

# Beijing+25: Accelerating Progress for Women and Girls

## The Way Forward



### 5. Catalyze the private sector as a key partner.

The private sector controls the bulk of activity in most economies. Large firms and multinational corporations have enormous power and access to vast resources that can be used to accelerate—or impede—women’s progress. In the workplace, private companies can set an example of what equality looks like in practice, ultimately influencing social norms as well.

### The report suggests the following strategies to catalyze private sector engagement:

**Increase women’s leadership in the private sector —which can lead to greater profitability for companies and higher workplace ratings by employees.** The goal is not to tokenize women appointees to high-level roles, but rather to build a professional environment that is conducive to equal opportunities for men and women.

### The private sector should commit to and act on gender-equality principles of operation and accountability.

For the business community, SDG 17 on revitalizing the global partnership for sustainable development is a call to engage in multi-sector collaborations for the public good. The following examples outline promising approaches from both the UN and the private sector:

- The [UN Global Compact](#) calls for companies to align their strategies and operations with universal principles of human rights, labor, environment, and anti-corruption. Some 12,000 companies from more than 160 countries have signed onto the compact. [Target Gender Equality](#), an accelerator program for participating companies, includes corporate targets for women’s representation and leadership.
- UN Women’s [Global Innovation Coalition for Change](#), a 27-member multi-stakeholder alliance, seeks to remove barriers and accelerate women’s empowerment at an industry-wide level. UN Women’s [Private Sector Accountability Framework](#), a blueprint for corporations on transparency, covers standards on pay, treatment, and upward mobility, and enables self-assessment of compliance with the seven UN Women’s Empowerment Principles.

- A growing number of businesses have adopted [environmental, social, and governance \(ESG\)](#) criteria to support sustainability and improve ethical impacts over the long term. The governance component can include gender diversity in management and boards and policies on parental leave and equal pay, and it can be a valuable tool for assessing a company’s practices related to gender equality.
- [The EDGE \(Economic Dividends for Gender Equality\) Certification Foundation](#) offers the first standardized methodology for assessing and certifying compliance with workplace gender equality criteria. Launched in 2011 at the World Economic Forum, EDGE certifications are now used across 24 industries in 37 countries.

### Increase private sector support of women’s entrepreneurship.

The private sector, particularly venture capital, can be a powerful force in removing barriers and driving progress for women’s entrepreneurship by providing otherwise inaccessible platforms and resources.

- [Teja Ventures](#), the first venture capital fund in Asia to apply a gender lens to its initiatives, invests in technology and business models that support women in the investment value chain—from founders to consumers, suppliers, and vendors—and targets women-led businesses that tap women’s leadership potential and promote their financial inclusion.
- Bank of America, in partnership with the Tory Burch Foundation, the Cherie Blair Foundation, and Vital Voices, connects business women across the globe with access [to mentors](#).
- In Nigeria, the Coca-Cola Company and the [Educating Nigerian Girls in New Enterprises \(ENGINE\)](#) program partnered to provide financial management, business, and leadership skills training to over 21,000 adolescent girls. The initiative increased business management, employment opportunities, and savings account ownership among participants.
- The UN’s Partnership with [Procter & Gamble](#), including programs in Egypt, Nigeria, Pakistan, and South Africa, expands small-scale women suppliers’ and entrepreneurs’ access to corporate value chains.

**Leverage the media for change.** The media—advertising, film, social, print, streaming— also have potent influence on how women are portrayed. The private sector can leverage the media for change, especially through paid advertising, to eradicate harmful gender-based stereotypes and promote messages of equality.

- Procter & Gamble partnered with its period products brand Always to promote girls’ education by integrating messages of equality into advertising campaigns that reached millions of consumers. Their [“Like a Girl” campaign](#) encouraged viewers to redefine the harmful notion that to do something “like a girl” was to do it in an unathletic and less skillful manner. They also launched a [“Choose Equal”](#) commercial in 2020 to raise awareness of ongoing gender inequalities and inspire action—recognizing women’s disproportionate burdens and care responsibilities during COVID-19.
- In New Zealand, where intimate partner violence has been illegal since 1995, the government mounted an [“It’s not OK” advertising campaign](#) in 2007. Surveys suggest that 90 percent of people remembered the ads, with more than two-thirds of them agreeing that the campaign aided their understanding of unacceptable behavior. From 2005 to 2013, the [reported annual rate of violence against women](#) fell from about 9 to 6 percent, and the reported annual rate of sexual violence against women fell from 5 to 3 percent.

Across all platforms, leveraging the private sector’s influence is critical in defining and shifting the narrative on gender equality, reducing harmful stereotypes, and bridging laws and practice.