beijing Prudence Interactive Co., Ltd.

Zhou Tong, Head of New Media Operations



Photo credit: Beijing Prudence Interactive Co., Ltd.

Having been born blind, 33-year-old Zhou Tong has spent her entire life overcoming many challenges but, in her role at Prudence Interactive, gender discrimination is not one of them.

"Even the interview for this job left me feeling good. I was a 29-year-old female but I was not asked whether I was married or had children and, ever since, I don't feel I have been treated differently because I am a woman," she said.

After a friend encouraged her to apply, Ms. Zhou joined Prudence four years ago. She started off doing social media and then worked in planning and training before

being promoted to her current role as Head of New Media Operations.

Asked how her employer has enabled her career development, Zhou said: "Working here, I feel women are treated as equals. I really believe in the products we provide and that motivates me to stay."

"There have been no limits to my personal and professional growth and I have been encouraged to try new things," she said, adding that her work-life balance is fair but she is happy to work overtime occasionally for the needs of the company when deadlines demand it.

"The technology we are developing is quite gender-responsive. Generally speaking, networking opportunities for people with vision impairment are very limited so the games and social communities that we produce expand those opportunities, especially when it comes to women."

"Through our products, people with vision impairment have an opportunity to get to know other people in the community. There are many examples of people who met and got married on our platforms. That is one reason I really like the products we make," said Zhou, who got married five years ago to someone she met through her work.

Asked about her hopes for the future and career progression, Ms. Zhou said: "I really believe technology can help people like me to navigate their lives and the world around them better. I also hope it can help others know more about our challenges and learn to see us as regular people just like them." ■

joining the UN Global Compact and participating in the Target Gender Equality Accelerator (TGE) has helped them develop an actionable gender equality roadmap.

"Established in 2017, the company is still quite young. Although we had our own policies for hiring and managing employees, our work on gender equality and HR management was not so systematic and detailed," Ms. Wang explained.

The Target Gender Equality Accelerator provides tailored performance analysis through the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs) Gender Gap Analysis Tool, which allows companies of different sizes to set priorities and plan actions based on their actual gaps and resources available.

"Through the data from WEPs tool performance analysis workshops, we learned how to set goals to enhance women's leadership and use the templates and

frameworks provided by the Accelerator to develop a comprehensive action plan to achieve these goals," said Ms. Wang. "After each training, we also reported and discussed the issues with our team members in relevant functions, and reflected deeply aiming to incorporate learning into the actions to advance gender equality in the workplace."

"We have witnessed an increase in the proportion of female staff through our efforts in staff development and equal promotion. But with the guidance from the TGE Accelerator, we want to achieve equality, 50/50, among all employees, as the next step," said Wang Lu. "Next year, following the TGE training, we will take actions to make it happen, such as more internal trainings and awareness raising."

"Women play an important role in society and women have the same abilities as men. So we aim to give all our employees the same opportunity," Ms. Wang added. ■

State-owned insurance giant steadily trains and promotes its way towards gender equality

Photo credit: China Pacific Property Insurance Co., Ltd.



Sector: Nonlife Insurance

Employees: 55,225

UN Global Compact participation year: 2023

TGE participation year: 2024

China Pacific Property Insurance Co., Ltd. (CPPIC) is a provider of insurance services, including auto, property, short-term health insurance, accidental injury insurance, and more.

Headquartered in Shanghai, CPPIC is a subsidiary of China Pacific Insurance (Group) Co., which is listed on the Fortune Global 500 for the 13th consecutive year, ranking 192nd in 2023. This parent company is also the first insurance company to be simultaneously listed on the Shanghai, Hong Kong, and London Stock Exchanges.

Before joining the UN Global Compact in 2023, CPPIC was actively involved in social and development issues by leveraging its strengths in talent, technology, and resources. A notable initiative is the "Poverty Prevention Insurance" launched in 2017, an innovative insurance service aimed at safeguarding families from the catastrophic consequences of a natural disaster or an education or health emergency. This commercial anti-

poverty insurance product in China has served over 50 million female beneficiaries in six years.

"CPPIC adopts ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) practices at a strategic level," said Tao Lei, General Manager Assistant and Board Secretary of CPPIC.

"In staff recruitment, training, promotion, and management, we strictly adhere to national policies and regulations, ensuring no gender discrimination or differentiation. Everything is conducted on a gender-equal basis," she added.

As of the end of December 2023, among all 55,225 employees of CPPIC, 25,754 are female, accounting for 46.6 per cent of the total workforce.

"During the three years of the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a global decline in the women's employment rate and income level. However, CPPIC successfully increased the percentage of female employees for three consecutive years from 2021 to 2023," said Ms. Tao.

Additionally, the percentage of female employees with higher academic qualifications (bachelor's degree and above) in the company has been increasing yearly: 39.8 per cent in 2021, 41.5 per cent in 2022, and 42 per cent in 2023.

"I don't feel any gender inequality in our company," said Chai Qin, Senior Manager of the Technology Innovation Centre, Technology Project Management Department at CPPIC. "I started in an R&D position and now I'm in a planning position. This is a career promotion for me."

"I was also chosen as the lead of our company's running group. I organise running activities, and my male colleagues are very supportive," she added.

To further support its talents, the company has launched a series of online and offline training and personnel development programmes. Among these, the 'Trainee Director' programme is aimed at employees under 35, helping them to be the next generation of the company's senior management. A total of 764 female employees have benefited from this programme.

"This isn't my first training at the Head Office," said Song Jialin, a Trainee Director at the Head Office. "However, for the 'Trainee Director' programme, only 30 out of 50 candidates were selected, so I really want to cherish this opportunity as much as possible. At the Headquarters, I can engage in more in-depth

Tao Lei, General Manager Assistant and Board Secretary



Photo credit: China Pacific Property Insurance Co., Ltd.

Tao Lei is a woman in senior management at China Pacific Property Insurance and she puts her rise to the top of the state-run company down to hard work and strong performance.

Asked if she sees herself as a trailblazer for other women, she modestly replies: "I hope I can play a positive role in inspiring others."

She is confident there is a strong cohort of female managers coming up behind her. Just over one third (36 per cent) of managers at the mid-level are women and a recently-introduced *Management Talent Cultivation Plan* saw the recruitment of an almost equal number of women and men (49 v. 51 per cent).

discussions with senior leaders and colleagues, gain new knowledge and experiences, and accelerate my personal development."

"At CPPIC, both women and men have equal opportunities to advance, as long as they demonstrate excellence in their work," Ms. Song added.

Another flagship personnel development programme is the "Management Talent Cultivation Plan". Launched in 2018, this initiative focuses on nurturing professional talent, particularly cultivating leaders and professional teams. As of 2023, 2,006 staff have been selected to this programme, with women representing 49.6% of the participants.

"When the company provides equal platforms and opportunities for both genders, it's essential for more female employees to step forward, showcasing their strengths and professional value. This will lead to recognition and more opportunities," said Ms. Tao.

"We don't really need to remove obstacles for women, we just need to build an inclusive workforce and create the right environment so that women can grow alongside men," she explains.

"We need women to bravely stand up and be seen and, when we recruit, we should look at demand rather than gender. We recruit and train employees on an equal basis. Performance should be prioritized," she adds.

Having committed itself to ESG leadership and the Ten Principles of the UN Global Compact in 2023, the state-run insurance group has a dedicated team working on goal setting and systems across its management structure as well as an online learning platform for staff to help improve knowledge of ESG for professional development, training and career planning.

"As part of our ESG strategy, we treat all employees as valuable assets and offer equal career planning," says Ms. Tao.

She also recognizes the valuable role that male employees play in supporting gender equality in the workplace, citing an example a couple of years ago when three out of 15 of her staff on one team needed to take maternity leave at about the same time.

"Men can be very inclusive and generous to female colleagues by stepping up to do the work while they are away," she adds.

Asked about how the role of gender equality has changed the company in recent years, Ms. Tao replies: "We believe in the strength that women can bring to our business. Female managers are very detail-oriented and female management can be a strong force for execution." ■

Although Ms. Tao is currently the only woman in CPPIC's senior management, the company has seen an increasing percentage of women in management roles in recent years—36.1% of mid-level management staff are female in 2023.

"Senior management is drawn from mid-level management, which in turn is drawn from entry-level positions," said Ms. Tao. "We can certainly expect a 50-50 gender representation in the future."

In 2024, CPPIC is joining the Target Gender Equality Accelerator (TGE) to strengthen its contribution to corporate gender equality.

"The UN Global Compact and Target Gender Equality provide a lot of guiding principles, methodologies, tools, and communication platforms. By incorporating what we learn from these resources and adopting scientific methods, we would be able to achieve the 50-50 ratio more swiftly," Ms. Tao explained. ■

COMPANY EXAMPLE—CHINT Global

Smart energy solution provider empowering women around the world



Photo credit: CHINT Global

Sector: Electronic & Electrical Equipment
Employees: more than 2,000
UN Global Compact participation year: 2021
WEPs signatory since: 2022
TGE participation year: 2022 and 2023
Forward Faster Initiative Commitment: Equal representation, participation and leadership across all levels of management by 2030; Equal pay for work of equal value by 2030.

CHINT Global is a smart electronic and clean energy solution provider with an ambitious mission to “empower the world”. Soon after the company’s formal set-up in 2020, CHINT Global joined the UN Global Compact as a participant in 2021 and quickly discovered that a key pathway to achieving its ambition is to empower the women in its workforce.

Its parent company, CHINT Group Co., Ltd., founded in 1984, has consistently pursued a strategy of “industrialization, technologization, internationalization, digitalization, and platformization.” Operating in over 140 countries and regions, CHINT Group employs over 50,000 people globally. In 2023, CHINT’s operating revenue reached \$21.59 billion, and the company has been listed among the Top 500 Chinese Enterprises for over two decades.

“The Ten Principles of the UN Global Compact has helped us frame our thinking about women’s

empowerment—like a reminder to everyone,” said Lily Zhang, the President of CHINT Global.

“Even if we all acknowledge that men and women are equal, in a traditionally male-dominated industry like ours, without a guiding principle, people easily forget. To create new habits, reminders are necessary both externally and internally,” she explained.

In 2022, CHINT Global became a signatory of Women’s Empowerment Principles (WEPs), a set of Principles offering guidance to business on how to advance gender equality and women’s empowerment in the workplace, marketplace and community. The company also participated in the UN Global Compact’s Target Gender Equality Accelerator (TGE) in both 2022 and 2023 to further strengthen their progress on gender equality.

“At the moment, our workforce consists of about 40% female and 60% male employees. We monitor these ratios annually during recruitment,” said Eric Gu, the Head of Human Resource of CHINT Global. “Of course, qualification and capability are paramount for any potential employee, and we find no shortage of highly qualified female applicants in China.”

Women’s empowerment policies are also integrated into the company’s operations post-recruitment. Beyond national and local statutory paid maternity leave capped at a maximum of 158 days, CHINT Global offers a “one-hour early departure” for female employees with a baby under one year old, and 10 days per year of “childcare leave” for employees with children younger than three. The company also provides a maternity room for new mothers.

“I faced no difficulties or obstacles at work after returning from my pregnancy,” said Sarah Zhang, a PV Application Manager at CHINT Global and also a mother of two children.

“When I was pregnant, the company immediately assigned an engineer to assist me. Upon my return, we were able to hand over the work seamlessly,” she added. “CHINT Global ensures two days off per week, greatly helping work-life balance.”

“I have my child and parents to take care of but I also have time for my own hobbies and a fulfilling life after work,” said Li Xia, a Winding Inspector at CHINT Global. Having started as a Winder, she says she was attracted to the company due to its reputation in supporting employees’ career development.

PROFILE STORY—CHINT Global

Amy Fan, Country Manager, Kenya and Regional Head of Southeast Africa



Photo credit: CHINT Global

Having studied and majored in administration, Amy Fan started her professional career at CHINT Global as a documentation clerk in 2006 but was always ambitious to try new things.

But when she applied to join the sales team, one of her male colleagues tried to alert her, telling her that ‘sales can be very difficult and challenging to get started with for an entry-level girl.’

“I wanted to be more customer-facing and was very ambitious. I was ready for the job and did manage to switch to the sales team,” she explained.

Now, with more than a decade of sales and corporate success behind her, Amy represents the company abroad as Country Manager, Kenya and Regional Head of Southeast Africa.

Out of 10 country managers, she is one of three women

driving the company’s business interests overseas.

Based in Nairobi for more than eight months a year, she misses her husband and families in Shanghai and now has to navigate a very male-dominated professional environment.

“Most of our customers and about 70 per cent of my colleagues are men, but they are always very respectful,” she says. “I do have many cross-cultural challenges to deal with and Lily, my boss, is very supportive. A female boss can give you good advice.”

Under her leadership, CHINT Global has recently set up a new warehouse in Kenya enabling the company to effectively respond to market emergencies and improve regional after-sales service. It also supports expanded sales channels and has improved the competitiveness of CHINT products in the local market.

The new “customer-centered” warehouse can better respond to customer needs, shorten delivery cycles and improve customer experience. In the future, the Kenyan warehouse will continue to expand its service scope, fully covering the markets of Uganda, Tanzania and Rwanda by the end of 2024, and expand the markets of 10 countries in East and Southern Africa by 2025.

While Amy says she has never seen gender equality as a particular problem in China, she recognizes it is in some of the African countries where she works and she tries to support women’s empowerment and economic advancement where she can.

“Where possible, I try to recruit female colleagues too,” she says. ■

This reputation also helps in attracting talent to the company in globally. Ilaria Zanetti, a marketing professional in Italy who faced challenges in persuading her previous employers to believe that a woman like her deserves a leadership role, is now thriving as a marketing manager at CHINT Global in Italy.

“CHINT Global allows me to balance work and life, gives me space for my ideas, encourages my self-development, and empowers me by providing opportunities to try new things,” explained Ilaria. “In the future, I hope to attend a business and administration course so that I can manage not only marketing, but also more general business as well.”

CHINT Global’s business now extends to more than

140 countries. Yet, the company aspires to more than just business expansion. At CHINT Global, the average annual income ratio of male and female employees is now 6:4, and 30 per cent of management level leaders are women. By joining the UN Global Compact’s Forward Faster Initiative in 2023, CHINT Global has committed to take corporate actions in achieving ambitious targets of “equal pay for work of equal value by 2030” and “equal representation, participation, and leadership across all levels of management by 2030”.

“Just create more opportunities for women, and they will never let you down,” is the message Ms. Lily Zhang hopes to convey to all other companies and industries. ■

COMPANY EXAMPLE—Esquel Group

Global textile and apparel provider committed to equal opportunities since 2000



Sector: Personal Goods

Employees: 15,716

UN Global Compact participation year: 2000

WEPs signatory since: 2020

TGE participation year: 2023

Forward Faster Initiative Commitment: Equal pay for work of equal value by 2030

Esquel Group is a well-known textiles and apparels service and solution provider that intertwines business with a commitment to sustainability.

Established in 1978 and operating from China, with its headquarters in Hong Kong, the company has consistently advocated for gender equality and sustainability, weaving these key values into its corporate culture.

As the first Chinese company, and one of the first companies worldwide, to join the UN Global Compact when it was launched by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan in 2000, Esquel has spent more than two decades implementing a comprehensive set of policies to ensure an equitable workplace. As articulated in their code of conduct established in 2005, the company has ingrained principles of non-discrimination and equal pay within its strategic goals.

"Since 2000, Esquel has integrated the Ten Principles of the UN Global Compact into the Group's strategic planning and decision-making process. Gender equality is not a standalone policy but is integrated into our overall strategy. We ensure that our policies are clear on

non-discrimination and harassment, translating them into various languages and displaying them across all factories and departments to ensure everyone is aware," said Shirley Xu, Senior Manager for Sustainability and Social Responsibility.

In 2022, Esquel said it received more than 690 pieces of employee feedback, none of which pertained to inequality or inclusivity issues.

"Our approaches are not merely top-down, but also bottom-up. We have appeal mechanisms not only at the Group level but also at the factory level, allowing our employees to submit appeals through various channels. They can choose to submit through a hotline, letters, social media channels, real name or anonymous—whatever our employees are most comfortable with," explained Ms. Xu.

Believing that every employee has the potential to be an agent of positive change, Esquel also places a high priority on developing leadership and technical skills across the company, regardless of gender. They offer an array of training programs tailored to enhance the management capabilities of their employees at different levels.

"I've been with Esquel for 20 years, starting as an operational trainee. The company's emphasis on growth and opportunity has seen me through multiple roles, now leading Technical Services Department in the Knitting Mill," explained Ms. Yin Xiuhe, Senior Manager of Knitting Mill Technical Services Department.

"In Esquel, training and development are not just about improving skills; they're about shaping leaders for the future. Our programs reflect this philosophy, offering equal opportunities to all. I see so many 'elder sisters' working in the management level which makes me believe that I can have a try too," said Ms. Yan Qing, currently the Associate Director at Technical Center of Excellence, having overseen significant growth and managed thousands of employees.

As the first company in the textile and apparel industry to provide continuing education and academic enhancement opportunities for frontline employees, Esquel has partnered with the Open University of China on an academic enhancement programme since 2015. The programme has fully funded 1,519 employees, 805 or 53 per cent of whom are female employees, to obtain college degrees. Around 68 per cent of the programme's beneficiaries received job promotions afterwards.

"I joined Esquel right after high school and started on the frontlines. Through personal dedication and the company's support, I moved up from a regular frontline

PROFILE STORY—Esquel Group

Yin Xiuhe, Senior Manager of Knitting Mill Technical Services Department



From her first job at Esquel Group as a technician in 2003 to her current role as a Senior Manager of Knitted Fabric Factory Technical Services Department, Yin Xiuhe's career trajectory is a tale of hard work, continuous learning, and the transformative power of supportive corporate policies.

"At Esquel, we don't say people who majored in dyeing can only go to the dyeing department, nor fabrics specialists cannot go to product development. In fact, Esquel provides an open platform for all, with no gender differentiation or limitation. As long as you have an open mind to learn, you can go across many departments," said Ms. Yin.

Yin Xiuhe majored in mechanical automation—a field not directly related to textiles—and joined Esquel straight after university. After five years in the Production Planning and Control Department, she discovered a keen interest in textile fabrics and sought to learn more.

employee to a manager, overseeing a department with over 700 employees," shared Ms. Zhou Yingying, Assistant Manager at the Sewing Workshop (Knit), a graduate of the Academic Enhancement Programme in 2020 and now a college degree holder.

Esquel's policies foster an environment where more women are willing to work and pursue long-term development opportunities. Data reveals that among employees with over 20 years of service at Esquel, 69 per cent are female. This percentage is 75% and 76% among employees with 10 years and 5 years of service, respectively.

"When I first joined Esquel 20 years ago, I never really thought I would work for one company for such a long time, nor would I end up being able to break down technical barriers and be responsible for the Technical Services Department of our knitted fabrics. In fact, you

Supported by her managers, she applied for and was granted a rotation to the technical department.

"There was also a very senior male expert who mentored me and unreservedly exported his experience to me," Ms. Yin explained, adding that she has never witnessed any bullying or gender discrimination at Esquel.

"I feel that this is a philosophy and culture from the top down," she adds.

Asked about the other corporate policies that have supported her two-decade tenure at Esquel, Ms. Yin replies, "One of the things I value most is our annual summer camp for employees' children. It provides a respite for working mothers during school holidays, enabling them to pursue professional development without worry." Since 2007, more than 7,400 children have benefited from the summer camp.

"The 'Parent-Child Day' is also a brilliant initiative that allows children to see what their mothers do, offering them a fresh perspective on their parents' roles outside the home. It strengthens the bond between parents and children and serves as a platform for mothers to be role models, inspiring excellence both at home and at work." In 2023, 2,021 employees and their children participated in 'Parent-Child Day' and other family activities.

As the mother of a teenage boy, Ms. Yin said the summer camp and 'Parent-Child Day' have brought her relationship with her child closer than ever.

"Around 80 per cent of employees in my current department are female. Most of us are in our 30s or 40s. The company's family friendly policies enable us to balance our professional life and family life," Ms. Yin added. ■

can see along the way that the whole company has no barriers to training, to your personal promotion, and to the enhancement of your own skills," said Ms. Yin Xiuhe.

"In my years with Esquel, I've seen a genuine culture of equality, where opportunities for advancement are based purely on capability and merit," shared Ms. Yan who joined Esquel in 2003.

In 2023, after joining the Target Gender Equality Accelerator, Esquel took another step forward by joining the UN Global Compact Forward Faster Initiative and committing to achieving "equal pay for work of equal value by 2030."

"Our journey in nurturing an equitable workplace is ongoing. We strive to lead by example, demonstrating how a company can effectively integrate corporate responsibility into its core," explained Ms. Xu. ■

COMPANY EXAMPLE—Huawei Technologies Co. Ltd.

Investing in female ICT leadership, skills and role models

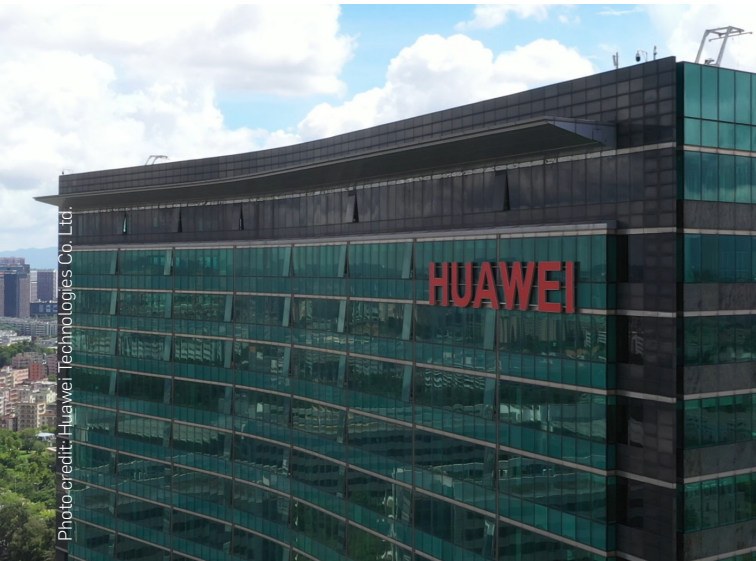


Photo credit: Huawei Technologies Co. Ltd.

Sector: Telecommunications Equipment & Telecommunications Service Providers
Employees: 207,000
UN Global Compact participation year: 2004
TGE participation year: 2023

As a global provider of information and communications technology (ICT) and smart devices, Huawei believes that ICT can play a critical role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and advancing the well-being of humanity.

Through promoting several international digital inclusion initiatives and action plans including “Seeds for the Future”, “Women in Tech” and “TECH4ALL”, Huawei is working with partners to innovate technologies and solutions that can make the world a more inclusive and sustainable place for all.

Huawei is especially committed to creating opportunities and support for women in order to achieve its goal of building an inclusive society that embraces diversity. “Tech for Her, Tech by Her, Tech with Her” is one major company initiative to improve women’s participation in and contribution to the tech sector and the digital economy at large.

Founded in a small office in Shenzhen in 1987, Huawei now has 207,000 employees and operates in over 170 countries and regions. Like other technology companies, Huawei has been dealing with the long-standing industrial challenges of gender equality since it started. Back in the 1990s, women in senior positions at Huawei

started a spontaneous support group to provide mentorship and guidance to younger women. Today, the company has established a systematic mentorship programme for each employee, together with HR policies, to ensure strong support in staff onboarding, professional development, and promotion.

“The proportion of female employees in Huawei is growing from 19% to 21% now. It’s not very high but has reached the average level regarding the industry’s talent pool,” said Joanna Ma, PR Director from Huawei’s Corporate Communications Department, who is also one of the founders of the company’s “Women in Tech” initiative.

But the underrepresentation of women at all levels persists, not only within the company but in the technology sector as a whole, especially in leadership positions.

“The pool of women candidates in STEM is too small,” said Ms Ma. Without an active and growing pool of women candidates in the job markets and in junior positions, having more females in the promotion pipeline has become out of reach.

Realizing that achieving gender equality is a broader challenge that starts with early education, the company decided to do more externally and to establish platforms to empower more women to enter the tech industry as a whole. Against this backdrop, Huawei set its gender strategy and launched the “Women in Tech” initiative.

One of the beneficiaries of this outreach is Ahlam Boumezrag, a female student from Algeria who set up a start-up company to detect crop diseases using drones and artificial intelligence. After joining Huawei’s training programme, she received expert guidance on doing business with ICT and benefited from onsite learning in China. “We did learn good ideas about everything that we need to build a tech start up,” said Ms. Boumezrag.

From Huawei’s perspective, the programme was not an easy journey because, at first, they had difficulties reaching and encouraging enough young women to participate in learning about ICT learnings and persuading them that they could potentially find employment in this area, Joanna Ma said, “We want the gender proportion of participants in our ICT learning programmes to be 50/50, but sometimes it’s difficult to find a lot of female students in STEM.”

“The biggest barrier is that women don’t even know they have these opportunities and can thrive in male-dominated industries,” shared Jana Havrankova, a Czech student who participated in Huawei’s initiative. “For me, this programme was a great boost of self-confidence.

PROFILE STORY—Huawei Technologies Co. Ltd .

Berta Herrero, Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, Huawei Europe



Photo credit: Huawei Technologies Co. Ltd.

When Berta Herrero knocked on her boss’s door with the idea of creating an academy outside Huawei to train a new generation of female digital leaders, her expectations were not very high.

“I was convinced that I had a great project proposal and one that could change people’s lives both inside and outside the company,” said Ms. Herrero, Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion at Huawei Europe. “To my surprise, my boss not only approved my idea but told me to drop everything else to make it happen. He told me ‘Women are the future of technology and we will be here to support them’.”

Over the last two years, Ms. Herrero has spearheaded

I started to believe in myself and I started to apply for jobs that I didn’t think I would be a good candidate for because it was mainly male dominated.”

By leveraging effective engagement strategies, such as building active communities and strengthening bonds through networks and alumni, more and more women are entering the technology industry through Huawei’s initiative.

“Now, we have ICT and leadership scholarships specifically designed for female students, we also have set the target to have at least one-third of the participants in our biggest ICT learning programme Seeds for the Future—which benefitted over 2.8 million students over the past 15 years—to be female,” said Ms. Ma. “Actually, in many countries the percentage exceeds 50 per cent.”

Schools for Female Leadership in the Digital Age and the Women’s Academy for Rural Innovation which provide talented women with scholarships for a life-changing series of masterclasses, workshops and debates guided by world class experts and mentors.

Through these courses, selected women acquire the skills and tools they need to lead in the digital age—everything from coding to AI ethics to sustainability, global collaboration and innovation against gender-based violence.

With more than 9,000 applicants since the first course was launched in 2021, the program has empowered a new generation of female leaders to speak up, strive for more opportunities and reach their full potential.

“One of our students, previously unsure of her potential, is now a rising star within Europe’s aviation industry, making flying safer, more efficient and less environmentally impactful. Another discovered her passion for global collaboration and is now on track to become a diplomat committed to a more inclusive digital transition. A third alumna is using her expertise in AI and carbon accounting to provide the construction industry with next-generation climate intelligence solutions, charting a path to smarter and greener buildings,” said Ms. Herrero.

“Like them, many bright female minds are overcoming limits and shaping the upcoming phase of the digital revolution—one where tech for good will be the common theme, and the end goal will be to make sure no one is left behind.”

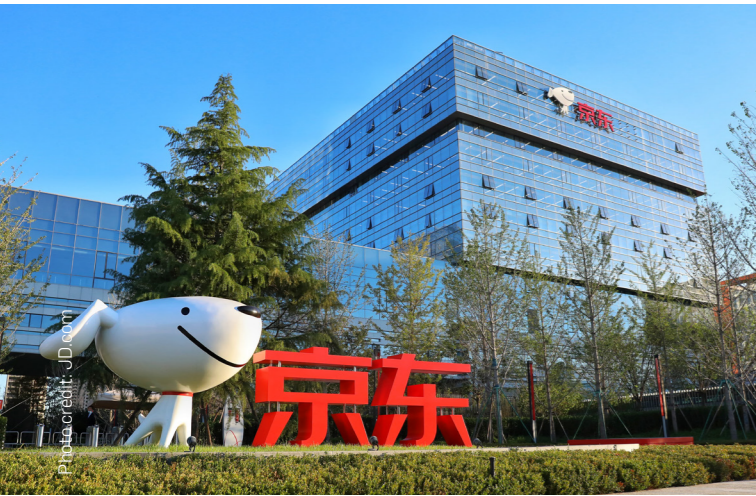
“The program has also had a catalysing effect of Huawei’s work culture and our own employees,” she said. ■

For now, another step forward is that the company is tracking the long-term growth of female talent. In the long run, the empowerment of talented women can boost the number of female candidates in Huawei’s recruitment and promotion pipeline.

Therefore, the company joined the UN Global Compact’s Target Gender Equality (TGE) accelerator programme to gain from the practical experience of industry peers.

“We are in the (TGE) accelerator programme because we don’t want to be limited by our own perspectives,” said Colin Qian, a TGE participant from Huawei, who is also running the Women in Tech Initiative. “Through TGE, we learn from the perspectives of our peers and even competitors, and we receive many practical tools and guidance for internal decision-making which helps us better engage with stakeholders.” ■

Well-known retailer aims to achieve gender equality by supporting family life



Sector: Retails and Logistics

Employees: 445,268

UN Global Compact participation year: 2021

TGE participation year: 2022

Forward Faster Initiative Commitment: Equal pay for work of equal value by 2030

Whatever you want to buy, JD.com aims to provide services to online shopping customers through a vast product range covering everything from fresh food and apparel to electronics and cosmetics. With nearly half a million employees, its nationwide network provides standard same- and next-day delivery to more than a billion Chinese consumers.

Prioritizing customer satisfaction, the company's workforce is largely composed of frontline workers, including couriers, warehouse staff, and customer service representatives. Despite the logistics sector being traditionally male-dominated, female employees make up 22 percent of the entire company. When considering "white-collar" roles, females constitute 46 per cent across various professions. The company recognizes gender equality as a crucial factor for future success and is committed to promoting the Sustainable Development Goal 5.

"Gender Equality is relevant to our business in the sense of the benefits and welfare of our employees," said Ms. Li Yi, Director of ESG at JD.com, "Our business relies heavily on human resources to provide services, so we really want to provide holistic benefits and an inclusive environment to ensure that staff come to work without worries. We think supporting their families is one of the keys to the company's long-term success."

For example, in addition to statutory maternity leave, JD.com provides 30 extra days of welfare maternity leave. To ensure women can easily return to work after having a child, JD.com provides subsidies for child care support for its employees, a child day care center for children under three—which has benefited more than 1,700 children, and a kindergarten for children under six—which has accumulatively enrolled more than 350 children of employees at JD.com according to the company's data by the end of 2022.

About 80% of JD's frontline workers are from rural areas. When many couriers decide to stay in the cities during Chinese New Year holidays to ensure continuous doorstep delivery service, the company provides subsidies to arrange their children to visit their parents' working cities for family reunion so they can also spend quality time together at this traditional festival.

For staff in customer service, JD.com sees this position has great potential to provide inclusive economic opportunities to more women, including those with disabilities.

"We launched the 'Sunshine Angels' programme in 2013 to establish an online customer service team of staff with disabilities, particularly women," said Ms. Li, "This team now has around 100 staff, with women accounting for 70% of the core team. Many of them rise to management positions."

The ESG team led by Ms. Li has managed to raise awareness of gender equality issues among top management.

"For a long time, JD.com didn't have any females on the board, but we realized that having board members of different genders helps a company make better decisions, so we continuously raised this issue," Ms. Li explained. "Now, we are very happy to see that three out of the seven board members are female."

Meanwhile, through the efforts of the ESG team, the company has launched a Policy on Board Diversity and created a specialized position of Chief Diversity Officer to mainstream gender equality as part of its sustainability strategy.

"Though the overall ratio of women employees in our company is 22 percent, it's worth mentioning that the proportion of women in senior management is also around 22 percent, which is the outcome of a good growth pathway," said Ms. Li. "But we also encounter challenges. When communicating with our top management, we need to explain not only 'why' gender equality, but also 'how' to achieve gender equality, especially in the China context, to demonstrate what's the good practice in the

Han Xue, Customer Service



Photo credit: JD.com

For Han Xue, a young mother with a disability, working at JD.com in customer service is more than just a job, it's a lifeline.

"It allows me to have a normal life to the greatest possible extent," said Han, who lost her ability to walk in an accident and now relies on a wheelchair to get around.

"The company provides me with this job, allowing me to find my own value instead of staying at home feeling depressed all day," she said. "The care given to people with disabilities have allowed me to embrace a new life, feel valued and loved. Eventually, I met my husband and started a new life."

Han is part of a program called Sunshine Angels, aimed at providing physically challenged people with online customer service job opportunities. She works at JD.com's Customer Service Center, with specialized and accessible work areas, dining facilities, employee dormitories, shuttle bus transportation, team building

industry and what's our performance compared with peers."

By engaging with the UN Global Compact, the company has learned about good practices and directions for goal setting, through which it identified the key issue of equal pay for equal work, and gained approaches to track progress and time-bound roadmaps to support women's career advancement.

"We joined Target Gender Equality Accelerator in 2022, through which we were able to systematically learn and evaluate gender indicators in human resources through the Women's Empowerment Principles and Gender Gap Analysis Tool. Then, in 2023, we joined the Forward Faster Initiative and committed to achieve equal pay for work of equal value by 2030," said Ms. Li.

"We already have a performance review and salary

and counseling activities, among others.

"If it were not for the support of the company and this job, I might have just stayed at home, needing to be taken care of by my family and even afraid to go out, worrying about (mean) looks from others," she added. "Coming here to work has enabled me to meet a group of friends and helped me regain my confidence and face my life."

As a customer service representative, Han listens to shoppers' problems and helps them solve their purchasing issues.

"Every thanks I receive is a recognition from the customers and makes me feel my own worth," she said.

Before taking maternity leave and welcoming her son in 2021, Han had been acknowledged by the company for her outstanding work performance. Upon her return to work, she was once again recognized as a "Frontline Pioneer" staff member.

"The company was highly supportive," she said, "offering extended maternity leave, a childbirth insurance and allowance, day care and playground facilities."

As a new mother, she recognises it may not always be possible to balance family and work life.

"I want to be an optimistic and happy mother. When I am working, I strive to complete my work efficiently. After work, I set aside specific times to spend with my child, so he does not feel like his Mom is always working. Parents are children's best teachers, and every day words and actions subtly influence our children."

"We must be confident," she said. "I never felt that being a person with disabilities meant I needed to be taken care of by others. I believe that if others can do something, so can we." ■

system that avoids gender discrimination, meanwhile, we also did self-checks through tools and formulas in *Action Guide to Move Gender Equality Forward Faster*. Through the Initiative, JD.com will strengthen its implementation, tracking and reporting on this issue."

When asked about the future plans, Ms. Li said: "Based on all these prior efforts, we are now streamlining our ESG strategy and will definitely incorporate gender equality as a core element." Regarding the suggestions for peers, she added, "I think there's no one and only pathway for companies to achieve gender equality, because situations vary for different industries. Gender equality may sound broad, but as long as you adopt a people-centered approach to address the key concerns for your employees and your industry, that will lead you to a starting point." ■

COMPANY EXAMPLE—Lenovo Group

Chipping away at the glass ceiling for women in the Tech Sector



Photo credit: Lenovo Group

Sector: ICT
Employees: 77,000
UN Global Compact participation year: 2009
WEPs signatory since: 2022
TGE participation year: 2022 and 2023

With its wide portfolio of services and technology products such as personal computers, servers, storage, mobile and cloud solutions, Lenovo is a global technology company that employs 77,000 people around the world with customers in 180 markets. Globally, 37 per cent of Lenovo's workforce are women, with an industry-leading representation of nearly 30% women in technical roles.

"As a global company, we recognize the significance of diversity and inclusion and put it at the top of our management philosophies," said Gao Lan, Lenovo's Senior Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer.

As an advocate for diversity and inclusion (D&I) for many years, the company became a UN Global Compact participant back in 2009 and joined multiple initiatives under the gender umbrella. As the company deepens its governance in the journey towards D&I, it fully leverages the sustainability and ESG roadmaps offered by UN Global Compact, by becoming a signatory to the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs) and joining the Target Gender Equality Accelerator for two consecutive years.

With the strong determination to reach gender parity and set an example in the industry, Lenovo has taken steps to address gender representation from the top down by setting public goals.

After exceeding its first generation goals for female executive representation in 2020 by achieving 21 per cent female executive representation, Lenovo has set new targets to achieve 27 per cent female executive representation by 2026. Progress toward these goals is reported annually in Lenovo's ESG Report.

When asked about the benefits of having more women in staff and leadership positions, Ms. Gao said: "Both men and women bring different viewpoints to the table, leading to better decisions for the company and helping us better serve our male and female customers."

To ensure the achievement of its gender targets, Lenovo has established an institutional management system to create a conducive environment, powered by leadership support, HR policies for inclusive workplace and training programs.

First, Lenovo established its D&I Board with rotated membership of senior executives from across Lenovo's business units and geographies to review and set the D&I agenda for the company. Meanwhile, continuous education and awareness-raising training sessions are implemented to help senior executives internalize the value of diversity, equity and inclusion and overcome unconscious bias.

The company leverages inclusive HR policies aiming to alleviate the obstacles that female employees face in career development. "In our hiring process, we require female candidates to be interviewed for manager positions," Ms. Gao explained. Besides that, she emphasized that other supportive policies and facilities, such as an after-school childcare center, enables mothers to be more engaged and increase efficiency at work. This also encourages more male employees to bring their kids to work.

Multiple training programs are also initiated to help prepare and support women to join the pipeline for executive positions, such as the Women in Lenovo Leadership program (WILL), which aims to provide cross-industry mentorship, and the Women Leadership Development Program (WLDP) which focuses on

PROFILE STORY—Lenovo Group

Gao Ying (Yolanda), Hardware Engineer, Consumer Business Department



Photo credit: Lenovo Group

With 70 patents to her name since starting work at Lenovo as a Hardware Engineer, Gao Ying is an employee who is worth her weight in gold.

She can even take credit for designing one of the company's best-selling portable computers, the Lenovo Yoga, "a high-performance convertible business Ultrabook™ with four different usage modes—Laptop, Stand, Tent, and Tablet."

Ms. Gao, who also goes by the English name Yolanda, joined the company 13 years ago straight after graduating from Beijing Institute of Technology University with Master Degree of Automation and has never been tempted to leave, mainly due to the way she has been treated and supported by the company and her male colleagues in particular.

"At Lenovo, there is a strong collaborative spirit between female and male employees. We support and assist each other in various aspects. Personally, as a mother,

leadership skills cultivation.

"I don't want females to get ahead just because they are women. I want females to be promoted because they are capable," Ms. Gao said.

Most importantly, the goals on equal representation cannot be achieved without strong accountability. Lenovo has benefited from the quantitative indicator systems under the WEPs and established its own tracking methodologies.

"We joined WEPs and TGE, and we found the WEPs Gender Gap Analysis Tool very helpful as it provides a systematic result review of our progress in terms of gender equality," said Ms. Gao, "We can identify gaps and areas for improvement."

when I discovered I was pregnant, I initially had concerns about the potential impact on my career. However, I experienced no unfair treatment and, in fact, received considerable support from both my male colleague and my boss," she said.

Asked how her male colleagues helped, she explained that they literally had to fill in for her and do her job while she took maternity leave.

"They provided assistance and unwavering support when I encountered challenges upon my return. This exemplifies what we refer to as the 'Lenovo culture'—a culture that values mutual support and collaboration." she said.

"I got nearly five months maternity leave and, when I got back to work, I experienced no disparities. I dedicated myself wholeheartedly, earned recognition from both my boss and team and eventually I was promoted to a managerial position."

"Lenovo has many female employees and creates a good environment to support women," she added. "The company upholds fair policies and fosters equal development for both male and female staff. There are no distinctions—everyone has access to identical opportunities, training, programs and courses for personal and professional improvement."

"We can choose to enhance either our technical expertise or managerial proficiency. Initially, I dedicated my efforts to mastering the technical aspects, receiving valuable support and training. As time progressed, I made a conscious shift towards management. Today, I have equal opportunities, alongside my male colleagues, for developing managerial skills."

"Currently, I am part of an innovation-focused team where 50 percent of my teammates are women." she said. ■

The company also keeps its own D&I scorecard with shared KPIs for management, and regularly brings the performance review to the executive level.

When asked for suggestions for peers within the industry, Ms. Gao said: "I know that in the high tech and ICT industry, acquiring talent resources can be challenging. But I believe you should integrate the D&I agenda into your heart, into the core of your business."

She emphasizes that gender equality should not be viewed as an add-on, it should be internalized as a company culture and implemented in day-to-day decision making. While becoming a diverse, equitable and inclusive enterprise is challenging, Lenovo has been successfully navigating its way. ■

Airline targets gender equality on its journey to becoming a profitable and sustainable global carrier



Sector: Travel & Leisure
Employees: 23,657
UN Global Compact participation year: 2022
TGE participation year: 2023

Sustainability is an integral part of Xiamen Airlines' journey as a state-owned Chinese company. In 2017, company then-President Zhao Dong signed an agreement with the United Nations to promote the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and a year later, the airline was flying the world's first commercial aircraft painted with the SDG colours. In 2023, now Chairman Zhao joined the Board of the UN Global Compact.

Headquartered in Fujian Province, Xiamen Airlines operates around 350 domestic and international routes including Amsterdam, Paris, Sydney and Los Angeles, extended to all major destinations around the world via SkyTeam Alliance.

Sustainability has proven to be a profitable destination. Among the 270-plus member airlines of the International Air Transport Association (IATA), Xiamen Airlines ranks in the top 30 in terms of revenue and in the top 13 in passenger traffic, flying more than 40 million people every year.

Having started its sustainability journey in earnest in 2012, Xiamen Airlines is implementing "Xiamen

Airlines Sustainable Development Plans" integrating the 17 SDGs into four categories, which include "Shared Benefits" as one category.

"Gender equality is part and parcel of Shared Benefits with employees and ensuring their rights," explained Zhang Na, Director of Sustainable Development of Planning and Finance. "In 2023, Xiamen Airlines decided to specifically include gender equality as a distinct component in the company's sustainable development planning, elevating its importance to a strategic level."

But it is no ordinary challenge. The unconventional workplaces, irregular hours and strict demands on physical fitness add extra complexity to every airline's gender equality journey.

"As a state-owned company, we see the increasing discussion and requirements on gender issues and ESG by the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission (SASAC), so we want to take initiative and take the lead to tackle the challenge," said Zhang.

Xiamen Airlines pays extra attention to family-friendly policies. By providing 540 days of maternity leave for female pilots and 450 days of maternity leave for flight attendants, the airline aims to support employees to recover from childbirth and rebuild their physical strength, with tailored physical and psychological training. In addition, for lactating mothers, the airline seeks to arrange short-distance and same-day return flights as well as day-time shifts for ground staff.

The company has also built 17 "Mom's Rooms" in workplaces nationwide, including in some airports, to provide private rest and breastfeeding facilities.

Xiamen Airlines aims to strengthen gender equality across the entire human resource system. Around 30 per cent of the company employees are female. Approximately 20 per cent of managerial positions at the director level and above in Xiamen Airlines are held by women.

By joining the 25by2025 campaign initiated by IATA to enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in the aviation industry, Xiamen Airlines has joined global efforts aimed at increasing the number of women in senior roles and under-represented jobs by either 25 per cent against the current metrics, or to 25 per cent by 2025.

However, with the deadline approaching, the company has encountered difficulties identifying all the roadblocks

Luo Danyi, Flight Captain for Boeing 787



Photo credit: Xiamen Airlines

Dreaming of becoming a pilot since she was a teenager, Luo Danyi joined Xiamen Airlines right after graduation from university. Now, at the age of 31, she has been flying passengers around the world for a decade.

"Seventy percent of my working time is spent on flights," Ms. Luo said. "I fly long-distance routes across continents, and often have to stay up late. But this is what I can take

after I strived for my career development."

Considering the speciality of the workplace of pilots, the company has made policies to help remove potential obstacles women might face.

"I first came to Xiamen Airlines as a First Officer in the Boeing 737 fleet. Now, I hold the position of Captain in the 787 fleet," Ms. Luo said. "The promotion process of a pilot is not influenced by gender. It's entirely technical based on qualifications, learnings and skills checks."

Asked about obstacles in her professional development, Ms. Luo shared a story about her personal confidence: "I always had the longing to fly the Dreamliner 787 back in college time. When the 787 fleet was calling for pilots in our company, I was pretty nervous and worried that I couldn't get the opportunity. I submitted the application and went all the way through the assessment process, and was selected as the captain."

"Women may sometimes underestimate themselves and impose limitations on themselves. Actually, the company never questioned me due to gender issues. My parents and male colleagues are also very supportive. It was me who didn't know I could make it until I actually achieved it."

Asked about how to encourage more women to grow in this career path, Ms. Luo stated: "Xiamen Airlines had some highly experienced female pilots with strong technical backgrounds. One even flew until her 70s and cultivated a lot of young generations of female pilots. So we have a good culture of respecting female pilots through our history, and they are also the role models that encourage us to follow their path." ■

and issues at stake and evaluating the effectiveness of the many supportive measures already in place.

"We need to establish sub-targets and milestones, incorporating them into the company's Key Performance Indicators to ensure a noticeable impact," said Zhang.

Through the Global Compact's Target Gender Equality Accelerator, Xiamen Airlines has been able to conduct performance analysis through the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs) and Gender Gap Analysis Toolkit enabling it to set a baseline and establish concrete steps to strengthen gender equality.

Looking ahead, the company envisions providing broader healthcare and educational resources for all employees and their families but also recognizes that

budget constraints can be an issue.

"Xiamen Airlines once initiated the after-class school service and the government consequently adopted the advice and expanded it nationwide. This shows the potential to leverage the joint contribution of individuals, enterprises and the government to address the budget issue," says Song Miaoqin, Manager of the Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

"It is anticipated that with the guidance of systematic indicators and scientific methodologies from the UN Global Compact and innovative approaches in resource mobilization, Xiamen Airlines will further the progress to promote well-being of female employees and thus gender equality," said Ms. Zhang. ■



**Guidance and Suggestions:
How to promote gender
equality in workplace**



Chief of Communications & Strategic Events of the UN Global Compact Dan Thomas and Team Interviewing Companies for the Report
Photo Credit: Lenovo Group

The UN Global Compact offers the following guidance and suggestions for companies to promote gender equality in the workplace and further contribute to women's economic empowerment and 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It is suggested that business adopts a systematic approach by following the roadmaps offered in this section. They are:

- Concept Learning and Performance Analysis
- Capacity Building and Awareness Raising
- Public Commitment and Leadership Support
- Goal Setting and Taking Actions
- Progress Tracking and Reporting

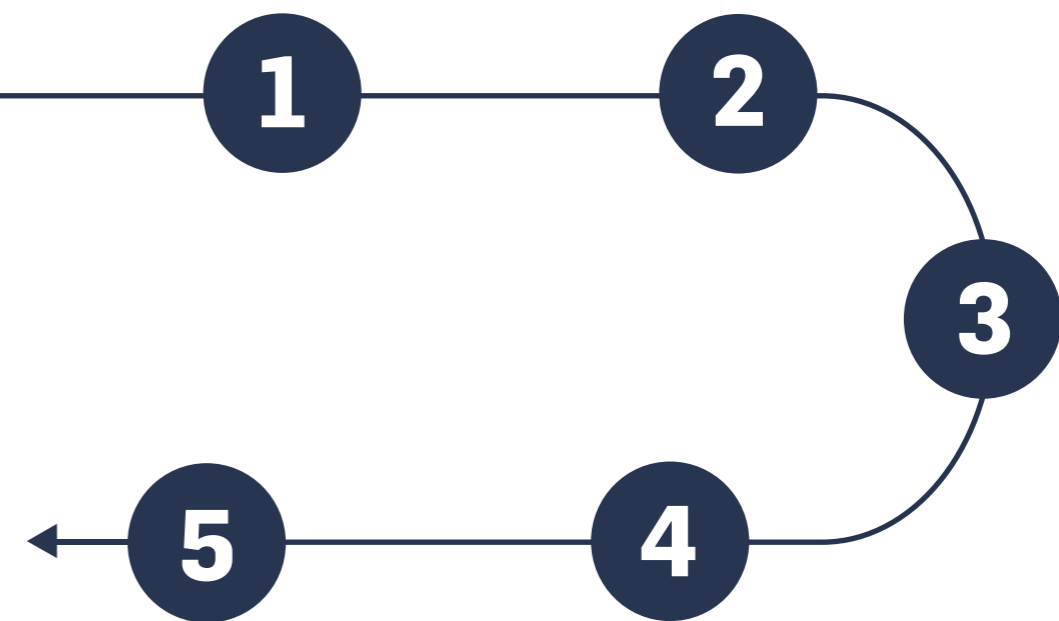
These steps are applicable to companies of different sizes and different developmental stages. They offer practical guides that fit into all relevant business management phases. Leveraging this guide, companies can streamline gender equality into their governance and take actions based on their priorities, available resources and strategic planning.

Roadmap Overview

Concept Learning and Performance Analysis: Use the [WEPS GENDER GAP ANALYSIS TOOL](#) to learn about the business-relevant foundational concepts of gender equality, and to identify gaps and areas of improvement within your organization.

Capacity Building and Awareness Raising: Participate in the [TARGET GENDER EQUALITY ACCELERATOR](#), where you will raise awareness and map out an action plan through capacity building workshops, peer-to-peer learning and advocacy.

Public Commitment and Leadership Support: Sign the [WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT PRINCIPLES](#) across the workplace, marketplace, and community to secure top level support on the strategic importance of gender equality and allow a top-down integration into planning.



Progress Tracking and Reporting: Respond to the [COMMUNICATION ON PROGRESS \(CoP\) QUESTIONNAIRE](#) annually, as transparency and accountability is key to making progress on gender equality and women's empowerment.

Goal Setting and Taking Actions: Commit to the [FORWARD FASTER INITIATIVE](#) by publicly declaring targets of equal representation across all levels or equal pay for work of equal value by 2030 and highlight the actions and report on progress annually.

Concept Learning and Performance Analysis

A systematic understanding of key issues of gender equality that are relevant to business lays the foundation for companies to add a gender lens in human resource management. Decoding the key topics into indicators and undertaking a self-analysis on performance are the first steps that helps businesses understand the current gaps and priorities in existing policies and activities on gender equality, as well as the sex-disaggregated data.

A key tool for this is the [Women's Empowerment Principles \(WEPs\) Gender Gap Analysis Tool](#), which is free and confidential, serving also as an internal learning tool to help companies walk through the gender equality policies and procedures across the workplace, marketplace, and community. Results from this tool provide companies with a clear understanding of areas for improvement, global best practices on gender equality, and benchmarks against industry standards.



Capacity Building and Awareness Raising

Scientific and hands-on methodologies to design a gender strategy, implement gender programmes and evaluate the work can, to a large extent, improve corporate management in gender equality in the workplace. Peer experience can help companies to bypass or tackle the common challenges in practice, such as awareness raising, resource mobilization, benchmarking, cross-department coordination, etc., and accelerate business contributions to SDG 5, 8 and 10.

[Target Gender Equality Accelerator](#) (TGE), a nine-month capacity building programme offered by the UN Global Compact in Chinese and other languages, engages companies in performance analysis, capacity-building workshops, peer-to-peer learning, and multi-stakeholder dialogues. The programme supports business in engaging with top management, setting ambitious targets, revising and creating action plans with Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), emphasizing gender balance across all organizational levels and equal pay for work of equal value.¹²



Public Commitment and Leadership Support

With the support and enhanced awareness from top management, companies can leverage the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs) to integrate gender equality as a holistic strategy and make a public commitment on promoting gender equality. Becoming a signatory of WEPs allows a business to consider and plan gender equality as an organization-wide strategy that is aligned with the broader business strategy. The Principles in WEPs have served as a signatories' moral compass, blueprint, and framework to lay out their gender equality ambitions.

¹² UN Global Compact, "Target_Equality_Brochure_2023". https://info.unglobalcompact.org/l/591891/2023-03-01/576kd2/591891/1677699401eCG535Mh/Target_Equality_Brochure_2023.pdf

The Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs) are a set of seven principles launched in 2010 by the UN Global Compact and UN Women. By signing the WEPs and joining the WEPs community, the CEO signals a public commitment to this agenda at the highest levels of the company and to work collaboratively in multi-stakeholder networks to foster business practices that advance gender equality in the workplace, marketplace and community.

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT PRINCIPLES

Established by UN Women and the UN Global Compact Office

Goal Setting and Taking Action

Commitments and awareness are just the first steps, companies are encouraged to set ambitious goals and take accountable measures to achieve gender equality in the workplace, especially through gender balance and equal pay, to activate the significant potential of women as economic, social and sustainable development change-agents, and accelerate world progress towards the 2030 Agenda.

Over the next seven years, Forward Faster Initiative is calling upon businesses to commit to a set of targets to advance gender equality in two key areas by 2030: equal representation, participation, and leadership across all levels of management and equal pay for work of equal value.¹³ With publicly declared goals, highlighted actions undertaken and required reporting on progress, business can increase accountability and transparency under time-bounded goals and achieve collective impact.

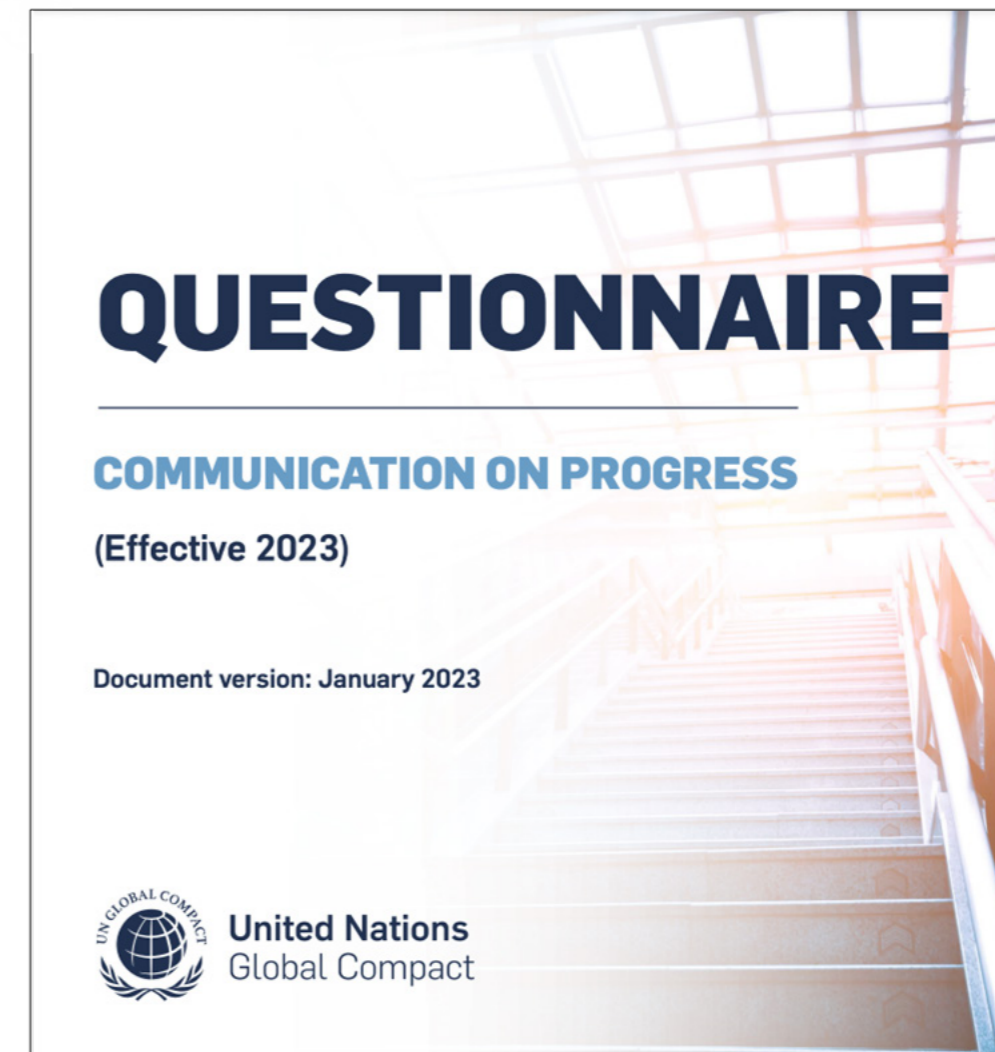


¹³ UN Global Compact, "Moving Gender Equality Forward Faster Action Guide". https://info.unglobalcompact.org/forwardfaster_gender_equality

Progress Tracking and Reporting

As business commitment to gender equality continues to grow, transparency and accountability has become essential to make lasting progress towards a more sustainable and equitable world. Reporting and monitoring on gender-disaggregated data is recommended.

The Communication on Progress (CoP), with indicators on gender equality, is the annual reporting framework of the UN Global Compact for participating businesses, serving as the main accountability mechanism to measure companies' progress. Regular reporting of UN Global Compact participating companies in the CoP will help to track the global aggregated efforts on gender equality and inclusiveness.



Resources and Tools

Platforms for Engagement:

- Communication on Progress (CoP): <https://unglobalcompact.org/participation/report/cop>
- Forward Faster Initiative: <https://forwardfaster.unglobalcompact.org/home>
- Peer Learning Groups: <https://unglobalcompact.org/take-action/peerlearning>
- Target Gender Equality Accelerator (TGE): <https://unglobalcompact.org/take-action/target-gender-equality/impact>
- UN Global Compact Panel Pledge: <https://unglobalcompact.org/what-is-gc/our-work/social/gender-equality/un-global-compact-panel-pledge>
- Women Empowerment Principles (WEPs): <https://www.weps.org/>

Knowledge Products and Toolkits for Business:

- Accelerate the Pace of Change E-learning Course: <https://academy.unglobalcompact.org/opencourses/learn/course/external/view/elearning/262/gender-equality-how-business-can-accelerate-the-pace-of-change>
- Decent Work Toolkit for Sustainable Procurement: <https://unglobalcompact.org/take-action/sustainableprocurement>
- Male Allyship E-Learning Course: <https://info.unglobalcompact.org/maleally>
- SDG Ambition Benchmark on Equal Pay For Work of Equal Value: https://info.unglobalcompact.org/l/591891/2023-03-28/57bgmj/591891/1680038785sZ6VYbnl/Equal_pay_for_work_of_equal_value.pdf
- SDG Ambition Benchmark on Gender Balance at All Levels of Management: https://info.unglobalcompact.org/l/591891/2022-06-02/4p4m9w/591891/1654181562FpOVuzGD/Gender_balance_at_all_levels_of_management.pdf
- Target Gender Equality Newsletter: <https://unglobalcompact.org/library/5833r>
- WEPs Guidance: <https://www.weps.org/resource-category/weps-guidance>
- Women Empowerment Principles (WEPs) Gender Gap Analysis Tool (GGAT): <https://weps-gapanalysis.org>

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About the UN Global Compact

As a special initiative of the UN Secretary-General, the United Nations Global Compact is a call to companies everywhere to align their operations and strategies with Ten Principles in the areas of human rights, labor, environment and anti-corruption. Launched in 2000, the UN Global Compact guides and supports the global business community in advancing UN goals and values through responsible corporate practices. With more than 24,000 companies and non-business participants based in over 160 countries, it is the largest corporate sustainability initiative in the world.

The UN Global Compact is unparalleled in its ability to unite companies with every stakeholder group working to advance sustainable development, including the United Nations, Government, civil society, investors and academia. Together, through bold actions and collaboration between all sectors of society, we can end extreme poverty and hunger, fight inequalities and address climate change, ensuring no one is left behind.

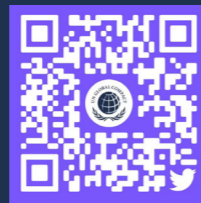
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Liaison Office in China X

About the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. At its heart are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are an urgent call for action by all countries—developed and developing—in a global partnership. They recognize that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality and spur economic growth—all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests.

1. No Poverty
2. Zero Hunger
3. Good Health and Well-being
4. Quality Education
5. Gender Equality
6. Clean Water and Sanitation
7. Affordable and Clean Energy
8. Decent Work and Economic Growth
9. Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure
10. Reducing Inequality
11. Sustainable Cities and Communities
12. Responsible Consumption and Production
13. Climate Action
14. Life Below Water
15. Life On Land
16. Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions
17. Partnerships for the Goals

Visit sdgs.un.org/goals to learn more.



United Nations
Global Compact

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About the Ten Principles of the UN Global Compact

Corporate sustainability starts with a company's value system and a principles-based approach to doing business. This means operating in ways that, at a minimum, meet fundamental responsibilities in the areas of human rights, labour, environment and anti-corruption. Responsible businesses enact the same values and principles wherever they have a presence, and know that good practices in one area do not offset harm in another. By incorporating the Ten Principles of the UN Global Compact into strategies, policies and procedures, and establishing a culture of integrity, companies are not only upholding their basic responsibilities to people and the planet but also setting the stage for long-term success. The Ten Principles of the United Nations Global Compact are derived from: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Labour Organization's Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, and the United Nations Convention Against Corruption.

Human Rights

1. Businesses should support and respect the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights; and
2. make sure that they are not complicit in human rights abuses.

Labour

3. Businesses should uphold the freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining;
4. the elimination of all forms of forced and compulsory labour;
5. the effective abolition of child labour; and
6. the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.

Environment

7. Businesses should support a precautionary approach to environmental challenges;
8. undertake initiatives to promote greater environmental responsibility; and
9. encourage the development and diffusion of environmentally friendly technologies.

Anti-corruption

10. Businesses should work against corruption in all its forms, including extortion and bribery.

Visit unglobalcompact.org/what-is-gc/mission/principles to learn more. For more information about the UN Global Compact, please email ungc.china@unglobalcompact.org.

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