

2018 REPORT ON PRIVATE SECTOR ACCOUNTABILITY FOR WOMEN'S, CHILDREN'S AND ADOLESCENTS' HEALTH

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has recognized the significance of gender equality, and the health of women, children and adolescents, emphasizing them in

SDG 5: Gender Equality

SDG 3: Good Health & Well-Being

The SDGs also emphasize the role of private sector in achieving the goals. A successful sustainable development agenda requires partnerships between governments, the private sector and civil society.

SDG 17: Partnership

Private sector can engage in women's health in finance; technology; capacity-building; trade; policy; partnerships with government, organization, etc. ; and data, monitoring and accountability.

The following are 4 ways for private sector to support women's health.

1. Invest in women's health and empowerment through expanded services and improved policies.

Through their expansive workforces, supply chains, and communications networks, companies can use their reach, resources, and expertise to reach millions of women and their families with much-needed health and empowerment services to both improve women's health and well-being while also improving business bottom lines.¹

2. Addressing gender-specific vulnerabilities and unique health needs of women.

Women workers do not have the same health needs as men — a fact only partially recognized by occupational safety and health standards, which provide critical protections against pregnancy tests, chemicals that may damage fertility and sexual harassment and violence. Corporations should ensure that these women's health needs are addressed in policy and respected in practice.²

3. Providing health educational materials.

¹ https://www.bsr.org/reports/Private_Sector_Action_For_Womens_Health_Empowerment_Brief.pdf

² <https://www.devex.com/news/4-ways-for-the-private-sector-to-support-women-s-health-88180>

Health education materials such as handouts or posters should be available to all workers covering topics that address the health needs of male and female workers, such as hand-washing, proper nutrition, disease prevention, menstrual hygiene, reproductive health and family planning. These materials should be easily accessible and comprehensible to workers.

4. Collect quantitative and qualitative data on impact of investments.

While there are dozens of private sector programs investing in women's health and empowerment around the world, data on the impact of these programs is still being collected, refined, and disseminated. Corporations should ensure suppliers collect sex disaggregated data to be able to measure the differential impact of workplace policies and practices on women and men. This would also include health data from workplace infirmaries, which should be analyzed and incorporated into documentation and record keeping.

Many private sector already have successful practices of programme supporting women's health.³

Qualcomm, a global actor in 3G, 4G and next-generation wireless technologies, through its Qualcomm® Wireless Reach™ initiative, funded the Mobilizing HERhealth program which created the HERhealth mobile application, an app that allows workers convenient access to five modules on reproductive structure, common gynecological diseases, family planning and maternal healthcare, HIV prevention, and mental health, via their mobile phones. To improve access to health services, the app also features a map of hospitals and clinics near the factories as well as links to websites where women can make doctor appointments. To date, the mobile application has been implemented in 34 factories across China reaching 3,500 women workers. In 2018, Qualcomm Wireless Reach will explore expanding the program to other countries.

Lindex, a Swedish fashion chain with approximately 480 stores in 17 markets, launched WE WOMEN, a 3-year program to provide technical, financial, and health training to 83,500 workers, including more than 50,000 women in Bangladesh. Supported by GIZ, a German development agency, and BSR, WE WOMEN will also incorporate gender equality into management systems and provide support and training to encourage career advancement for female employees. Lindex began investing in the health of workers in its supply chain in 2012, working with BSR to run the workplace women's health program, HERhealth, in factories in

³ https://www.bsr.org/reports/Private_Sector_Action_For_Womens_Health_Empowerment_Brief.pdf

Bangladesh, Pakistan, and India, reaching 12,000 women. Through their investment in workplace health Lindex saw returns on both health outcomes and business indicators. They documented improved worker health knowledge, such as prevention of sexually transmitted infections; nutrition; and hygiene, improved hand washing and use of sanitary napkins rather than dirty cloth. The factory observed less sick leave and staff turnover due to improved health. Managers had better understanding of the needs of female workers and workers and management communicated better. This expanded investment in women workers through WE WOMEN to the entire workforce in Bangladesh—a country which produces 45 percent of Lindex’s total production— marks a significant increase in the company’s commitment to women’s health and empowerment. Lindex plans to scale this program to the rest of their supply chain in India, Pakistan, Turkey, China, Myanmar, and Cambodia. For Lindex, with so many female customers and so many female workers, investing in women’s health and empowerment just makes sense.

Jabil is a US-based global manufacturing services company with 90 facilities in 23 countries, and 175,000 employees worldwide. Women comprise approximately half of Jabil’s workforce, and in response to the unique needs of their female employees, in 2009, in partnership with BSR, the company began implementing the HERhealth program to provide family planning and reproductive health education, life coaching, team building and self-esteem and wellness programs to female employees in seven factories in China. To date, nearly 60,000 employees have participated, reaching an additional 240,000 colleagues, family, and community members with important messages and knowledge on women’s health. Jabil has seen improvement in both the health and empowerment of female employees, as well as business returns. One worker who participated in the workplace program explained how the program has impacted her life, saying, “Jabil’s investment in women is very important. For instance, it provides me with an employment opportunity, as well as an opportunity for self-improvement.” Jabil currently implements the HERhealth program in six factories in China and one in Vietnam, and is expanding the program to India.

Twinings, an international tea company, is implementing BSR’s HERhealth project with smallholder farmers and tea workers in Kenya, most of whom are women. It will provide them with information on reproductive health and family planning, sexually transmitted infections, menstrual hygiene, pre- and post-natal care, nutrition, and non-communicable diseases. Twinings has already reached over 1,000 workers and is working to cover 40,000— 60 percent of women in their supply chain in Kenya. The program has already shown returns. Health knowledge on key topics such as family planning, HIV, Hepatitis B, and pregnancy health have

improved significantly. Women able to name a family planning method increased from 30 to 100 percent; women's knowledge of mother to child transmission of HIV increased from 9.5 percent to 77 percent; and women able to name three or more pregnancy risk factors increased from 11 percent to 86 percent. Twinings has also seen improved health behavior with an increase in the use of health facilities following trainings; improved worker relations with management, with workers feeling more comfortable discussing issues with their managers; and reductions in absenteeism, leading to improved productivity in the workplace.

Marks & Spencer (M&S), a British multinational retailer has partnered with NGOs in Cambodia, Kenya, India, Vietnam, and Bangladesh to implement workplace women's health and empowerment programs. In Cambodia, M&S partnered with Project Hope and the Reproductive Health Association of Cambodia (RHAC) to deliver health services to over 14,000 workers in 7 factories under a program called HEALTHWORKS. Initiated in response to concerns following reports of fainting among women workers, employees were provided health education on topics including reproductive health and family planning, anemia, hydration, nutrition, and hygiene and sanitation. Additionally, on-site clinic staff were trained to provide more effective information, basic medicines, and referrals to community clinics. The program resulted in a 60 percent reduction in anemia, a 40 percent increase in workers accessing the factory clinic, and a 15 percent increase in referrals by factory clinic to external clinics. The program produced a strong business case and return on investment with an average 5 percent reduction in absenteeism and 7 percent increase in production efficiency across all 7 factories. HEALTHWORKS has continued in M&S factories with a further 10 factories participating, 15,000 workers trained on basic health awareness, and 22 clinic health staff provided with health service and information skills.

UN-Habitat is the United Nations programme working towards a better urban future. Its mission is to promote socially and environmentally sustainable human settlements development and the achievement of adequate shelter for all. For addressing women, children and adolescents' health in urban context, private sector could engage in following areas:

1. WASH facilities

Adequate water, sanitation and hygiene(WASH) facilities are essential components of providing basic health services. Urban water distribution and sanitation systems are all too often derelict and unable to cope with the growing demographics, and many of the urban poor tend to be excluded from these services anyway.

Among the urban poor, women and girls are disproportionately affected by the lack of access to WASH facilities. In many parts of the world, women and girls are primarily responsible for fetching water. In Africa and Asia, they walk an average 6km a day to complete this task. When households lack a toilet or latrine, women often delay relieving themselves until night for privacy, but this practice can be harmful to their health and their safety. Women and girls also must deal with menstruation and pregnancy, which create additional needs for adequate materials (soap, water, and feminine products) and facilities (toilets, trash disposal, health clinics/hospitals with toilets, water, soap, etc.) to stay clean and free from infections. While lack of access to WASH in and of itself is an issue, it also impacts other areas of girls' lives.

Company such as construction contractors, local water providers, water filter manufacturers, tanker providers, all involve in the relevant business and supply chain, and could establish partnership with multi-stakeholders. Moreover, all the company can contribute to the access to WASH facilities for workers by providing adequate facilities in workplace.

A [new multi-sector report](#), Water for Women, showcases water social enterprises that offer local employment and reinvest profit in upkeep and maintenance. One such trial in Nigeria has established two water centres in the heart of urban communities, where water is pumped and sold at a low cost, alongside food and household products.⁴ 'Enterprise in WASH' is a research initiative focused on the role of small-scale enterprises, emerging as important players in sustainable water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) service delivery for the poor. It involves engagement in Indonesia, Vietnam, Cambodia, Vanuatu and Sierra Leone on gender and entrepreneurship, associations and other business support mechanisms, cost structures for private water enterprises, entrepreneurship and rural water supply sustainability.

2. Transportation

Bicycle Sharing Schemes

Accessible forms of transportation and sustainable development are intrinsically connected to each other. Simple, affordable transport can significantly improve the lives of people in developing countries by generating income opportunities as well as providing access to essential (health) services, education, work and markets.

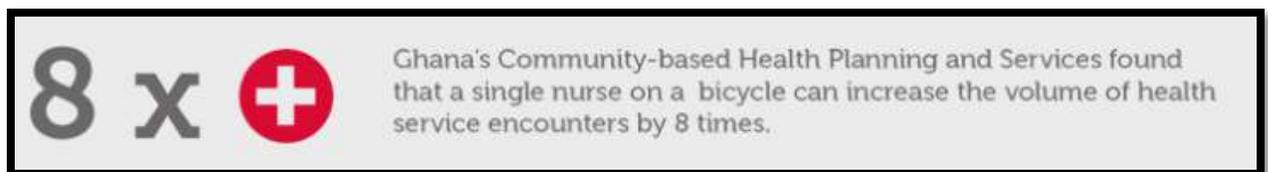
⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/2015/mar/22/social-enterprise-answer-access-water-ngo-business>

“Mobility may be something that citizens of developed countries take for granted. Yet for the 40-60% of people in developing countries who live more than 8km from a health care facility, or for poor urban dwellers who must spend up to five hours daily commuting in order to make a living - safe, clean, and affordable transport is a necessity”

Katherine Sierra, Vice President, Sustainable Development, World Bank

In many developing communities, young women are responsible for collecting water and firewood with head loading being a very common method, putting a strain on the neck, compressing the spine, often causing long term damage.

A bicycle-sharing scheme could prevent these dangerous practices and can generally promote good health. Additionally, if specifically provided to health workers they could extend their reach and provide essential services to a wider range of patients.⁵



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Central to the proposed concept is free or affordable access to bicycles provided by the private sector or in form of a public-private-partnership for trips in urban / rural areas as an alternative to motorized public transport or private vehicles, thereby reducing congestion, noise, and air pollution. E-bike sharing could be a further option to extend the range of conventional bikes and increase the accessibility of areas with more difficult topographies. The e-bikes are generally recharged upon parking them at their station.

3. Waste Management

Garbage to roads Project (India)

Today we recognize that plastic's most desirable trait, its durability and resistance to decomposition, is simultaneously its greatest threat to our ecological system and consequently to our health.

Marine biologists and researchers recognized for decades the devastating impacts plastic waste can have on the ocean, which is increasingly contaminated by plastic garbage. In 2005 it was documented that 10 million square miles, which is almost the size of Africa, was

⁵ Source: <http://www.re-cycle.org/why-bikes/health>

⁶ Source: <http://www.re-cycle.org/why-bikes/health>

contaminated by garbage with 90 % of it being plastic, 80% of which was originally sourced from land. Collectively, these harmful chemicals found in plastic waste are known to cause the following severe health problems: cancer, endometriosis, neurological damage, endocrine disruption, birth defects and child developmental disorders, reproductive damage, immune damage, asthma, and multiple organ damage.⁷

India is among many developing countries that sit on a plastic “time bomb” with garbage - much of which is plastic- leaking into the soil and contaminating ground water, while also releasing dioxins and other toxic chemicals into the air, all of which carries huge environmental, social and economic consequences.

Mr. Vasudevan a professor of chemistry at an engineering college near Madurai in India, came up with the idea to build roads out of plastic litter. His “plastic to pavement technique” method can replace 15% of more expensive bitumen in the mix used to lay roads.

Since 2004, more than 5,000 kilometers of plastic roads have been laid in at least 11 Indian states.⁸ Construction companies from the private sector could actively support this initiative by using the proposed mix simultaneously support waste management activities and improving environmental as well as human health in the long term.

⁷ <https://www.motherearthliving.com/health-and-wellness/harmful-effects-of-plastic-ze0z1205zsch>

⁸ <http://blogs.worldbank.org/sustainablecities/plastic-pavement-another-example-creative-waste-management>