

Working with Business

Partnership models and keys to success

Presentation to the SEEP WEE Working Group



BSR[®]

The Business of a Better World

HERproject's Mission

To unlock the full potential of women working in global supply chains through workplace programs promoting health, financial inclusion, and gender equality



Increasing the ability of low-income women to take charge of their health

Currently active in:
Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Myanmar, Pakistan, and Vietnam



Expanding financial inclusion of low-income workers in global supply chains

Currently active in:
Bangladesh, China, Kenya, India, and Indonesia



Building gender-equitable workplaces

Currently active in:
Bangladesh, Ethiopia, India, and Kenya

The HERproject Collaboration

HERproject brings together international companies, suppliers, and local NGOs to drive impact for women.



Companies commit to empowering women workers in global supply chains through workplace programs and collaboration.

BSR develops curricula, tools, and guidance for workplace-based interventions, connects companies with local partners, and provides technical support for implementation of HERproject.

Local Partners use their expertise to adapt the curricula to the specific context and provide qualified trainers to deliver programs.

Factories and Farms allocate time for trainings for workers on health, financial inclusion, and gender equality, and work with BSR and local partners to build inclusive workplaces related to these areas.

Women Workers participate in trainings, become peer educators, and share information with colleagues, friends, family, and members of their communities.

HERproject Company Partners



Why Participate in HERproject?

Strengthen Supplier Relationships

- **Invest in strategic suppliers, and build their capacity** to implement women's empowerment and worker well-being initiatives.

Improve Supply Chain Resilience

- **Engage with suppliers** on issues beyond compliance.
- Provide suppliers with opportunities to **build inclusive workplaces** that can lead to more motivated workers and **improved business performance**.

Move from Commitment to Action

- **Deliver on global commitments to women's empowerment** (e.g. SDGs, WEPs, Better than Cash Alliance)
- **Extend your company's commitments** to women's empowerment throughout the business including supply chain.

Support Local Community Development

- Benefits of HERproject **extend beyond the workplace** and into the community.
- Women with increased agency and influence over family decision-making are more likely to **invest in the health and welfare** of their families and communities.

Making the Case

Hone Your Pitch with Business Audiences



Engaging Internal Stakeholders

Advancing women in supply chains requires collective action and buy in. One of the first steps towards collective action is engaging with key functions in your company, and **connecting women's advancement to their business priorities.**

- **The C-Suite** sets the overall strategic vision and will determine the budgeting and resources allocated to support supply chain initiatives
- **Procurement** teams are responsible for day-to-day engagement with suppliers, supplier selection, and setting expectations and preferences
- **Communications** teams will be involved in telling the company's "brand story" or narrative around women's advancement
- **Human Resources** teams are necessary to push women's advancement internally and to create consistency between company practices and supply chain initiatives

Making the Case: Instructions

- 1. Read (on your own):** In your group, take **2-3 minutes** to read the stakeholder profile page.
- 2. Brainstorm Your Elevator Pitch (as a group):** Nominate a note-taker, and take **5 minutes** to brainstorm and document as a group your elevator pitch for this stakeholder: 3-5 key messages / talking points on advancing women in global supply chains that you think will begin to gain the buy-in of this stakeholder.
- 3. Share Your Pitch:** One person from each group will share the pitch back with the room

C-Suite Stakeholder Profile

- C-Suite or (Senior Leadership) has very **limited time**.
- They are under intense pressure from shareholders to meet **short-term financial targets** and consequently may be reluctant to entertain ideas that are not immediately seen as profit drivers.
- However, their **buy-in is crucial** as their actions send signals throughout the organization.



Questions You Should Be Prepared to Answer When Engaging with the C-Suite

- Which other companies are doing this?
- How can we ask companies to do this if we aren't doing it ourselves?
- How much will this cost?
- What is the ROI and payback period?

Human Resources: Stakeholder Profile

- Before engaging business partners on women's advancement, many companies aim to make changes internally so that they can **demonstrate their values to business partners**.
- Human Resources teams are integral to any changes regarding **workforce makeup, professional development, and workplace benefits**.
- However, Human Resources teams already face **pressure to keep recruiting and administrative costs down** and may be reluctant to take on new initiatives that are perceived as being costly.



Questions You Should Be Prepared to Answer When Engaging with the HR Team

- How much will this cost?
- How long will it take?
- What do I have to do?
- How do we do this?

Procurement Teams: Stakeholder Profile

- **Manage supplier relationships** and are best positioned to roll out any new initiatives with suppliers.
- **Possess in-depth knowledge** about the context in which each supplier operates and the challenges they face.
- May be **hesitant to introduce any new programs** or initiatives that threaten the stability or productivity of their working relationships.
- Play a **critical role in the success of any supply chain initiatives** to advance women.



Questions You Should Be Prepared to Answer When Engaging with Procurement

- How much will this cost?
- How long will it take?
- What if suppliers don't want to do it?
- How does this fit with existing compliance programs?

Communications Team: Stakeholder Profile

- Responsible for internal and/or external company communications, **expected to understand and accurately communicate on a broad range of topics.**
- Works alongside Human Resources, Marketing, and Investor Relations functions to **ensure that communications boost brand image and reputation with key stakeholders:** employees, customers and stakeholders
- Potentially **new to the topic of women's advancement and/or supply chains**, and concerned about how it will contribute to or align with company's existing messaging.



Questions You Should Be Prepared to Answer When Engaging with Communications

- When is this starting?
- Will it be public?
- How can I describe it briefly and effectively?

C-Suite – Aligning with Business Priorities

C-Suite executives face intense pressure to deliver value to shareholders and advancing women in the supply chain can be a value driver.

Business Priority	Opportunities and Talking Points
Execute corporate strategy	<p>Advancing women in the supply chain is aligned with our corporate values and strategy.</p> <p>In our corporate offices, we promote diversity and inclusion; it makes sense that we would apply these expectations across our entire value chain.</p>
Achieve industry leadership status	<p>1,400 business leaders have signed the Women’s Empowerment Principles (WEPs), and more than 14.6 billion has been pledged by the private sector to support programs involving women between 2005-2020.</p> <p>Despite the leadership some companies have taken, there is still a lot of work to be done.</p>
Create business value	<p>Advancing women in our own workplace and in our supply chain has clear business benefits.</p> <p>Companies that offer competitive benefits and professional opportunities for women, attract and retain top, female talent. They are able to reap the benefits of productivity and efficiency gains, but also lower recruiting and training costs due to reduced turnovers.</p> <p>Suppliers that provide training and leadership opportunities to women, report lower turnover rates and workers report greater confidence in their ability to do their jobs. Factories that invest in and promote women report productivity and efficiency gains, which means more efficient and stable supply chains for us.</p>
Brand Reputation and Stakeholder Concern	<p>The advancement of women in the workplace is an increasing area of stakeholder concern.</p> <p>Stakeholder expectations around working conditions in supply chains and gender inequality in the workplace are increasing. If our brand has a good story to tell about the women in our supply chain, advancing and lifting their families and communities out of poverty, we can boost our brand reputation and proactively address stakeholder concerns.</p>

C-Suite – Elevator Pitch

Elevator Pitch

There is a business case for aligning our supply chain investments with our corporate values and priorities:

By giving our suppliers the tools and knowledge to empower women, we can help them boost their productivity and decrease costs through reduced turnover, greater innovation, and a more skilled workforce.

Investing in our suppliers will also build stronger business relationships, which decreases our risk of supply chain disruptions.

The fact that we haven't solved women's empowerment internally shouldn't hold us back- our suppliers are likely to respond positively if we candidly commit to working on this alongside them.

Human Resources – Aligning with Business Priorities

Business Priorities	Opportunities and Talking Points
Attract and retain top talent	<p>Investing in women can increase our talent pipeline. As gender equality comes into the media mainstream, companies are under greater scrutiny to provide equal opportunities for women in the workplace. Companies that are known for offering women equal opportunity, pay, and competitive benefits, will have more interest from highly qualified female talent.</p>
Reduce turnover	<p>Investing in women reduces turnover and associated costs. Turnover costs can be as high as 50-60% of an employee's annual salary. Women are more likely to quit due to organizational culture or the inability to manage family and work duties. Investing in workplace benefits and programs to help women thrive at work and balance their responsibilities at home can help to avoid these high turnover costs.</p>
Keep administrative costs down	<p>Benefits that promote women's advancement can result in long-term savings. Flexible work schedules, subsidized childcare, and paid family leave, all help women manage their workloads with their domestic duties and stay in their jobs longer, therefore reducing recruiting and training costs overtime. Similarly, professional development programs for women make them feel more valued at work also contribute to longer retention rates.</p>
Build and improve corporate culture	<p>A focus on women's empowerment can help guide and strengthen corporate culture. Whether women's empowerment efforts are focused internally, or in the supply chain, adding a clear focus to a company's corporate mission/values can increase employee engagement.</p>

Human Resources – Elevator Pitch

Elevator Pitch:

Supporting women's advancement in our supply chain is consistent with our company values and commitment to women throughout our business.

Promoting and investing in women will help our company attract and retain highly qualified female talent and reduce our turnover costs.

Rallying behind an important, timely issue like women's advancement can help to solidify our corporate culture and mission, which can lead to higher employee engagement.

Procurement Team- Aligning with Business Priorities

Procurement teams have their own business priorities that may appear at odds with women’s advancement, but there are several areas of opportunity and alignment to highlight.

Business Priority	Opportunities and Talking Points
Maintaining strong, stable business partnerships	Working with suppliers to enable women’s empowerment can strengthen supplier relationships through increased collaboration and investment.
On time deliveries and lower product reject rates	Factories that have invested in female employees have experienced higher productivity and efficiency .
Compliance	Including gender metrics in vendor scorecards provides greater insights into suppliers’ working conditions and alignment with corporate values. Studies have shown that female managers have higher rates of compliance with health and safety standards.

Procurement Teams – Elevator Pitch

Elevator Pitch:

Advancing women is part of our corporate strategy and vision. To fulfill this vision, we need to help influence women's advancement among our suppliers, whose employees represent the biggest portion of our workforce.

We have compelling evidence that shows that factories that invest in, and advance, female employees see productivity and efficiency gains through reduced turnover and absenteeism, and greater employee engagement.

Partnering with suppliers on women's advancement programs can strengthen the working relationship and provide a platform to address other issues beyond commercial issues and compliance.

Communications – Aligning with Business Priorities

Communications teams are tasked with engaging a wide variety of internal and external stakeholders on the company’s business processes and how they are creating value.

Business Priority	Opportunities and Talking Points
Delivering clear, timely and consistent messaging	We are already collecting data from our suppliers for our sustainability report and our website, these would be additional data points that would tell a great story. There is an opportunity to streamline this data collection to ease the burden of reporting out. Plus, we have resources to share to help you learn more about the importance of women’s advancement in supply chains, and we are willing to help!
Boosting the company’s reputation internally and externally	The advancement of women in the workplace is becoming a more popular topic in media. Customer and employee expectations around working conditions in supply chains and gender inequality in the workplace is increasing. If our brand has a good story to tell about the women in our supply chain, advancing and lifting their families and communities out of poverty, we can boost our brand reputation not only with our customers, but with our employees too.
Proactive not reactive communications	We can avoid scrutiny, misperceptions or questions about our treatment of women in our supply chain by proactively communicating our vision and efforts.

Communications team – Elevator Pitch

Elevator Pitch:

Increasing focus on gender equality issues makes this a timely opportunity to share what our company is doing to promote women's advancement. It also gives us an opportunity to proactively shape our reputation in this realm, rather than react to inquiries or questions as the result of NGO or consumer campaigns.

Plus, we can work with the procurement teams to collect compelling data and stories to support the narrative.

Thank you!

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