



IS YOUR WORKPLACE

**EQUAL
INCLUSIVE
DIVERSE**



Missing Opportunity

Companies are missing out on an enormous talent pool as a large portion of working age women are not joining the workforce. The South Asia region had a low 19% female participation rate in 2021, while the average is 59% in East Asia and the Pacific. Women are also performing double, triple and sometimes even more time on unpaid care work than men; and they make up only 4% of CEOs of publicly listed companies in Asia Pacific. The challenge is complex and multi-dimensional. Investing in an enabling workplace- which is diverse, safe, inclusive and equal can provide a solution, and have high returns for companies.



- A diverse workplace
 - A safe workplace
 - An inclusive workplace
 - An equal workplace
- =
- well balanced and representative.
 - all employees feel secure.
 - supportive to the needs of all employees, creating a sense of belonging.
 - free from bias and discrimination.

While this may sound simple, in reality your company needs to assess and identify bottlenecks that present obstacles to having a diverse and gender-balanced workforce.

The Risk

A workplace which is not inclusive, safe and equal for all creates a number of challenges, from low employee satisfaction, drop in productivity levels to high staff turnover. These could have a direct negative impact on the reputation of your company, as well as its profits.

The Opportunity

On the other hand, creating a diverse, safe and inclusive workplace for all can increase staff engagement, loyalty and improve productivity levels. These are likely to have a direct positive impact on the reputation of your company, as well as its profits.

Moral imperative or a business case?

Normative frameworks and international standards remain the foundation for championing gender diversity in the workplace. Women's safety, access and inclusion in the workplace is an important social challenge of our times, and companies have the ethical and moral imperative to ensure that they create a workplace wherein women and men can participate and reach their full potential. Private sector needs to do their part.

On the other hand, creating an enabling workplace also has an economic imperative. For countries, increasing the female labour force participation serves as an engine of growth. This also translates into a business case for the private sector, as investing in gender equality helps improve performance and profits. Increasingly, companies have begun to regard diversity as a source of competitive advantage, and as an enabler of business strategy and growth. A company can reap substantial benefits when women participate equally in the workforce. However, to make this a reality, supportive policies and practices are needed, which can create a positive workplace, not just for women but also for men. Hence, building workplace diversity is not only the right thing, but also a smart thing to do.

“For the private sector, women’s equal participation and leadership is both a moral duty and a business imperative”

UN Secretary General, March 2021, UN Commission on the Status of Women.

Several research highlight that companies with diverse teams:

- have 19% higher revenue¹
- outperform industry norms by 35%²
- are 1.7 times more likely to be innovation leaders in their industry³
- are 70% more likely to capture a new market⁴

¹ Boston Consulting Group <https://www.bcg.com/en-us/publications/2018/how-diverse-leadership-teams-boost-innovation.aspx>

² McKinsey https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/why-diversity-matters?source=post_page

³ Josh Bersin <http://joshbersin.com/2015/12/why-diversity-and-inclusion-will-be-a-top-priority-for-2016/>

⁴ Harvard Business Review <https://hbr.org/2013/12/how-diversity-can-drive-innovation>

A Possible Solution

UNDP's Sustainable Development Service (SDS) on Gender Equality, Diversity and Inclusion supports companies to go from commitment to action. The SDS programme is an innovative approach to help companies increase employee satisfaction, realize the full potential of all workers regardless of sex and have a more inclusive, healthier and equal work environment.

The SDS framework is based on ILO conventions and the highest international standards for gender equality. And its focus is to support homegrown companies, with a footprint in the Asia Pacific region. The SDS can help strengthen accountability and provide your company with hard evidence to demonstrate results to employees, shareholders and other stakeholders in line with sustainable corporate practices.



Dialogue

The SDS program can provide a starting point for dialogue across your company on issues of diversity, inclusion and accessibility that impacts each and every employee. Such a dialogue can help culminate into a commitment which has the CEO's vision, management backing and ownership and engagement of all employees.



Reflection

Based on the initial commitment, the SDS can provide an opportunity to collectively reflect upon existing practices, policies and culture of your organization. It can help identify pathways to link the D&I agenda with your company's growth strategy. Providing reflections and data on diversity, can help create projections for your company's future growth and vision.



Assessment

Through a comprehensive assessment tool, the SDS can help identify gaps, prioritize initiatives and help establish metrics for monitoring progress on how the company can integrate principles of diversity, inclusion and equality.



Improvement

Finally, the SDS will provide a phase for implementing recommendations and actions through a fixed period of time, while tailoring the plan to your context, both within the local geography as well as in the industry and sector that your company operates in.

Read ahead to learn how companies in Bhutan have engaged in the SDS, and gain insights on how you can start your journey to make your workplace more equal, inclusive and diverse.

The 11 Enablers

The SDS program will help assess, identify bottlenecks and provide recommendations to improve 11 key areas. These 11 areas are critical enablers to create transformative changes towards gender equality, diversity, and inclusion.

AREA/PILLAR	THE GAPS	EXAMPLES OF APPROACHES
RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION	<p>60% of enterprises in Asia Pacific acknowledge that hiring and retaining skilled women is a challenge.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biased recruitment and promotion processes • Occupational segregation along gendered lines • Workplace is not supportive to needs of female talent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tackle unconscious bias in HR policies • Identify bottlenecks that prevent female talent from staying on • Set short, medium and long term goals to diversify and balance your workforce
EQUAL PAY AND WAGES	<p>Globally, women earn 77% of what men earn.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undervaluation of women's work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review compensation structure and criteria for allocation of benefits • Establish a policy on equal remuneration for equal work • Encourage wage transparency
PROMOTIONS	<p>Women make up only 19.1% of management staff in Asia-Pacific.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of supportive networks for women • Arbitrary promotion policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop leadership programs, coaching, sponsoring, mentoring for junior female talent • Set targets to increase women in the management pipeline • Make managers accountable for gender balance at different levels in their teams
TRAINING	<p>Trainings can be one of the most effective measures to improve gender equality in recruitment, retention and promotion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generic trainings that are not tailored to specific needs, have limited impact for growth • Women have unequal access and opportunity for trainings and career enhancement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Align training needs assessments with role and employee potential • Establish targeted training programs that align with men and women's career plans • Train all staff to incorporate gender equality goals and business case into the corporate culture
WORK LIFE BALANCE	<p>Policies that create better work-life balance for men and women, improve inclusivity and productivity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Care-work is disproportionately borne by women • Lack of flexibility in work arrangements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leverage digital solutions to offer flexible working arrangements, suited to employee needs • Provide care support services, and safe accessible spaces for new mothers • Encourage shared parental leave
PREVENTION AND TREATMENT OF SEXUAL AND GENDER BASED HARASSMENT	<p>In 2018, global workplace sexual harassment imposed a \$2.6 billion cost in lost productivity, or \$1,053 on average per victim. Significant losses also result from absenteeism (28% of costs), and manager time (24% of costs).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of policies on preventing and addressing sexual harassment • Limited awareness on the nature, cost and issues related to sexual harassment • Lack of trust among employees due to inadequate reporting and grievance mechanisms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt zero tolerance policies for preventing and addressing sexual harassment, with accountability structures • Ensure all staff, including new recruits are oriented to these policies and redress measures • Have management and male allies lead the agenda

<p>INCLUSION</p>	<p>Millennials reported inclusion to be a non-negotiable factor when deciding their potential employer. 80% of respondents say inclusion is important when choosing an employer, 39% of respondents reported that they would leave their current organization for a more inclusive one and 23% of respondents indicated that they have already left.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on diversity through numbers, but lack of attention to inclusion practices • Limited foresight in changing the culture and enabling environment in the workplace 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote inclusivity as a core competency with managers • Provide a safe space for employees to voice opinions and concerns • Introduce staff surveys to understand the pulse of the organization and areas of improvement
<p>CRISIS MANAGEMENT AND EMPLOYEE PROTECTION</p>	<p>In a study by Deloitte, only 55% of employees were willing to work in case of a pandemic flu (new strain).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of contingency planning for remote working • Inadequate focus on employee safety and protections in times of crisis • Inadequate representation of all employees in crisis management and planning teams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update policies for remote working and access to information • Establish strong communications channels to support and provide regular information • Establish mechanisms such as mental health and other well-being channels for employees • Ensure that diversity and inclusion goals remain central during times of crisis and post-crisis recovery
<p>SUPPLY CHAINS</p>	<p>Companies that invest in diversifying their supply chain are better positioned to access commercial opportunity through women-owned businesses share of the market.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women-owned businesses do not always have the information and capacity to bid for large procurement tenders • Even if the company has good gender equality and safe workplace practices, these are not always mirrored in the practices of suppliers in the value chain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen requirements for standardization of code of conduct and promoting gender equality across the supply chain • Establish a gender-responsive procurement plan
<p>INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION</p>	<p>The way we use language and communications is one of the most visible aspects of gender equality.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual, verbal and written communications can perpetuate harmful gender stereotypes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure visibility for both men and women in visual content used for promotional materials/advertising • Promote gender-sensitive and inclusive language within the company • Design disruptive campaigns and narratives that challenge harmful gender stereotypes
<p>LGBTI</p>	<p>Tackling discrimination and promoting diversity helps tap into new talent, diversified ideas and building loyalty with customers and investors.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies lack a focus on ensuring inclusion of LGBTI community at the workplace • All employees may not be aware or sensitive to working with peers from the LGBTI community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct awareness and sensitivity workshops to promote greater inclusion • Identify and eliminate discriminatory practices in recruitment, promotion and working conditions for LGBTI

The Bhutan Experience

Bhutan has been part of the initial roll-out of the SDS program. The SDS program is anchored with the Bhutan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI)- which plays a pivotal role in outreach to the companies as well as the National Commission for Women and Children- which is the nodal agency responsible for promoting gender equality in Bhutan. The involvement of both the public and private sector is beneficial to ensure the broader business ecosystem is involved, as well as the SDS program being aligned with national government priorities.

The SDS program was tailored to the Bhutanese context and to the needs and interest of each company. Below are some insights and perspectives from the four companies that have been part of the SDS program experience in Bhutan.

Company: Norbu Healing Arts Centre Sector/Industry: Therapeutic physical wellness services

The company engaged in the SDS program through the CEO's commitment, and had the Human Resources Head lead the process within the company. The company picked on two important issues: first, to improve awareness about sexual harassment; and second on inclusion, especially on promoting people with disabilities to be able to work within their company.

“**Sexual harassment is a big issue in Bhutan. It is more openly discussed today, and there have been few high-level cases wherein perpetrators have been punished. Overall this has raised people's awareness, that harassment at the workplace is a serious issue. We want that our company should also improve our understanding around prevention and addressing sexual harassment, as well as be adequately prepared with processes in place, should it occur.**” - *Company representative of Norbu Healing Arts Centre*



The company since its engagement in the SDS program has strengthened its action plan around sexual harassment, and is working to create a clear set of information and guidance for all its employees. It is now well understood that sexual harassment is important, not just to individuals but to the company as a whole- in terms of its reputation and other associated costs; and there is a strong foundation set for zero tolerance to harassment!

Company: Singye Group of companies Sector/Industry: Multi, including construction, manufacturing and trade

After the initial sensitization to the SDS program and its enabling pillars, the company designated focal points in the head office, as well as a focal within each of their business units and branches to ensure that the commitment and actions get translated throughout the company.

Some of the key results have been changes to their internal service rules, to recognize gaps and introduce new measures related to sexual harassment; as well as increase maternity leave from one to three months. While there is no legal obligation for maternity leave provisions set by the government for private companies, the Singye company wants to be a leader in the industry and introduce better provisions than their competitors in the market.



“ Providing better leave for new mothers is only one part of the equation. We are now exploring provisions for breastfeeding space as well as potential childcare support to ensure that our female talent can return to work with the support that they need. ” - *Company representative of Singye Group of companies*

The company is also reflecting upon its composition of women in leadership roles and considering ways to attract and retain its female talent to bridge the gender gaps in management roles. The pandemic may have slowed some progress, but the Singye Group is energized to take forward several important areas to improve gender equality in its company.

Company: Druk Chapchab Pvt Ltd.
Sector/Industry: Construction

The Druk Chapchab is one of the few companies in the construction sector that employs a large share of women on its sites. Recognizing the potential of its female workers, the company was excited to participate in the SDS program to improve its compliance and to educate and raise awareness of gender equality issues among its employees.

“ While we have not had any previous cases of sexual harassment, the SDS program helped us educate all our employees, men and women to the do’s and don’ts and to recognize the other forms of harassment beyond just physical harassment. ” - *Company representative of Druk Chapchab*

The sensitization workshops as part of the SDS have proven to be useful for the company to raise pertinent gender issues that impact the workplace, especially from a safety perspective. Now with a Gender Committee in place there is a more robust system to resolve any issues that may surface and to proactively improve the workplace for all. There is a lot of attention through social media and government initiatives to talk about gender equality issues recently, and the SDS is a timely initiative for the company to get involved in.



Company: Wangchuk Group
Sector/Industry: Hotel and hospitality

Since undergoing the SDS program, the Wangchuk Group has established a Gender Committee, headed by the Managing Director, with the head of Human Resources being the main focal point and representatives (both men and women) from across the business units in the company.

The company has since sensitized all its staff and wants to take a proactive approach in ensuring that all new recruits are aware of the company’s policies on zero tolerance to harassment and other gender-sensitive and inclusive practices. This is especially relevant, given the company is in the hotel and hospitality industry which employs a large proportion of women, and their safety is of critical importance to the company.

“ We are already seeing several benefits from the SDS program, including but not limited to an improvement in awareness of our employees about gender issues in the workplace. This has helped build ownership of the agenda internally, and is helping to strengthen the culture of respect in our organization. ” - *Company representative of Wangchuk Group*



The company is also trying to address vulnerabilities from an intersectional perspective. For instance, by supporting single mothers and female headed households and intends to create additional measures for young mothers as well as those that may suffer from pregnancy complications.

UNDP has been spearheading the SDS program, through the Bangkok Regional Hub and in Bhutan through the UNDP Bhutan office. Why? Because gender equality is a non-negotiable for UNDP and for achieving the development agenda.

“ The SDS program was initiated in Bhutan at a time when the topic of workplace safety was becoming quite prominent in the media. It felt like perfect timing to initiate a dialogue with the private sector community. This is really a first of a kind initiative in Bhutan, and we hope that we can inspire other companies to join- both in Bhutan and across the region. ” - *Representative from UNDP Bhutan*

Why and How to Engage in the SDS

There is growing evidence on WHY companies should invest in gender equality and diversity.

Increase in innovation and capacity to assess the market.

Evidence: Inclusive business cultures lead to a 59.1% increase in creativity, innovation, and openness and 37.9% better assessment of consumer demand.⁵

Enhanced organizational reputation to become an employer of choice.

Evidence: Companies with strong gender inclusion have improved employee satisfaction and reduced employee turnover and absenteeism.⁶

Improved resilience to deal with crisis and recovery.

Evidence: Companies with gender-diverse boards outperform those with no women in terms of share price performance during times of crisis or volatility.

Improved financial performance and business outcomes.

Evidence: Organizations with inclusive cultures are 2 times more likely to exceed financial targets, 3 times more likely to be high performing, 6 times more likely to be innovative and agile and 8 times more likely to achieve business outcomes.⁷

Improved return on equity.

Evidence: Firms that have more women in management positions enjoy 35% more return on equity than firms that lack gender diversity.

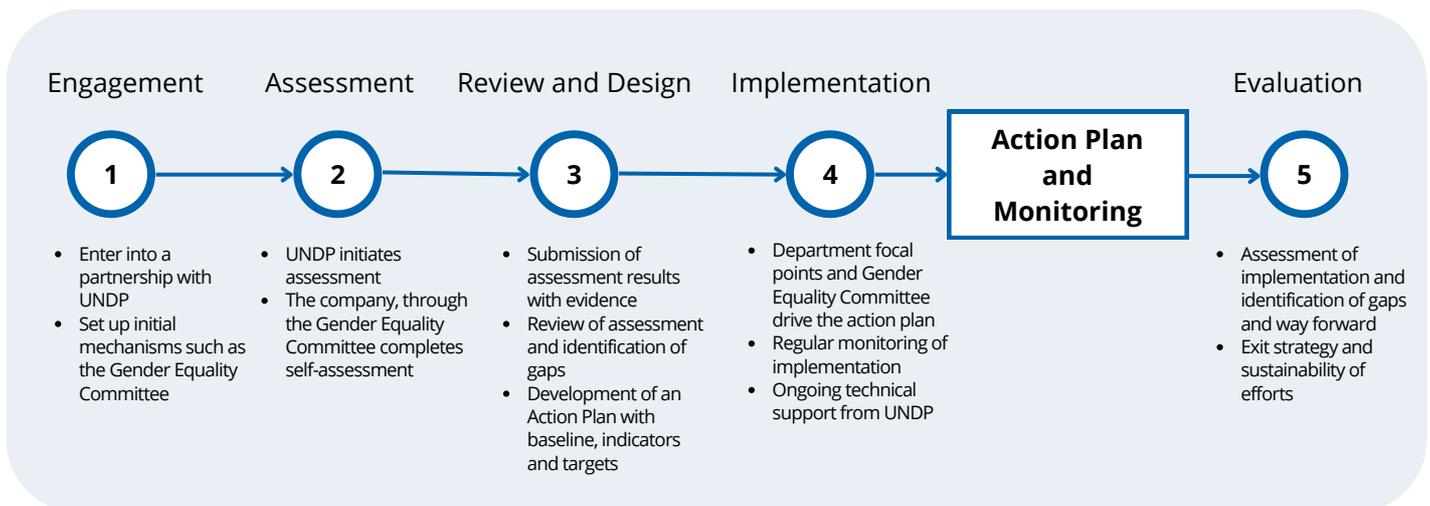
Enter into a partnership with UNDP to help take you through the SDS journey.

⁵ Catalyst. (2020). Why Diversity and Inclusion Matter: Quick Take. <https://www.catalyst.org/research/why-diversity-and-inclusion-matter/#:~:text=Catalyst%20has%20organized%20these%20findings,and%20responsibility%2C%20and%20financial%20performance>

⁶ Australian Government. Workplace Gender Equality Agency. Retrieved from: <https://www.wgea.gov.au/topics/workplace-gender-equality/the-business-case>

⁷ Deloitte 2018, The diversity and inclusion revolution: eight powerful truths <https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/deloitte-review/issue-22/diversity-and-inclusion-at-work-eight-powerful-truths.html>

SDS Workflow



Frequently Asked Questions

1. Is it costly for my company to take part in the SDS program?

Initial engagement in the SDS program requires a very small investment, which can be bilaterally discussed as cost-sharing options.

2. Are there cost implications to the Action/Implementation plan after the SDS assessment?

Depending on the assessment of gap areas, many of the recommended actions will not require additional costs, but rather a tweaking of existing policies or development of new policies. At the same time, there may be some measures that require investment in terms of creating physical space for a creche or nursing area for new mothers. In either case, the benefits far outweigh the costs, as returns on these investments are high and long-term.

3. There are other similar assessments? Why choose the SDS?

The value of the SDS is that it is comprehensive in covering critical enablers that can help assess and promote gender diversity and inclusion in your workplace. At the same time, it offers an opportunity for your company to tailor specific areas of the assessment according to the country and company context. It is also based on existing good practice and international standards for gender equality and diversity but geared to support national and local companies which are headquartered in Asia-Pacific. The SDS is a unique tool to support companies in the Asia Pacific region.

4. How can I initiate the SDS program in my company?

It's simple. Contact UNDP and they will be glad to present the SDS program and its benefits to your company management and human resources team.

5. Who should drive the SDS program in my company?

The SDS program has to have the backing of management to be a success, and the engagement of your human resource department is also key. In addition, the SDS drives collaboration and engagement across different units and departments in the company so everyone has a role to play.

**For more details contact your local UNDP Country Office, or write to:
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