



**BPW International 1930 - 2011**

The International Federation of Business and Professional Women

## fact sheet 2:

# WHAT ARE THE WEPS AND WHY ARE THEY RELEVANT TO BPW?

The Women's Empowerment Principles – Equality Means Business (WEPs) is a partnership initiative of UNIFEM (part of UN Women) and the UN Global Compact.

It encourages engagement with the private sector, non-governmental organizations, the United Nations and governments to advance and empower women in the workplace, marketplace and community.

While designed as a tool for the private sector to strengthen and create company policies and programmes to achieve gender equality, the WEPs' seven principles provide a platform for all stakeholders to move their commitments to gender equality closer to implementation. The principles emphasize the business case for corporate action to promote gender equality and women's empowerment, and are informed by real-life business practices and input gathered from across the globe. As a global organization of business and professional women, BPW International endorses the WEPs and has made their promotion and realization a top organizational priority.

### The 7 Principles

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

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# ...AND WHY ARE THEY RELEVANT TO BPW INTERNATIONAL?

Our vision and mission in relation to the WEPs:

## VISION

Women empowered and equal in the workplace

## MISSION

Leading promotion and realization of the WEPs internationally by:

- Working with UN Women offices and UN Global Compact focal points to organize WEPs events and consultations with the private sector and community groups;
- Empowering company executives to understand key elements integral to promoting gender equality in the workplace, marketplace and community;
- Encouraging CEOs to sign the CEO Statement of Support;
- Working with individuals, community, business and government to inspire action and collecting “best practices”;
- Keeping government and the private sector accountable to national and international human rights standards.

## HOW DO WE DO THIS?

We do this by:

- Listening, learning, communicating and educating;
- Being open, expert, committed and impartial;
- Fostering collaborative, diverse, flexible, respectful and innovative workplaces.

## OUR STRATEGIC GOALS

To achieve our vision and mission in relation to the WEPs through:

### Leadership

We exercise a leadership role in raising awareness of the WEPs by being visible, courageous and influential on gender diversity issues;

### Education

We help members around the world to understand and educate others about gender equality in the workplace;

### Monitoring

We hold individuals, organizations and government responsible for their human rights obligations;

### Innovation

We are best placed to deliver innovation through our diversity of race, language, colour, age, ethnicity, culture, religion and (dis)ability, enhancing the quality and impact of our work.

### Empowerment

We support and inspire others to engage in meaningful activity on the WEPs

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# How will we fulfil our responsibilities?

Feedback from Affiliates running WEPs consultations and events will allow BPW International to organize our work into the following areas:

- **Policy development and research:** reports, input, good practice evidence and CEO pledges derived from Affiliates will allow us to write submissions to UN Commissions, parliamentary and other enquiries, examine federal legislation with Affiliates and work with civil society and multinationals on how to advance women in the workplace. Through these activities we can monitor the performance of government and companies and make recommendations on how policies could better meet human rights obligations. We exercise leadership by bringing to public attention the importance of inclusion of women's talents, skills, experiences and energies and by influencing outcomes to maximize intentional actions and deliberate policies.
- **Education and public awareness:** the ongoing research provided by Affiliates will allow us to update our toolkit and learn from each others' experiences. It will also allow us to develop publications and educational resources and get our message into the communities with a view to promoting the WEPs and raising public awareness about important human rights issues.
- **International technical cooperation:** through our general consultative status at ECOSOC, we work closely with various UN agencies and deliver findings in relation to the seven principles. We can share experiences in relation to our technical work with the agencies and link the issues we deal with to the WEPs so that they are mutually supporting.

## BPW raising awareness of the WEPs

As civil society participants, BPW has a critical role to play in raising awareness of the WEPs. With an expansive network of Affiliates in more than 90 countries, BPW Federations and clubs are best placed to work collaboratively with local UN Women, UN Global Compact offices, government, the private sector, industry groups and academia to engage with them through well planned consultations or events.

There will be two phases of WEPs support. Initially members are encouraged to raise awareness of the Principles by running their own WEPs consultations,

events and encouraging companies to report back 'best practices' and have their CEOs sign the CEO Statement of Support. The second phase will involve implementation of the WEPs and strategies that will assist companies with organizational changes and measuring their progress.

BPW Affiliates are invited to become active in the first stage of our work. An essential component of this work is reporting of good practices that have been implemented by companies. Bringing together information on the practices that companies may already have implemented to advance women will be very helpful in building the business case for the benefits of workplace choices.



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We encourage members to implement the following two actions after a WEPs consultation or event:

- Report back good practices identified during consultations that empower and advance women in business
- By way of follow up, send a call to action to participants that have expressed support for advancing equality between women and men by inviting their CEOs to sign the [CEO Statement of Support for the Women's Empowerment Principles](#).

We are particularly interested in hearing from companies that have empowered women and learning from the actions and policies adopted by them. The working examples represent a broad range of sectors and regions, demonstrating the universal relevance and practicality of women's empowerment and gender equality. To read some of the "best practices" that have been collected by UN Women and the UN Global Compact go to:

Companies Leading the Way: Putting the Principles into Practice.

### Good practice example: **Raising the profile of a local club**

Attending the BPW Presidents Seminar in New York [now known as the BPW Leaders Summit] and the BPW Sub Regional Conference helped a BPW leader get a stronger understanding about how the BPW initiatives like the WEPs could be used and promoted at the local and national level. This was the case for one of our clubs that made the WEPs the focus of their first ever conference, attracting 70 participants, print and TV media and signing up new members in the process! The fact that the club was from a small island with no local UN Women or UN Global Compact contacts didn't stop the meeting from going ahead. BPW International was able to arrange for 150 copies of the WEPs brochures to be delivered with adequate support to make sure the event was a huge success! We are able to achieve so much when we are focused and can work together for a common purpose.



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