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THE DANISH FAMILY
PLANNING ASSOCIATION

Health and gender equality in **the Sustainable Development Goals**

a guideline for businesses



WHY FOCUS ON HEALTH AND GENDER EQUALITY?

Good health and gender equality are critical factors to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Addressing these issues represents an opportunity for companies to strengthen their core business and respect human rights.

With the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the world has agreed on a universal and transformative path for global development. More than 90% of the SDG targets link to international human rights, proving that the SDGs and human rights reinforce one another.

Since 2015, companies have used the SDGs as a framework for responsible business conduct and sustainability. Companies can contribute significantly to the achievement of the SDGs and respect, protect and uphold human rights by investing in better health, including sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and gender equality in the workplace. Good health and gender equality are goals in themselves, represented by SDG 3: good health and well-being and SDG 5: gender equality. Equal access to safe and healthy working conditions espe-

cially contributes to the achievement of SDG 1: no poverty, SDG 8: decent work and economic growth and SDG 10: reduced inequalities. Furthermore, advances in gender equality improves the economic empowerment of women. As women typically invest in their families and communities, investments in women's health and gender equality have a powerful impact on most of the SDGs and contribute significantly to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

This guideline provides companies with recommendations on how to address two crucial components of the SDGs and human rights: health, including SRHR, and gender equality.¹ In it, you will find an overview of linkages between the SDGs and human rights with respect to these two issues as well as a step-by-step guide to address health and gender equality in your business.

WHAT ARE SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS?

SRHR includes efforts to eliminate preventable maternal mortality and illness, to ensure quality sexual and reproductive health services, including contraception, family planning and menstrual hygiene, to prevent sexually transmitted infections (STI), and to eliminate (sexual) harassment and violence against women and girls.

Source: WHO

¹In this publication, health is used to refer to health broadly as well as SRHR specifically.



This guideline provides recommendations for companies on how to address two significant components of the SDGs and human rights: health, including SRHR, and gender equality.

Why SRHR and gender equality matter

Gender equality and health are part of the fundamental human rights and are essential to achieving growth and sustainable development. Despite advancements in recent decades, gender inequality and poor access to sexual and reproductive health services remain a challenge, especially concerning women's rights:

- On average, women earn only 77% of what men earn
- The female labour force participation rate globally is 50% compared to men's 76%
- On average, women undertake 250% more unpaid care and household work than men
- 33% of women have experienced gender-based violence in their lifetime
- 214 million women worldwide do not have access to the family planning services they desire²

The links between SRHR, gender equality and sustainable development are significant and addressing these issues across the business community will have a positive impact across all the SDGs.

Promoting SRHR and gender equality is good for businesses and society

The success of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development relies on companies engaging in and committing to the SDGs. Investments in the SDGs, and particularly in the SDGs related to health and gender equality, do not only benefit people, but benefit businesses as well. When women are denied the opportunity to engage fully in the labour market due to gender inequality and poor sexual and reproductive health, businesses miss out on qualified workers. In fact, as a manager you can strengthen job satisfaction and motivation and in turn boost

productivity and profitability of your company by promoting health and gender equality in the workplace. Your reputation as an advocate for health and gender equality can also attract consumers, skilled employees and investors.

Achieving the SDGs is expected to unlock business opportunities worth an estimated \$ 12 trillion and create 380 million new jobs, 90% of which will be in developing countries.³ When corporate investments advance women's equal participation in the labour market, women will be economically empowered to invest in their families and communities. This will contribute to sustainable growth, competitiveness and future-readiness of economies and local communities worldwide.⁴

The same applies when companies invest in employee health. Such investments improve the health status and knowledge of employees, their families and the community. Good reproductive health and family planning in particular, enables men and women to plan if and when they want to have children and how many they they want to have. This renders it easier for them to complete an education, hold a paid job and contribute to the local economy.

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OUTCOMES OF IMPROVED HEALTH AND GENDER EQUALITY IN THE WORKPLACE⁵

- Positive public image
- Better risk management
- Greater creativity and innovation
- Improved ability to attract qualified employees
- More motivated and loyal employees
- Reduced absenteeism and employee turnover
- Healthier and more productive employees
- Improved long-term financial performance

SDGs, HUMAN RIGHTS & BUSINESS

Health and gender equality are cross-cutting issues in the SDG and human rights agenda. When companies choose to invest in health and gender equality as key SDG targets, the impact extends far beyond SDG 3 and SDG 5.

When focusing on health, including SRHR, and gender equality SDG 3: good health and well-being and SDG 5: gender equality are the most obvious to address. SRHR issues are decisive factors for women's health and affect women's ability to participate fully in social and economic life. Moreover, better SRHR enables women to engage fully in paid employment. The result is better gender equality in the workplace and society. The link between SDG 3 and SDG 5 is clear: Investing in better SRHR leads to better gender equality opportunities and outcomes. Furthermore, the improved SRHR and better gender equality contribute to achieving SDG 8: decent work and economic growth. Particularly factoring in the massive socioeconomic gains from greater gender parity in the global labour market: an estimated \$ 12-28 trillion added to global annual GDP by 2025.⁶

Improving health and gender equality in the workplace also strengthens women's economic empowerment, which contributes to achieving SDG 1: no poverty and SDG 10: reduced inequalities. Research shows that women on average reinvest 90% of their income in food and education for their families and in the sustainable and peaceful development of their communities. The same applies to 35% of men's income.⁷ Reinvestments in families and local communities contribute to the achievement of SDG 2: zero hunger, SDG 4: quality education, SDG 11: sustainable cities and communities and SDG 16: peace, justice and strong institutions. These are just the most obvious

links between the SDGs - many more may be unlocked. Table 1 on page 6 and 7 presents the links between the SDGs and human rights with respect to health, including SRHR, and gender equality.⁸ Be aware that the table displays only the most explicit links. See Table 2 for a more comprehensive and detailed overview of how SRHR and gender equality link to all of the 17 SDGs.



² UNFPA (2017) "State of world population 2017" ³ Business and Sustainable Development Commission (2017) "Better business better world" ⁴ World Economic Forum (2018) "The global gender gap report 2018" ⁵ See also our publications "How to strengthen gender equality in the workplace" and "How to integrate employee health & gender equality in your business operations"

⁶ McKinsey Global Institute (2015) "The power of parity: How advancing women's equality can add \$12 trillion to global growth" ⁷ Clinton Global Initiative "Empowering girls & women" ⁸ You can benefit from using this along with our publication "Gender equality and the right to health: a guideline for businesses"

Table 1 : Linkages between the Sustainable Development Goals and human rights⁹

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS	HUMAN RIGHTS	EXPLANATION OF LINKAGE
	Right to non-discrimination.	Non-discrimination and gender equality in the workplace are contributing factors to greater female labour force participation and economic empowerment, effectively reducing poverty and inequality. Non-discrimination is also a contributing factor to decent work and economic growth and strengthens the workplace as an institution free from discrimination.
	Right to work.	The right to work involves the right to company-based education. Both men and women should have equal access to this in support of gender equality and to reduce inequality. Better opportunities to learn and excel at work creates better working conditions and drives economic growth.
	Right to equal pay for equal work.	Equal pay for equal work for all genders strengthens gender equality, reduces inequality and is essential to decent work and economic growth.
	Right to a living wage.	Earning a living wage reduces poverty and is essential to decent work. As women on average earn less and undertake more unpaid work than men, it also benefits gender equality and reduces inequalities.
	Right to safe and healthy working conditions.	Safe and healthy working conditions helps protect employee health and is essential to decent work. If the specific health and safety issues of women are respected at work, women are better able to participate in the labour market, fostering gender equality.
	Right to equal opportunity for everyone to be promoted.	Equal opportunity reinforces gender equality, reduces inequality, and is essential to decent work and economic growth.
	Right to rest, leisure and paid holidays.	Reasonable limitation of working hours is especially important for women, who often assume childcare and homecare responsibilities. Decent working hours support gender equality, reduces inequality, and are essential to decent work.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS	HUMAN RIGHTS	EXPLANATION OF LINKAGE
	Right to form and join trade unions.	Unionisation is essential to decent work and advocacy related to gender equality and health, including SRHR.
	Right to social security, incl. social insurance.	Social security can advance women's health, including SRHR through corporate health insurance and support female labour force participation. This reduces inequality and poverty among women and promotes health, gender equality and decent work.
	Right to protection of mothers before and after childbirth.	Protection of mothers safeguards women's health and decent work for mothers. This advances gender equality and reduces inequality, as it makes it safer for (expecting) mothers to work.
	Right to water and sanitation.	Access to clean water and decent sanitation is important, especially for women e.g. in relation to menstrual hygiene. Access to decent sanitation contributes to gender equality, safety and health at work and decent work.
	Right not to be subjected to torture, cruel, inhumane and/or degrading treatment.	Elimination of cruel treatment at work promotes health and decent work. Cruel treatment at work can be in the form of sexual harassment and violence, and is often linked to gender issues. Tackling cruel treatment against women at work strengthens gender equality and the workplace as an institution free from sexual violence.
	Right not to be subjected to slavery, servitude or forced labour.	The majority of victims of modern slavery and trafficking are women. The elimination of slavery advances gender equality and decent work and strengthens the workplace as an institution free from violence.
	Right to privacy.	The right to privacy is especially relevant regarding the availability of private lavatories with locks, which can help prevent gender-based harassment and violence. As such, it supports gender equality and decent work.

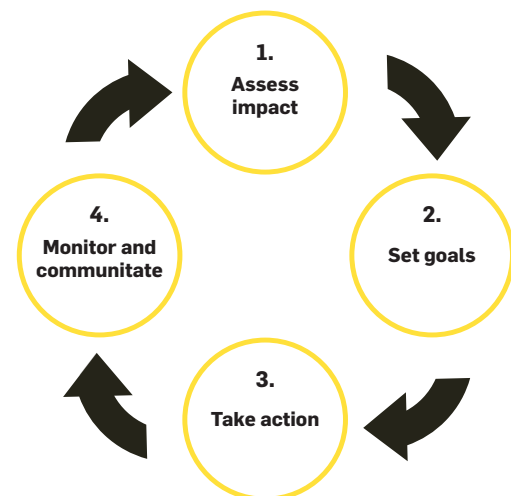
A 4-STEP PROCESS TO INTEGRATE THE SDGs

In order to integrate health, including SRHR, and gender equality in their core business, and in support of the SDGs, companies need to: assess their impact, set ambitious goals, implement health and gender-sensitive initiatives and communicate results.

As a business, you can contribute to the achievement of the SDGs by addressing health and gender equality of your employees in your company strategy and relevant company policies. Particularly issues related to SDG 3: good health and well-being and SDG 5: gender equality.

A number of guides have been developed for companies on how to align their business strategies with the SDGs, including how to measure and manage their SDG contributions. See figure 1 for an illustration of the 4-step process, which companies should undertake to integrate the SDGs in their core business.¹⁰

Figur 1: A 4-step process to address the SDGs



¹⁰ See for example the SDG Compass (www.sdgcompass.org)

Step 1: Assess impact

You should assess your company's actual and potential impact on SDG 3: good health and well-being and SDG 5: gender equality and other related SDGs in your workplace and supply chain. This will help you identify opportunities and risks. Engage with potentially affected stakeholders, including your employees and vulnerable groups, such as women, to understand their SRHR and gender equality needs and how your company affects these. Based on your impact assessment, you can define your company's strategic SDG priorities, and provide the company's senior management team with an opportunity to demonstrate its commitment to contribute to the achievement of the SDGs. For instance, this commitment can be expressed in a policy statement"

Step 2: Set goals

Building on your company's strategic priorities, you should set specific, measurable and time-bound goals. For each relevant SDG impact area, identify or develop key performance indicators (KPIs) against which you can measure your company's impact and progress. You can find inspiration in the SDGs, each of which has a set of indicators and priorities.

Step 3: Take action

Your commitment to sustainable development and your specific priorities with respect to SDG 3: good health and well-being and SDG 5: gender equality and other related SDGs must be integrated across all company departments and management levels to achieve the established goals. In table 1 of this guideline, you can find suggested initiatives to implement. Also, one way to contribute to the SDGs is by engaging in partnerships to advance health, gender equality and decent work for all. By coming together with relevant stakeholders, such as civil society organisations, to achieve shared objectives and shared value it will be possible to contribute to the achievement of SDG 17: partnerships for the goals.

Step 4: Monitor and communicate

Investors, consumers and other stakeholders increasingly require companies to disclose their corporate sustainability initiatives. Accordingly, you should integrate your company's selected SDG priorities and goals into existing reporting frameworks and in communication with stakeholders. It is important that you measure and report on your company's positive and negative impacts on health and gender equality. Furthermore, you should document and communicate your return on investment on implemented health and gender equality initiatives. Many reporting frameworks exist to guide you through this step, for instance the Global Reporting Initiative.



SDG 3 AND 5: SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTION

Below is a checklist of suggested initiatives you can implement as part of your process to promote respect for human rights and integrate the SDGs in your business, particularly SDG 3: good health and well-being and SDG 5: gender equality.¹¹

CHECKLIST



- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure equal pay for all genders | <input type="checkbox"/> Establish a gender diverse health and safety committee with participants from various levels in the company |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Have health and safety talks and trainings | <input type="checkbox"/> Inform employees about their rights and duties and about gender equality and SRHR initiatives |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Provide parental leave of at least 14 weeks | <input type="checkbox"/> Align policies with national law and international recommendations on gender equality and SRHR |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Offer flexible working hours, especially after parental leave | <input type="checkbox"/> Offer health insurance with equal access for all employees, covering sexual and reproductive health |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure a gender-balance in leadership and decision-making | <input type="checkbox"/> Offer family planning counselling, STI testing and other sexual and reproductive healthcare services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Establish an effective, safe and accessible grievance mechanism | <input type="checkbox"/> Offer safe transportation to/from work, if relevant (for example if you have a production site in a remote area) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Support access to childcare facilities in the workplace or nearby | <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure access to sexual and reproductive healthcare services, e.g. by having an on-site clinic, weekly visits from a health professional or allowing staff to go to medical checks during working hours |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Establish a zero-tolerance policy towards all forms of violence and harassment | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Establish a life-threatening diseases policy, which includes sexually transmitted infections (STI) | |

SRHR AND GENDER EQUALITY AT THE CORE OF ALL SDGs

Table 2: SRHR and gender equality in the Sustainable Development Goals

<p>1 NO POVERTY</p> <p>Access to reproductive health, including contraception and family planning services, is crucial to ensure that women can participate in the workforce and earn an income. If a woman has many children completing an education and having a job can be a challenge. This can leave her and her family vulnerable to poverty.</p>	<p>2 ZERO HUNGER</p> <p>Many families have more children than they have the resources for, which can make feeding the family a daily struggle and make it difficult for mothers to hold paid jobs while maintaining the household. Furthermore, undernourishment during pregnancy can have severe consequences for the foetus.</p>	<p>3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING</p> <p>214 million women have unmet needs for family planning and 800¹² women die every day due to pregnancy-related causes. 33% of women have experienced gender-based violence, which harms their physical health and well-being. Poor health can lead to a discontinuation of education or work, which can lead to poverty and hunger.</p>
<p>4 QUALITY EDUCATION</p> <p>Child marriages, teenage pregnancy and gender-based discrimination and violence harms girls' and women's access to and completion of an education. Women account for over 60%¹³ of the world's illiterate, and in Sub-Saharan Africa alone, 35.1 million girls are out of school.¹⁴ This negatively affects girls' and women's access to employment.</p>	<p>5 GENDER EQUALITY</p> <p>Women are more likely than men to be impoverished, unemployed, uneducated, and victims of sexual and physical violence. Globally, women earn 23% less than men do, and only 23% of all national parliamentarians are female.¹⁵</p>	<p>6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION</p> <p>Water and sanitation issues especially affect women's health. Access to good sanitary facilities is crucial to keeping girls and women in school and at work during their menstruation. Furthermore, women bear a disproportionate burden of fetching clean water, negatively affecting the time they have available to go to school or work.</p>
<p>7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY</p> <p>Women are more likely to be primary energy managers of their households and spend hours every day collecting fuel and cooking. This often leads to poor health conditions for women due to indoor pollution.</p>	<p>8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH</p> <p>Only 50% of the world's working age women are in the labour force (compared to 75% of men). Women often face barriers to work due to unplanned pregnancies and household and care duties. Furthermore, low salaries and poor working conditions constitute a global problem also affecting women.</p>	<p>9 INDUSTRY INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE</p> <p>Poor infrastructure and lack of access to transportation results in poor and vulnerable women struggling to reach affordable healthcare facilities and health professionals.</p>
<p>10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES</p> <p>Inequality often leads to poverty and large fluxes of migration. This often hinders access to health services and facilities for vulnerable groups, including women and girls. The result is higher maternal mortality rates and fewer women and girls in education and the workforce.</p>	<p>11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES</p> <p>Urbanisation means many people live close together in slum areas with poor sanitation, lack of clean water and lack of access to health clinics with reproductive health services. Women who have to walk to work through unsafe areas due to a lack of safe transportation are also more likely to become victims of violence.</p>	<p>12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION</p> <p>Irresponsible consumption and production patterns contribute to exploitation of labour and to climate change, which affect the poorest countries most. Access to health and safety at work can negate the negative impact on women. Family planning counselling can improve individuals' and communities' ability to adapt to changing weather patterns and possible food shortages.</p>
<p>13 CLIMATE ACTION</p> <p>Climate change affects ecosystems and the agricultural sector, which creates negative effects that disproportionately burden poor women, who bear the main responsibility of food production and water collection.</p>	<p>14 LIFE BELOW WATER</p> <p>Fewer fish in the world oceans is a threat to employment of women, who often work in seasonal and low-paid labour for example in the fishing industry.</p>	<p>15 LIFE ON LAND</p> <p>Women are especially vulnerable when climate change degrades land. Women do not own much if any land, which leaves them with few opportunities, if their land dries out or is flooded.</p>
<p>16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS</p> <p>Girls and women suffer during conflict: sexual assault is used as a weapon of war, the number of child marriages rise, maternal mortality increases and lack of contraception increases the risk of unplanned pregnancies. Even in peacetime, women are more often victims of (sex) trafficking and are often excluded from decisionmaking in many institutions and in some countries suffer under discriminatory legislation.</p>	<p>17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS</p> <p>Partnerships that thematically cross-cut the SDGs and involve private and public sector actors and civil society is crucial in ensuring the transformation of gender equality and SRHR goals into action.</p>	

¹¹ For more initiatives, see the Danish Family Planning Association's publications "Gender equality and the right to health: a guideline for businesses" and "How to integrate employee health & gender equality in your business operations"

¹² Guttmacher Institute (2017) "Adding it up" ¹³ UN Statistics Division (2015) "The world's women 2015" ¹⁴ UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2018) "Fact sheet no. 48"

¹⁵ IPU (2017) "Women in politics: 2017"

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Who is the DFPA? The Danish Family Planning Association is a private, non-governmental organisation without religious or political affiliations, and the Danish member association of the International Planned Parenthood Federation, the world's largest sexual and reproductive health and rights organisation. DPFA has been working in developing countries for more than 20 years addressing young people, women and men's sexual and reproductive health and rights. In recent years, DFPA has increasingly engaged with the private sector in developing countries, partnering with companies and workplaces in general as a platform for strengthening the sexual and reproductive health and rights of employees in a way that benefits both people and companies.

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