GENDER EQUALITY
Why it is important in business

**WHY**

- **Companies that become aware of the role women play as direct employees and as workforce in their supply chain, are better positioned to improve business practices.**
- **Women are often under-represented in leadership roles and over-represented in part time and informal roles.**
- **Investing in issues that are relevant for your female workers is an important step towards worker satisfaction and improved production.**

**Benefits**

- **Production quality and output increased**
  - Equal access to training, same as men
- **Talent attracted and retained**
  - HR systems that respond to men’s and women’s needs
- **Market access**
  - High standard ethical and sustainable markets prefer gender diverse suppliers
- **Innovation**
  - Gender diverse teams perform better on innovative capacity

**HOW**

**Ensure equal opportunities and support**

- Equal contracts for equal jobs
- Management positions for women
- Technical jobs for women
- Trainings accessible by both men and women
- Include gender business strategy with specific actions

**Guarantee good working conditions & safety**

- Extra protection against dangerous chemicals for pregnant women
- Zero tolerance on sexual harassment & discrimination
- Home-work transportation for women
- Health and sanitation facilities

**Provide fair payment**

- Equal pay for equal tasks
- Support for women’s control over income by own bank account

**Facilitate work-life balance**

- Maternity leave
- Support for breastfeeding in the workplace
- Support for childcare
- Flexible working hours

*“The business case for gender equality is compelling. Investing in women is indeed smart economics”*
Philipppe Le Houérou, IFC Executive Vice President and CEO
### Gender Impacts on Business
The examples below demonstrate gender strategies by companies in three countries and their results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Results</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decent working condition for women, e.g. transportation for women</td>
<td>Improved production quality</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vegetables &amp; Fruits</td>
<td>+ Capacities of 400 female employees well utilized, resulting in improved production quality</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fundo Dona Pancha, Peru</td>
<td>+ No shortage of employees, even in time of labour shortage</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-traditional jobs for women, e.g. export managers, financial controllers</td>
<td>+ Good reputation in and outside Peru</td>
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<td>Childcare support in harvest time</td>
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<tr>
<th>Garments</th>
<th>Reduced staff turnover &amp; absenteeism</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ismailia factory, Egypt</td>
<td>+ The absentee rates dropped from 19% to 10.7% over 12 months</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health training program for 1,150 garment workers</td>
<td>+ The employee turnover rate declined from 14.5% to 8.1% over 12 months</td>
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<tr>
<td>35 female peer educators are trained to pass on training information to employees</td>
<td>+ Good return on investment: cost reduction fourfold of cost of investments in gender</td>
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<th>Flowers</th>
<th>Women empowerment</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ethiopian Horticulture Producer Exporters Association &amp; member farms</td>
<td>+ Raised awareness of 7000 female employees of supplier companies on their rights regarding protection from sexual harassment, and on nutrition, family planning and reproductive health</td>
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<tr>
<td>In cooperation with: IDH, Floriculture Sustainability Initiative (FSI) &amp; BSR HERproject</td>
<td>+ Female employees start claiming their rights</td>
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<tr>
<td>Training of 400 male and female employees as peer educators</td>
<td>+ Improved hygiene and sexual reproductive health among female employees</td>
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<tr>
<td>Awareness raising in (member) producer companies on rights, sexual harassment, hygiene</td>
<td>+ Scaling up to 20,000 employees in follow up project</td>
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<tr>
<td>Engaging local stakeholders knowledgeable on gender issues</td>
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### Contact
IDH, Fair & Sustainable Consulting and ICCO provide companies and organizations guidance on gender strategies. If you want more information, please contact us.

Email: Info@fairandsustainable.nl

### Source
BSR, 2011, HERproject: Health Enables Returns
IDH, internal sources
BOP Innovation Center, Women as inclusive business partners, Fundo Dona Pancha
Photo: ICCO Cooperation / Eva de Vries

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