



ADVANCING GENDER EQUALITY THROUGH

GENDER-RESPONSIVE PROCUREMENT IN THE WATCH AND JEWELRY INDUSTRY

• TOOLBOX •



7 PRINCIPLES

Principle 1



Establish high-level corporate leadership for gender equality.

Principle 2



Treat all women and men fairly at work – respect and support human rights and nondiscrimination.

Principle 3



Ensure the health, safety and well-being of all women and men workers.

Principle 4



Promote education, training and professional development for women.

Principle 5



Implement enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practices that empower women.

Principle 6



Promote equality through community initiatives and advocacy.

Principle 7



Measure and publicly report on progress to achieve gender equality.



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PROCUREMENT IN THE
WATCH AND JEWELRY
INDUSTRY**

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WATCH & JEWELLERY
INITIATIVE 2030

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Design: Oliver Gantner



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1. INTRODUCTION

WHAT GENDER-RESPONSIVE PROCUREMENT IS

Gender-responsive procurement (GRP) is the strategic and sustainable sourcing of goods, services and works that actively advances gender equality and women's empowerment. Grounded in international labour and human rights standards, it ensures that procurement practices uphold women's rights and promote fair and inclusive working conditions across supply chains.

A robust supplier code of conduct is a critical foundation for this approach, translating the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs) commitment into operational practice.

Building on this foundation, GRP integrates gender equality across procurement strategies, processes, policies and practices. This includes engaging suppliers on gender equality, embedding expectations in codes of conduct and contracts, and using purchasing power to incentivize improved performance. A core element of GRP is strengthening the supplier base by working with gender-responsive suppliers and expanding opportunities for women-owned businesses. It also requires recognizing and addressing gender inequalities and power dynamics embedded in value chains and market relationships, ensuring that women workers and entrepreneurs can access and benefit from business opportunities.

UN Women research shows that GRP can generate a range of benefits to companies

- **Unlocks market opportunities:** GRP opens access to new suppliers, fostering innovation in products and services and reducing risks, thereby enhancing supply chain performance.
- **Enhances supplier diversity:** Supplier diversity drives innovation, competition and market access, bolstering a company's competitive edge, while mitigating the risk of reliance on a few suppliers.
- **Increases revenue and reduces spending:** GRP enhances financial performance through increased efficiency, cost savings and revenue potential.
- **Fosters a value-based culture:** Aligning with the WEPs helps align procurement with corporate sustainability and equality commitments. Even seemingly minor purchasing decisions can trigger a positive domino effect.
- **Strengthens brand reputation:** GRP boosts brand image, which in turn fosters trust with customers, employees and investors.
- **Ensures compliance:** Pursuing GRP aligns with emerging transparency and reporting obligations, promoting regulatory adherence.



WHY GENDER-RESPONSIVE PROCUREMENT MATTERS

Global supply chains are under unprecedented pressure. Geopolitical instability, climate shocks, regulatory shifts and growing scrutiny of environmental and social risks have exposed structural vulnerabilities in procurement systems. At the same time, companies face expanding due-diligence and reporting expectations that extend beyond Tier 1 suppliers. Gender inequality—manifesting in wage gaps, occupational segregation, informal work and exposure to violence and harassment—remains a material but often overlooked risk within supply chains, directly affecting productivity, resilience and business continuity.

Women participate across many tiers of the jewelry supply chain, from artisanal mining and mineral processing to cutting, polishing and manufacturing. Yet, their economic outcomes vary significantly. Persistent gender inequalities and related risks include violence and harassment, discrimination, unequal pay, and limited access to finance. These challenges often result in informal or insecure employment and unsafe working conditions. For businesses, this translates into higher turnover and absenteeism, as well as reduced productivity and supply chain reliability.

Women represent only around 15 per cent of the global industrial mining workforce, highlighting the sector's continued male dominance.¹ Women also remain significantly underrepresented in leadership and decision-making roles across mining companies, demonstrating persistent barriers to advancement.² Women in industrial mining earn on average 40 per cent less than their male counterparts, reflecting persistent wage gaps and occupational segregation across the sector.³

In artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM), which produces a significant share of the world's gemstones and around 20 per cent of global gold, women's participation is higher—around 30 per cent of the workforce globally—but they are often concentrated in lower-paid and less secure roles and face limited access to land, finance, equipment and formal markets.⁴

Gender-responsive engagement under the Fairmined programme in Colombia—implemented by the Alliance for Responsible Mining—has shown that women's labour in ASM is frequently informal, unrecorded and therefore largely invisible within standard supplier assessments. Through targeted engagement approaches, including interviews and focus groups with women miners and processors, these initiatives revealed that women were often actively involved in tasks such as ore selection, processing and panning, yet were not formally recognized as workers within mine structures. As a result, they were frequently excluded from contracts, social protections and occupational health and safety measures, despite being exposed to significant risks, including hazardous substances and unsafe working conditions.⁵

In jewelry manufacturing, women may represent 40–90 per cent of factory workforces in some production hubs, including large segments of India's jewelry manufacturing industry and gemstone processing sectors in China and Thailand.⁶ However, women are frequently concentrated in lower-paid or lower-status roles such as sorting, grading and quality control, while men dominate higher-value tasks such as trading or advanced gemstone cutting. In mining, women represent only 15 per cent of the global mining workforce, highlighting the sector's continued male dominance.⁷

These patterns reflect persistent gender inequalities across supply chains, where women are often concentrated in lower-value, less secure roles. For companies, this is not only a social issue, it translates into operational and business risks, including workforce instability, lower productivity and missed opportunities for innovation.

Procurement is a powerful yet underutilized lever for addressing these risks; it is where strategy meets action. Each year, companies spend trillions of dollars through their supply chains, shaping market incentives, supplier behaviour and working conditions far beyond their direct operations.



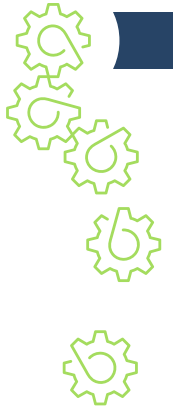
Integrating a gender-responsive lens into procurement enables companies to identify hidden risks, strengthen supplier relationships and unlock performance gains. Evidence shows that suppliers that support women's participation, leadership and wellbeing are more resilient and better able to adapt to disruption.

Despite growing commitments to gender equality, many companies have yet to translate these into consistent procurement practices across suppliers and geographies. This gap represents both a challenge and an opportunity.

The Gender-responsive Procurement Toolbox supports companies in closing this gap by turning commitments into practical actions. It provides a structured pathway for companies at different stages of their GRP journey, enabling them to move from isolated initiatives to systemic, sustained change across their supply chains.

JOIN THE GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAIN COALITION COLLABORATE WITH LIKE-MINDED COMPANIES TO DRIVE IMPACT

The Global Supply Chain Coalition is UN Women's new initiative to drive gender equality in global supply chains. Powered by the WEPs, the Coalition aims to elevate gender equality as a fundamental pillar of sustainable supply chains and responsible business conduct. The Coalition works with companies to embed gender equality into procurement and supplier practices through peer learning and co-creation of tools. Join the Global Supply Chain Coalition to collaborate with peers and accelerate measurable progress on gender equality together. Learn more about the Global Supply Chain Coalition [here](#).



HOW GENDER-RESPONSIVE PROCUREMENT APPLIES TO THE WATCH AND JEWELLERY INDUSTRY

Gender-responsive procurement is increasingly recognized as a key lever for advancing gender equality in mineral supply chains. In the jewelry industry—where procurement decisions shape sourcing relationships across complex mining, refining, manufacturing and trading networks—procurement practices influence who benefits economically and who is exposed to harm. Women’s rights advocates and mining governance organizations have highlighted supply chain due diligence as a critical opportunity to address gender inequality within supplier workplaces and across mining communities and local economies.

The Stakeholder Statement on Gender-responsive Due Diligence of the Women’s Rights in Mining (WRM) initiative of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) argues that gender norms and unequal power relations are embedded in mineral markets and supply chains and therefore must be explicitly addressed within due diligence systems rather than treated as peripheral social concerns.⁸

More recently, the Intergovernmental Forum on Mining, Minerals and Sustainable Development (IGF) hosted a session at the 2025 OECD Responsible Minerals Forum on gender-responsive due diligence where they reiterated that the WRM-OECD statement remains a relevant call to action for governments, civil society and business to prevent gender inequalities along mineral supply chains,⁹ while the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH has positioned gender justice in the extractive sector as a core priority linked to responsible supply chains and supply chain due diligence regulation.¹⁰

Within the sector, existing responsible sourcing standards increasingly recognize gender issues but do not yet consistently operationalize gender-responsive procurement.

- The Responsible Jewellery Council (RJC) code of practices requires members to prohibit workplace violence and harassment and ensure non-discrimination and respect for workers’ rights.¹¹
- The RJC Gender Equality Toolkit goes further by encouraging companies to integrate gender considerations into procurement decisions, including supplier policies on harassment, grievance mechanisms and sourcing from women-owned businesses.¹²
- The World Jewellery Confederation (CIBJO) ESG Compendium similarly promotes alignment with the WEPs.¹³



However, these approaches remain largely policy guidance-based. Across minerals governance frameworks, the picture is similar.

- The Initiative for Responsible Mining Assurance (IRMA) explicitly recognizes gender discrimination risks in recruitment, procurement and workplace policies.¹⁴
- The World Gold Council's Responsible Gold Mining Principles link gender issues to community engagement and local procurement.¹⁵
- The LBMA Responsible Gold Guidance requires companies to assess human-rights risks affecting vulnerable groups.¹⁶
- The OECD Guidance for the Responsible Sourcing of Minerals from Conflict-Affected and High-Risk Areas sets no expectations that relate to gender equality besides conducting due diligence on the risk of widespread sexual violence.¹⁷

Yet, most frameworks still rely on broad human rights requirements rather than fully operationalized gender-responsive procurement models, leaving an important implementation gap that this *Gender-responsive Procurement Toolbox* helps to address.



Photo: Andre Messika

2. ABOUT THIS TOOLBOX



HOW THE TOOLBOX IS DESIGNED

In 2025, UN Women's WEPs Secretariat and the Watch & Jewellery Initiative 2030 (WJI 2030) collaborated with experts and member companies to co-create practical tools on gender-responsive procurement. This collaboration resulted in the development of the *Gender-responsive Procurement*

Toolbox designed for companies of different sizes and levels of maturity. The Toolbox provides flexible, practical tools that companies can adopt and adapt, whether they are just getting started or looking to deepen and scale their approach.

WHAT IT INCLUDES

The Toolbox includes guidance in the following areas:

- **The business case for gender-responsive procurement:** outlining why integrating gender considerations into procurement strengthens performance, resilience and long term value.
- **Supplier engagement guidance:** supporting procurement teams to engage suppliers on gender-responsive business and procurement practices in a structured, consistent and proportionate way.
- **Sample contractual and governance provisions:** offering draft language to help integrate gender-responsive procurement expectations into contracts, codes of conduct and internal frameworks.
- **Capacity building resources:** supporting procurement teams in building awareness and practical understanding of gender-responsive procurement among internal colleagues and suppliers.
- **Good practices and implementation guidance:** sharing practical examples, lessons learned and actionable tips to support application across different sectors, geographies and supplier profiles.





The Toolbox comprises a set of complementary and adaptable tools, including the following handouts:

[Handout 1](#) | **Supplier engagement checklist**

- This checklist is a practical engagement tool designed to support dialogue between buyers and suppliers on gender equality. Structured around the WEPs and four supplier maturity levels (Beginner, Improver, Achiever, Leader), it helps identify priorities, risks and opportunities for improvement without functioning as an audit or pass/fail assessment. The checklist supports shared understanding, proportional expectations and continuous progress over time.

[Handout 2](#) | **Supplier frequently asked questions (FAQ)**

- This FAQ addresses common supplier questions about the purpose, use and implications of the checklist (Handout 1). It clarifies that the process is developmental rather than compliance driven, explains how information is used and situates the checklist in relation to other WEPs tools such as the Gender Gap Analysis Tool. The handout helps set expectations, reduce uncertainty and reinforce the collaborative intent of supplier engagement.

[Handout 3](#) | **Gender-responsive supplier code of conduct**

- This code of conduct sets out baseline expectations for suppliers to respect gender equality, non discrimination and human rights across their operations and supply chains. Designed as a foundation for engagement and continuous improvement, it emphasizes proportionality, alignment with international standards and progressive strengthening of practices based on risk, sector and maturity. The code also encourages suppliers to cascade similar standards within their own supply chains.

[Handout 4](#) | **Sample gender-responsive legal clauses**

- This handout provides illustrative contractual clauses that buyers can use to integrate gender equality expectations into supplier agreements. It presents graduated options—from soft, aspirational clauses to mandatory requirements with consequences—allowing buyers to tailor expectations based on supplier risk, maturity and relationship stage. The clauses demonstrate how gender-responsive procurement can be embedded into contracts without resorting to one size fits all approaches.



[Handout 5](#) | Sample training outline and materials

- This handout outlines a modular training programme to support suppliers in understanding gender equality risks, business impacts and buyer expectations. It includes objectives, key content areas, activities and indicative timings and is designed to be adapted to different contexts and capacities. The training focuses on learning, dialogue and action planning, rather than evaluation or compliance checking.

[Handout 6](#) | Sample gender risk maps

- These risk maps provide illustrative examples of gender-related risks commonly observed across supply chains, including in leadership, workplace practices, health and safety, subcontracting and community contexts. The risk maps help suppliers identify who may be affected, potential business impacts, existing controls and priority levels, reinforcing the message that gender related risks are also business risks.

[Handout 7](#) | Action planning tools

- These tools support suppliers in translating identified priority risks into practical, achievable actions. The handout guides suppliers to define mitigation actions, assign responsibility and set realistic timelines, emphasizing proportionality, feasibility and continuous improvement. It reinforces that progress is iterative and that even small, well defined actions can contribute to meaningful change over time.

[Handout 8](#) | Potential scenarios, responses and outcomes

- This handout illustrates how gender-responsive procurement can be applied flexibly across different procurement situations, such as supplier onboarding, contract renewal, high risk contexts, or SME engagement. Through practical scenarios, it shows typical constraints, proportionate GRP responses and expected outcomes, highlighting that GRP is about smart decision making rather than rigid compliance.



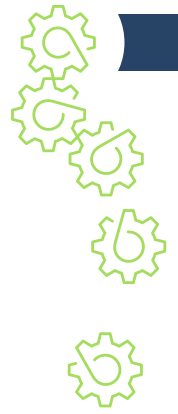
USING THE TOOLBOX IN THE PROCUREMENT LIFECYCLE

Gender-responsive procurement can be integrated across the full procurement lifecycle, from strategy and planning through supplier selection, contracting and ongoing supplier engagement.

The five tools in this Toolbox are designed to support companies at each of these stages, enabling a coherent and systematic approach rather than isolated actions.

	Stage	Tool	Usage
1	Strategy and planning	Business case for gender-responsive procurement	The business case helps your company to articulate the value of gender-responsive procurement, align internal stakeholders and build buy-in across procurement, sustainability, legal and leadership teams. It supports internal decision-making, external dialogue with suppliers and partners, and capacity-building efforts that lay the foundation for implementation.
2	Supplier identification and due diligence	Supplier engagement checklist	During supplier identification, selection and due-diligence processes, the checklist enables procurement teams to systematically assess suppliers' gender-responsive practices. It helps identify risks and gaps, inform supplier engagement strategies and integrate gender considerations into sourcing and onboarding decisions in a consistent and transparent manner.
3	Contracting and supplier onboarding	Draft templates for contracts and codes of conduct	The draft templates support the formal integration of gender-responsive procurement requirements into contracts, codes of conduct and related governance instruments. This helps translate policy commitments into enforceable expectations and ensures alignment between procurement practices and internal accountability mechanisms.
4	Supplier engagement, capacity building and implementation	Training toolkit	The training toolkit supports implementation by building awareness, knowledge and practical skills among procurement teams and suppliers. It facilitates shared understanding of gender-responsive procurement expectations and supports suppliers in meeting requirements through capacity-building.
5	Ongoing supplier management and continuous improvement	Good practices	Throughout ongoing supplier management, the good practices provides practical guidance and actionable tips to support continuous improvement. It helps companies adapt approaches across different sectors, geographies and supplier types, and encourages learning, innovation and scaling of effective gender-responsive procurement practices over time.

3. MAKING THE BUSINESS CASE



WHY SUPPLIER ENGAGEMENT ON GENDER EQUALITY MATTERS

Supplier engagement on gender equality is critical because a company's impact and risk exposure extends far beyond its own operations into its value chain.

On average, more than 80–90 per cent of a company's environmental and social impacts sit in the supply chain, making procurement a decisive lever for managing risk and performance. By engaging suppliers on gender equality, companies can strengthen supplier productivity, improve compliance with labour and reporting requirements and build more resilient and inclusive value chains, translating shared values into measurable business outcomes. Addressing gender equality also has a cascading impact on other equity-seeking groups, whether through intersectionality or dependence (e.g., the rights of children, people with disabilities, refugees and asylum-seekers, and Black, Indigenous and People of Colour groups).

Engaging suppliers on gender equality is not only a moral imperative; it is a sound business strategy. Evidence consistently shows that gender-equitable workplaces are associated with higher employee engagement, lower turnover and stronger operational performance. Companies with more gender-diverse leadership teams are significantly more likely to outperform peers financially and demonstrate stronger organisational performance and risk management outcomes.¹⁸ Diverse and inclusive workforces can also enhance productivity and profitability by bringing a wider range of perspectives to innovation and problem-solving, while supporting stronger respect for human rights.¹⁹

Mineral supply chains have historically been male dominated, shaping organizational norms, workplace culture and safety practices, especially in mining. Women's increased participation has, in many contexts, begun to challenge these norms and promote more inclusive working environments that prioritize respectful behaviour, improved communication and stronger adherence to safety protocols.²⁰

Furthermore, gender-responsive approaches in the mining sector appear to help generate broader social benefits in mining communities: women's economic empowerment in mining regions has been linked to increased investment in household wellbeing, education and community development. Research shows that when women have greater economic participation in mining economies, households are more likely to invest in children's education and health, which can help address persistent challenges such as poverty and child labour in mining regions.²¹

Conversely, gender-related risks, such as discrimination, harassment, unsafe working conditions and lack of grievance mechanisms, are among the most common drivers of labour disputes, legal claims, reputational harm and supply chain disruptions. Companies with weak supplier oversight face growing exposure to financial losses, delayed deliveries and brand damage, particularly as due diligence and reporting expectations expand across jurisdictions.

Beyond risk mitigation, gender-responsive supplier engagement delivers broader strategic economic and societal benefits. Women are estimated to influence over 90 per cent of global jewelry purchases and demand,²² and constitute 70 per cent of the jewelry manufacturing workforce, making up a large portion of the industry's value chain.²³ As a result, advancing gender equality is not only a social imperative but also directly linked to market access, customer trust and long-term growth.

Companies that embed gender-responsive practices across their value chains are better positioned to attract and retain talent, meet investor expectations and respond to increasing transparency and scrutiny. In this context, buyers that champion gender equality among suppliers not only strengthen their own resilience and competitiveness but also help set new standards for responsible procurement across industries. They have the opportunity to emerge as leaders at the forefront of this issue.



WHY THIS MATTERS FOR PROCUREMENT LEADERS AND BUYERS

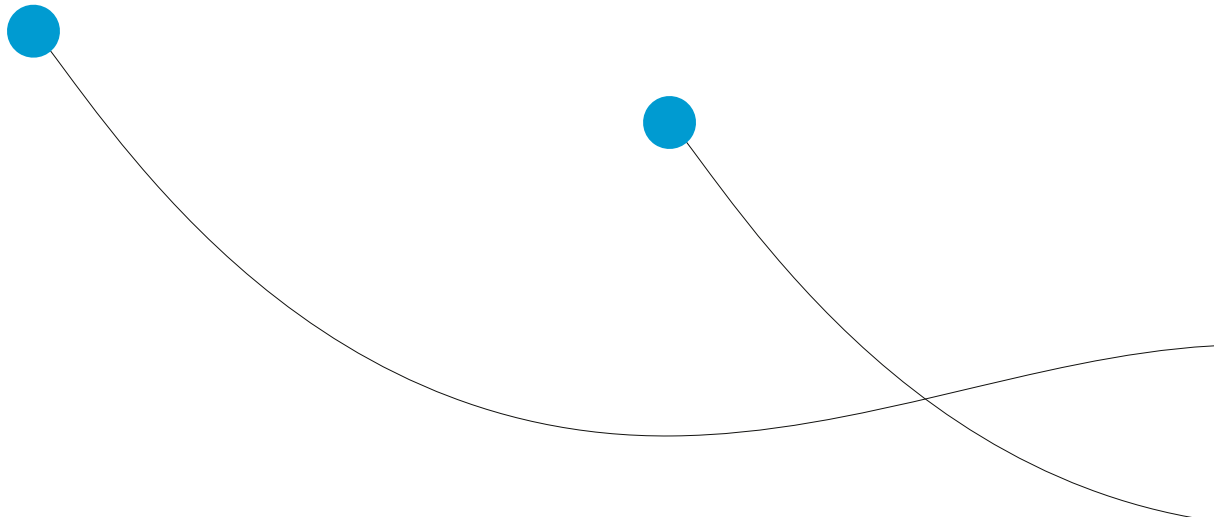
Supplier engagement on gender equality is a risk management and performance issue, not a peripheral social initiative. More than 80 per cent of social and labour risks typically sit within the supply chain, where procurement decisions directly influence supplier behaviour, workforce conditions and compliance outcomes. Integrating gender considerations into supplier engagement helps procurement teams identify hidden risks early, strengthen supplier reliability and protect business continuity.

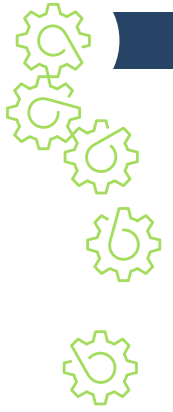
In practice, companies that engage suppliers on issues such as gender-based violence, wage equity and access to grievance mechanisms have uncovered risks linked to workforce instability, informal sourcing channels and unsafe working conditions, particularly beyond Tier 1 suppliers. Addressing these issues has been shown to improve supplier reliability, reduce turnover and strengthen supply continuity, critical factors in a sector characterised by long, opaque and high-risk supply chains.²⁴

From a commercial perspective, suppliers with equitable and responsible workplace practices tend to be more stable, productive and reliable partners.

Gender-related risks, such as discrimination, unsafe working conditions, harassment and lack of grievance mechanisms, are frequently linked to absenteeism, high turnover, quality issues and operational disruptions. These risks increasingly translate into financial exposure for buying companies through contract breaches, delivery delays, legal claims and reputational damage, particularly under expanding due-diligence and reporting requirements.

Gender-responsive procurement also supports long-term value creation. By setting clear expectations, building supplier capacity and embedding gender equality into sourcing and contracting processes, procurement functions can strengthen supplier performance while meeting growing internal and external expectations. In an environment of rising cost pressures, regulatory scrutiny and supply chain volatility, chief procurement officers (CPOs) who integrate gender-responsiveness into procurement practices are better positioned to secure resilient supply chains, demonstrate leadership and deliver measurable value to the business.





QUICK CHECKLIST TO START INTERNAL CONVERSATIONS

This checklist helps organizations assess their readiness to address gender-related risks in procurement practices and supply chains. It applies to direct suppliers and, where visibility allows, extends further upstream.

The checklist could be evolved into a planning/management/monitoring tool by adding columns that allow for documenting the status (no, partially,

yes), justification (basis for determination of status), priority level and intended corrective action, timeframe and responsibility.

Remember that per the United Nations Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights²⁵ you should address those risks you can control as the priority (your own procurement practices) and then seek to influence risks in your supply chains.

A checklist to start internal conversations

Why is gender-responsive procurement a strategic business priority?

Use this checklist to test whether your organization is fully accounting for the risk, performance and growth implications of its supply chain decisions.

1. Supply chain impact and risk exposure

- We acknowledge that 80–90% of our environmental and social impacts sit in the supply chain, often beyond our own operations.
- We have identified where gender-related risks exist across supplier tiers and what these risks are both to rightsholders and our business partners.
- We have identified where our procurement practices may increase the likelihood or severity of gender-related risks.
- Procurement decisions are being used as a lever to influence supplier behaviour, workforce conditions and compliance in relation to gender equality.

Business relevance: Supply chains are where the majority of operational, legal and reputational risks originate and where they can be prevented or mitigated.



2. Risk management and business continuity

- Gender-related risks (e.g., discrimination, unequal pay, harassment, unsafe working conditions, lack of gender-responsive grievance mechanisms) have been explicitly included in due diligence and supplier risk assessments.
- We understand how these risks drive labour disputes, absenteeism, strikes, legal claims and delivery delays.
- We are proactively identifying and mitigating these risks before they escalate into financial losses or supply disruptions.
- We work with suppliers to mitigate these risks, addressing harms to rightsholders, impacts on suppliers' businesses and risks to our own resilience. We disengage from suppliers only as a last resort.
- We promote male allyship as a strategy for suppliers to help mitigate these risks.

Business relevance: Gender risks are among the most common and costly drivers of supply-chain disruption.

3. Supplier performance and reliability

- We acknowledge the link between gender-equitable workplace practices and supplier productivity.
- We engage with our most critical suppliers and they show stability and ability to retain their workforce.
- We engage high risk suppliers in practices that reduce turnover, incidents of violence, harassment and discrimination contributing to quality issues and operational volatility.

Business relevance: More equitable suppliers tend to be more reliable, productive and consistent business partners.



4. Compliance and due diligence readiness

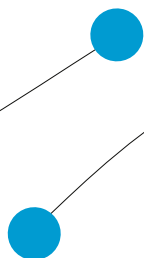
- Our suppliers are prepared to meet expanding labour, human rights and ESG due-diligence requirements across jurisdictions.
- We have sufficient visibility over workforce conditions in high-risk categories or regions.
- We have sufficient visibility over our suppliers' knowledge of and responsiveness to gender-related risks in their affected communities in high-risk categories or regions.
- We are confident our procurement practices would withstand regulatory scrutiny, audits or public disclosure.

Business relevance: Weak supplier oversight increases exposure to penalties, litigation and reputational damage.

5. Financial and reputational exposure

- We have assessed the potential cost of inaction (e.g. contract breaches, delayed deliveries, remediation costs, brand damage).
- We recognize that reputational risks increasingly translate into lost contracts, investor concern and customer distrust.
- We are protecting our brand value by addressing risks at their source rather than reacting to crises.

Business relevance: Persistent gender inequalities in the supply chain can directly hit revenue and enterprise value.





6. Market access, growth and stakeholder relevance

- We recognize that women make up a significant share of the global supply-chain workforce and play a critical role in value creation.
- We factor in that women control USD 20 trillion in annual consumer spending and purchasing decisions.
- Our sourcing and supplier engagement practices align with evolving market, customer, investor and regulatory expectations on responsible and inclusive production.

Business relevance: Gender equality is increasingly linked to customer trust, market access, investor confidence and long-term growth.

7. Talent and internal expectations

- We use procurement as a strategic lever to reinforce company values, culture and leadership credibility.
- Our procurement approach supports our ability to attract, retain and motivate talent across the organization.
- Our procurement practices contribute to broader corporate sustainability, ESG and value-creation goals.

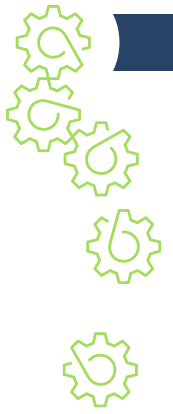
Business relevance: Procurement leadership is no longer judged on cost and efficiency alone, but on its contribution to people, purpose, performance and trust.

8. Strategic leadership and competitive advantage

- We use our buying power to set clear expectations and standards for suppliers.
- We embed gender considerations into sourcing, contracting and supplier engagement, not treating them as add-ons.
- We position procurement as a driver of resilience, performance and leadership in a volatile environment.

Business relevance: CPOs who integrate gender-responsiveness strengthen supply-chain resilience and demonstrate strategic leadership.

4. USING THE TOOLBOX



ENGAGE SUPPLIERS

This tool applies to the sourcing of all goods and services. Companies are encouraged to prioritize gender-responsive procurement with suppliers where they can have the greatest impact—starting with direct (tier 1) suppliers, and extending to

indirect suppliers where there is sufficient visibility. Priority should be given to suppliers that are either high-risk, considering severity and likelihood of impact on affected rights-holders, and represent significant spend for the company.

Supplier engagement approaches

Supplier engagement on gender equality is most effective when it is approached as a partnership built on clear expectations, practical support and mutual benefit. Buyers play a critical role in setting the tone, by communicating priorities, assessing supplier practices and providing the tools and incentives suppliers need to improve. Progress

accelerates when expectations are paired with capacity-building, recognition of good performance and regular feedback. In this way, supplier engagement becomes a continuous cycle of dialogue, improvement and accountability that delivers lasting impact across the value chain.



Photo: Bruna the Label



The following approaches could be used:

Type of approaches	Action	Outcome
Communication tools	Use contracts, codes of conduct, procurement policies and supplier communications to clearly signal that gender equality is a business priority and a core expectation of doing business.	This can help raise awareness and reinforce the company's commitment to gender equality to its suppliers.
Assessment tools	Use structured conversations, surveys, self-assessments or audits to understand where suppliers currently stand on gender equality practices	This helps establish a baseline, identify gaps and risks, and tailor engagement and support. Repeated use of these tools also enables tracking progress and impact over time.
Capacity building	Support suppliers through practical training and implementation resources, such as workshops, webinars, guidance materials and checklists. Encouraging peer learning and knowledge exchange, where appropriate	Encouraging peer learning and knowledge exchange can further accelerate learning and uptake.
Recognition and incentives	Incentivize progress by recognizing strong performers through mechanisms such as preferred supplier status, longer-term contracts or public recognition.	Making gender equality a factor in procurement decisions can also motivate suppliers to invest in improvement.
Collaborate and co-create	Work with suppliers to set realistic targets and milestones, recognizing that change takes time and contexts vary. Share good practices and, where feasible, co-invest in solutions, particularly with smaller suppliers and women-owned businesses.	Companies should remain mindful of competition law requirements and avoid practices that could lead to inappropriate coordination or information-sharing between competitors.
Track and report	Collect data and monitor supplier progress on a regular basis and share results transparently with relevant stakeholders	Tracking and reporting strengthens accountability, informs continuous improvement and helps demonstrate impact over time.

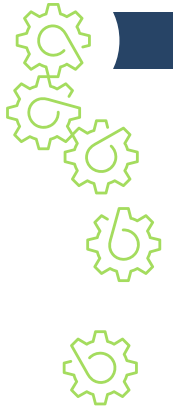
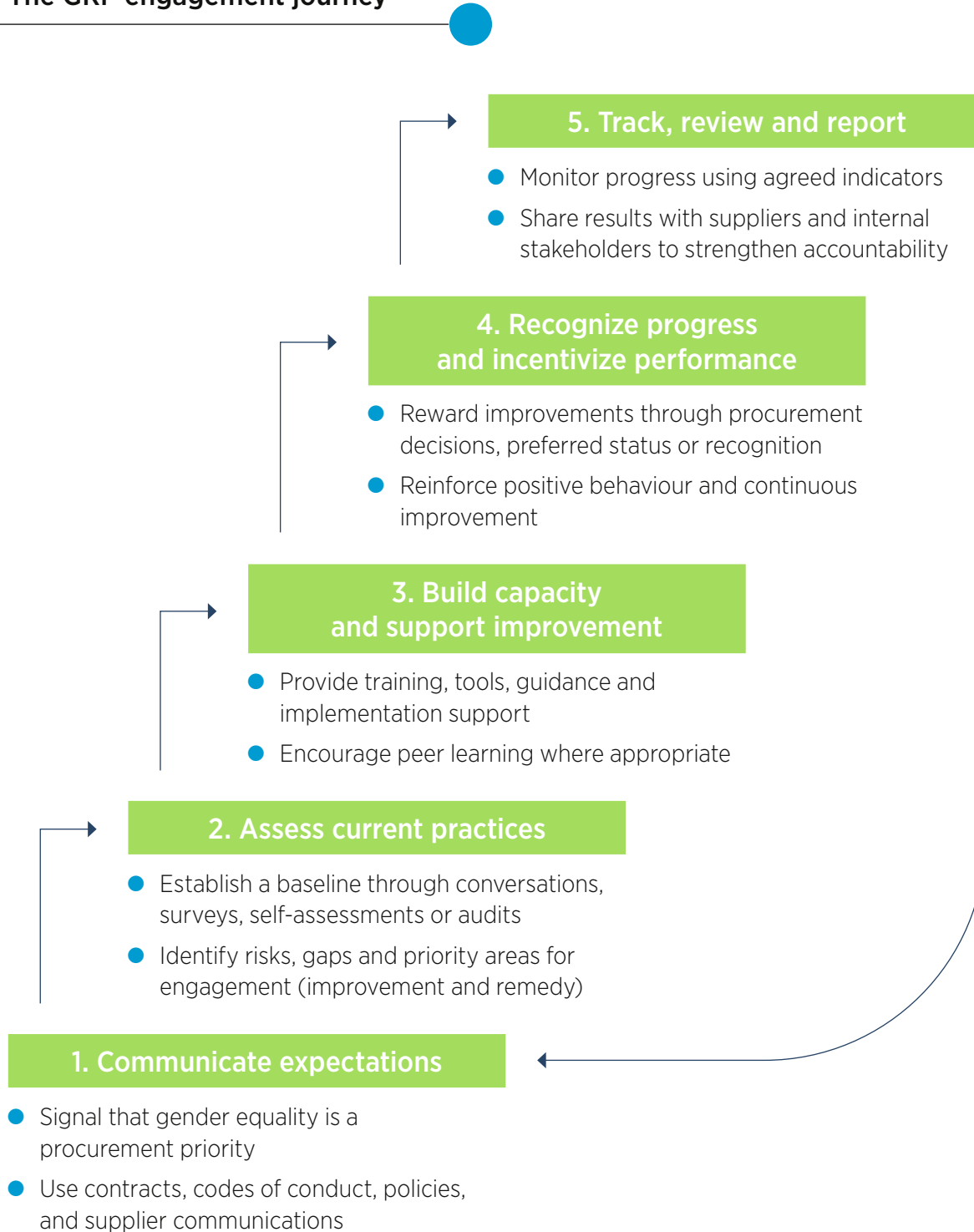


Figure 1
The GRP engagement journey





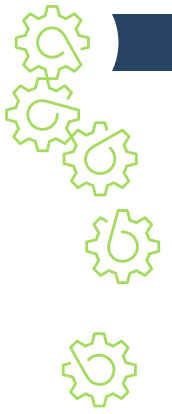
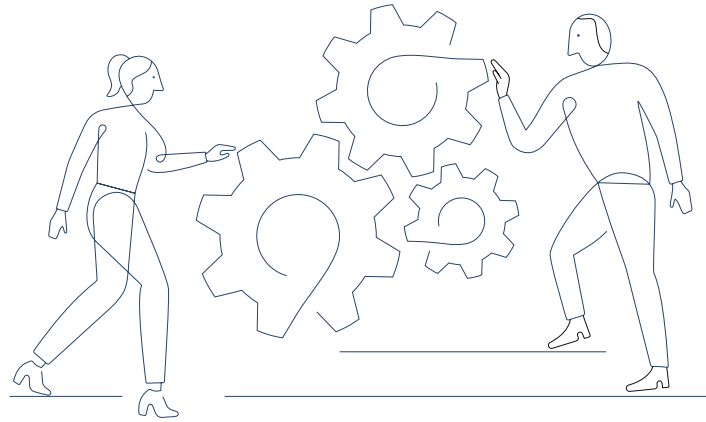
Quick wins

A 90-day pathway towards gender-responsive procurement

Objective: Lay the foundations for gender-responsive procurement while maintaining business-as-usual operations:

- Focused and time-bound
- Builds on existing procurement processes
- Delivers visible results within 90 days
- Minimizes disruption while managing material risk

Phase Period	Actions
Phase 1 ALIGN & MOBILIZE Weeks 1-4	<input type="checkbox"/> Secure senior sponsorship <input type="checkbox"/> Align procurement, legal, HR and sustainability teams <input type="checkbox"/> Establish a shared mandate
Phase 2 FOCUS & ASSESS Weeks 4-8	<input type="checkbox"/> Pilot the Supplier engagement checklist <input type="checkbox"/> Focus on high-risk or high-spend suppliers <input type="checkbox"/> Identify gaps, risks and quick wins
Phase 3 EMBED & OPERATIONALIZE Weeks 6-10	<input type="checkbox"/> Review contracts, codes of conduct and supplier policies <input type="checkbox"/> Integrate gender-responsive clauses into new or renewed agreements
Phase 4 ENABLE & SCALE Weeks 8-12	<input type="checkbox"/> Deliver short awareness or training sessions <input type="checkbox"/> Engage procurement teams and selected suppliers <input type="checkbox"/> Clarify roles, expectations and available support
DAY 90 CHECKPOINT	Set the next phase up for success by defining 2-3 measurable objectives, such as: <input type="checkbox"/> Number of suppliers assessed <input type="checkbox"/> Contracts updated with gender-responsive clauses <input type="checkbox"/> Procurement teams and suppliers trained



Tools	Outcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Business case <input type="checkbox"/> Conversation checklist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Clear ownership ▶ Internal alignment on risk, compliance and performance rationale
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Supplier engagement checklist <input type="checkbox"/> Supplier frequently asked questions (FAQ) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Targeted insights ▶ Prioritized supplier engagement (no blanket requirements)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Draft contract clauses & templates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Expectations embedded into core procurement processes ▶ Reduced compliance and legal risk
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Training toolkit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Increased capability ▶ Consistent understanding across buyers and suppliers
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ A clear roadmap for scaling ▶ Demonstrable progress and leadership momentum

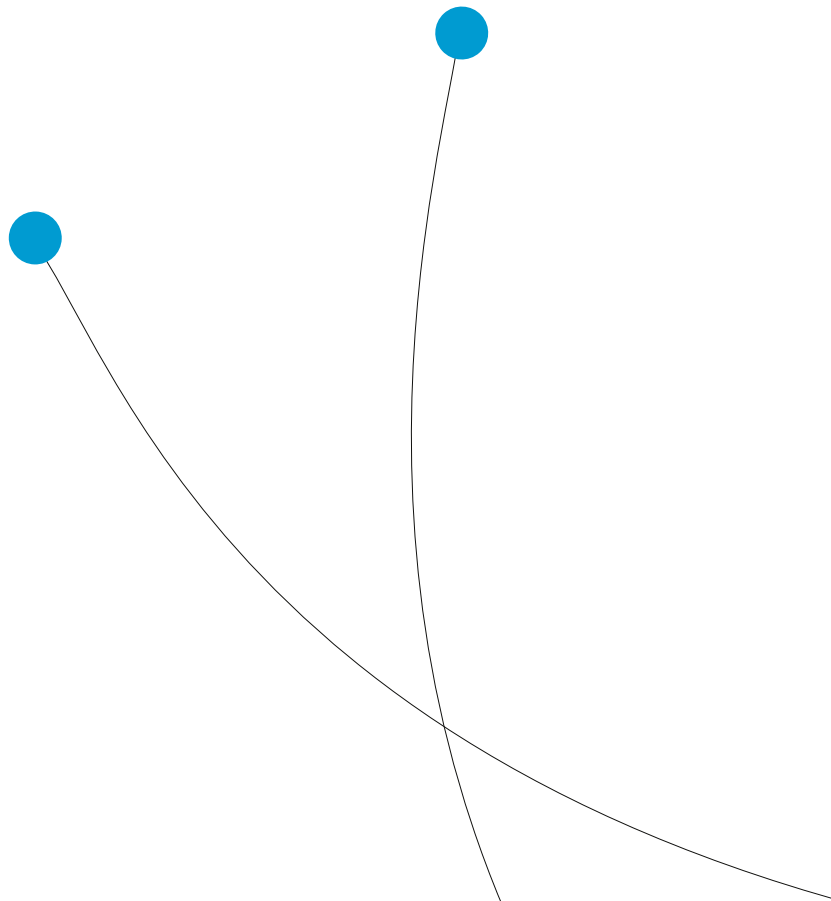


[Download Handout 1](#) | **Supplier engagement checklist**

- This checklist is a practical engagement tool designed to support dialogue between buyers and suppliers on gender equality. Structured around the WEPs and four supplier maturity levels (Beginner, Improver, Achiever, Leader), it helps identify priorities, risks and opportunities for improvement without functioning as an audit or pass/fail assessment. The checklist supports shared understanding, proportional expectations and continuous progress over time.

[Download Handout 2](#) | **Supplier frequently asked questions (FAQ)**

- This FAQ addresses common supplier questions about the purpose, use and implications of the Supplier engagement checklist (Handout 1). It clarifies that the process is develop-mental rather than compliance driven, explains how information is used and situates the checklist in relation to other WEPs tools such as the WEPs Gender Gap Analysis Tool. The handout helps set expectations, reduce anxiety and reinforce the collaborative intent of supplier engagement.





USE TEMPLATES AND GLOBAL NORMS

To support the practical integration of gender-responsive procurement into supplier expectations and contractual arrangements, the Toolbox includes two complementary templates:

Gender-responsive supplier code of conduct

The code of conduct provides a value-based framework that communicates minimum expectations related to gender equality, non-discrimination, safe and inclusive workplaces and responsible business conduct. It is designed to be accessible to suppliers of different sizes and maturity

levels and to support dialogue, awareness and continuous improvement rather than punitive compliance. Companies are encouraged to adapt the code to their context and use it as a foundation for supplier engagement and capacity-building.

[Download Handout 3](#) | Gender-responsive supplier code of conduct

- This code of conduct sets out baseline expectations for suppliers to respect gender equality, non discrimination and human rights across their operations and supply chains. Designed as a foundation for engagement and continuous improvement, it emphasizes proportionality, alignment with international standards and progressive strengthening of practices based on risk, sector and maturity. The code also encourages suppliers to cascade similar standards within their own supply chains.

Sample legal clauses for procurement contracts

The illustrative sample legal clauses complement the code of conduct by offering sample contractual language that can be incorporated into new or renewed procurement contracts. These clauses are intended to help companies formalize gender-responsive expectations, clarify roles and responsibilities and support accountability in a proportionate and risk-based manner. They are illustrative only and should be adapted in consultation with legal counsel to reflect applicable

laws, contractual frameworks and risk profiles.

Together, these two templates help companies align values, expectations and contractual mechanisms, ensuring that gender-responsive procurement is embedded consistently across procurement policies, supplier relationships and legal instruments.

[Download Handout 4](#) | Sample gender-responsive legal clauses

- This handout provides illustrative contractual clauses that buyers can use to integrate gender equality expectations into supplier agreements. It presents graduated options—from soft, aspirational clauses to mandatory requirements with consequences—allowing buyers to tailor expectations based on supplier risk, maturity and relationship stage. The clauses demonstrate how gender-responsive procurement can be embedded into contracts without resorting to one size fits all approaches.



STRENGTHEN CAPACITY THROUGH TRAINING

This chapter provides a practical Training Toolkit to help procurement teams and suppliers translate gender-responsive procurement commitments into day-to-day practice. It offers a ready-to-use training outline, suggested activities and facilitation tips, plus handouts to support discussion, risk

identification and action planning. The materials are designed to be participatory and adaptable—whether used for a short virtual session or an in-person workshop—and should be applied in a proportionate, partnership-based way that supports continuous improvement.

Purpose of the proposed training

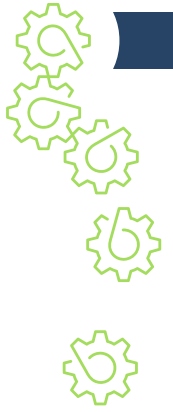
- Building awareness and turning it into action
- Help suppliers understand that gender equality is not a 'nice to have' but a business imperative.
- Gender equality is better business

Modality/ style of the training

- 2-3 hours virtual training or 1-day in-person workshop
- Participatory, solution-oriented – with short presentations, polls, breakout discussions and exercise and company examples.

Principles of the training

- Interactive
- Listen and ask questions
- Explain your company's stance on gender equality and why you are raising gender equality as a key business imperative with them
- Set the tone for a long-term partnership (not policing) and signal that gender equality is integral to the supply chain.
- Balance awareness-raising, practical tools and business relevance, including case studies/ examples from real life experiences.
- Provide or point to resources that they could use.



[Download Handout 5](#) | Sample training outline and materials

- This handout outlines a modular training pro-gramme to support suppliers in understanding gender equality risks, business impacts and buyer expectations. It includes objectives, key content areas, activities and indicative timings, and is designed to be adapted to different contexts and capacities. The training focuses on learning, dialogue and action planning, rather than evaluation or compliance checking.

[Download Handout 6](#) | Sample gender risk maps

- These risk maps provide illustrative examples of gender related risks commonly observed across supply chains, including in leadership, workplace practices, health and safety, subcontracting and community contexts. The risk maps help suppliers identify who may be affected, potential business impacts, existing controls and priority levels, reinforcing the message that gender related risks are also business risks.

[Download Handout 7](#) | Action planning tools

- These tools support suppliers in translating identified priority risks into practical, achievable actions. The handout guides suppliers to define mitigation actions, assign responsibility and set realistic timelines, emphasizing proportionality, feasibility and continuous improvement. It reinforces that progress is iterative and that even small, well defined actions can contribute to meaningful change over time.



Photo: Pomellato



LEARN FROM PRACTICE

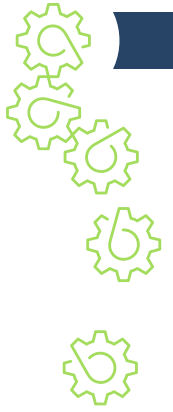
This good practices guide provides practical guidance, real world examples and actionable tips to support implementation across different contexts, including practical do's and don'ts and illustrative scenarios.

Practical Do's and Don'ts

BEGINNER – Visibility & awareness

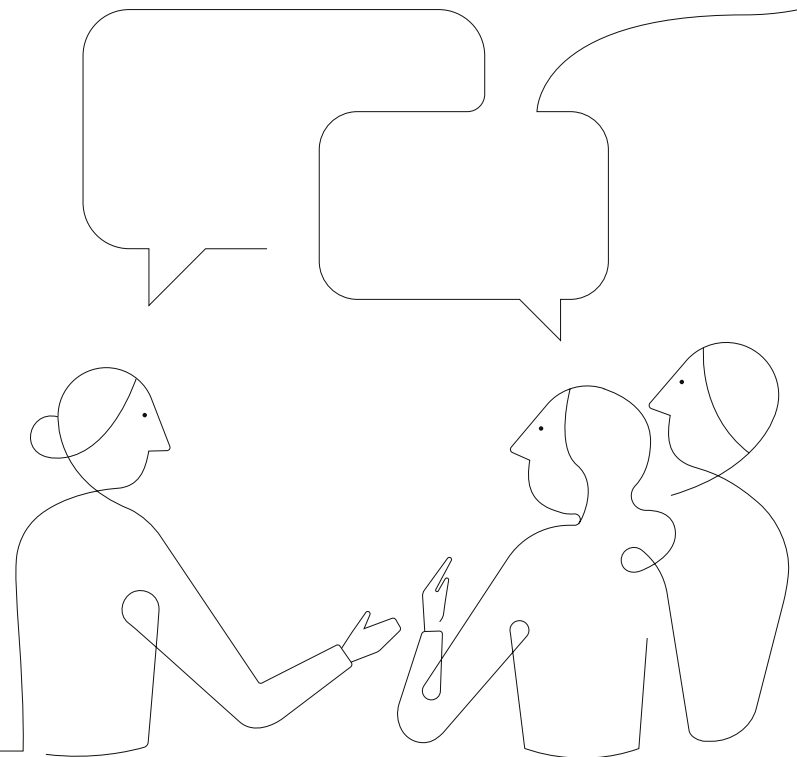
DO	DON'T
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Do acknowledge gender equality as a material supply-chain risk.● Do include basic non-discrimination and safe workplace expectations in supplier codes of conduct.● Do prioritize high-risk categories, regions or labour-intensive suppliers.● Do communicate expectations clearly and simply to suppliers.● Do secure basic internal alignment across procurement, legal and sustainability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Don't treat gender equality as a voluntary or "nice-to-have" initiative.● Don't apply complex requirements without explaining the business rationale.● Don't launch large-scale supplier assessments without capacity to follow up.● Don't expect immediate results from early-stage suppliers.





IMPROVER – Structure & early accountability

DO	DON'T
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Do add a small number of practical gender-related questions to existing supplier assessments. ● Do use data to identify gaps such as lack of grievance mechanisms or unsafe conditions. ● Do focus engagement on priority suppliers, not the entire supply base. ● Do offer guidance, examples or templates to support supplier improvement. ● Do integrate gender expectations into new or renewed contracts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Don't create parallel processes that duplicate existing labour or ESG systems. ● Don't overwhelm suppliers with lengthy questionnaires or reporting demands. ● Don't rely solely on self-declarations without follow-up. ● Don't penalize suppliers who are transparent about gaps but willing to improve.





ACHIEVER – Integration & performance

DO	DON'T
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- Do embed gender considerations into sourcing, contracting and supplier management processes and decision-making.
 - Do set clear, measurable expectations and track progress over time.
 - Do link supplier performance on gender issues to business outcomes such as reliability or quality.
 - Do train procurement teams on how to raise issues and escalate concerns.
 - Do document and demonstrate measurable improvements.
 - Do encourage suppliers to provide a focal point to support employees who are victims of domestic violence to help guide them to support.
 - Do provide training to suppliers on encouraging male allyship.
- Don't treat gender performance as separate from supplier performance.
 - Don't rely on policies alone without evidence of implementation.
 - Don't ignore recurring issues such as absenteeism or turnover linked to gender risks.
 - Don't assume one-off engagement is sufficient.



LEADER – Influence & systemic impact

DO	DON'T
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Do use buying power to influence strategic suppliers and sub-suppliers. ● Do encourage suppliers to cascade expectations through their own value chains. ● Do collaborate with peers, industry initiatives or multi-stakeholder platforms. ● Do recognize and reward suppliers that demonstrate leadership. ● Do share tools, lessons learned and good practices openly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Don't use leadership positioning to impose unrealistic or untested requirements. ● Don't focus only on top-tier suppliers and ignore downstream risks. ● Don't duplicate industry efforts when collaboration is more effective. ● Don't treat leadership as branding without substance.

CROSS-CUTTING – all maturity levels

DO	DON'T
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Integrate gender-responsive procurement into existing processes ● Focus on risk, performance and business continuity ● Apply proportionality and prioritization ● Emphasize improvement over perfection ● Ensure all grievance mechanisms are gender-responsive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Create parallel or siloed initiatives ● Apply one-size-fits-all requirements ● Over-report instead of acting ● Lose sight of the commercial rationale ● Focus only on suppliers' own procurement practices; ensure consideration of gender equality issues in their own operations are in scope for due diligence and improvement engagements



Potential scenarios

Potential scenarios illustrate how GRP is applied in practice, emphasizing a smart and proportionate approach rather than one size fits all compliance. Handout 8 outlines typical procurement situations, common constraints and the corresponding GRP

responses, showing how requirements can be adapted to different contexts while still driving meaningful outcomes. Overall, it demonstrates how GRP enables pragmatic decision making that balances ambition, feasibility and impact.

[Download Handout 8](#) | Potential scenarios, responses and outcomes

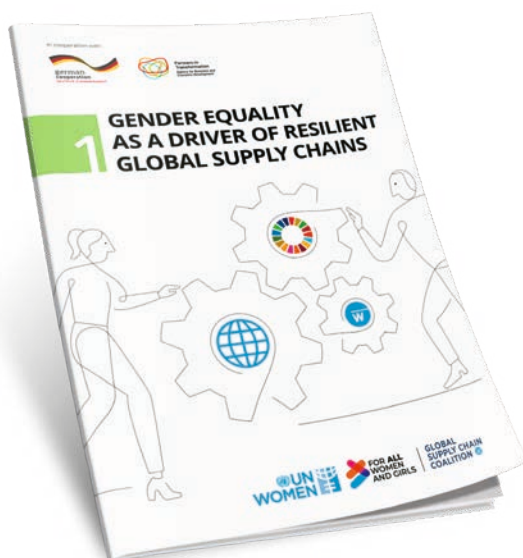
- This handout illustrates how gender-responsive procurement can be applied flexibly across different procurement situations, such as supplier onboarding, contract renewal, high risk contexts, or SME engagement. Through practical scenarios, it shows typical constraints, proportionate GRP responses and expected outcomes, highlighting that GRP is about smart decision making rather than rigid compliance.

5. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAIN COALITION

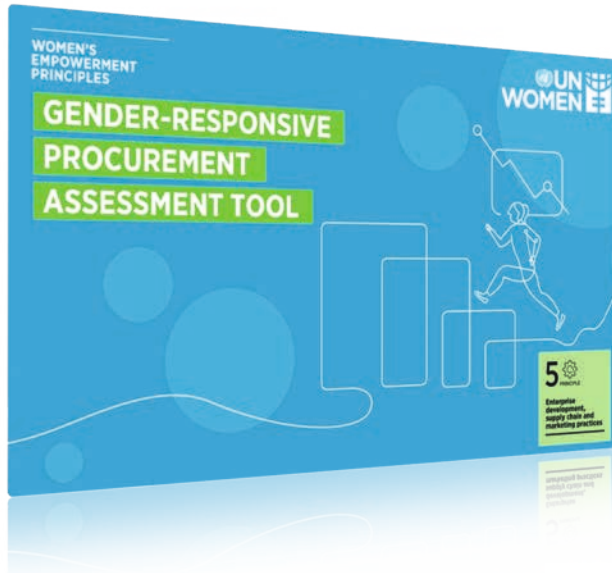
www.weps.org/global-supply-chain-coalition



www.weps.org/resource/global-supply-chain-coalition-explainer-1-gender-equality-driver-resilient-global-supply



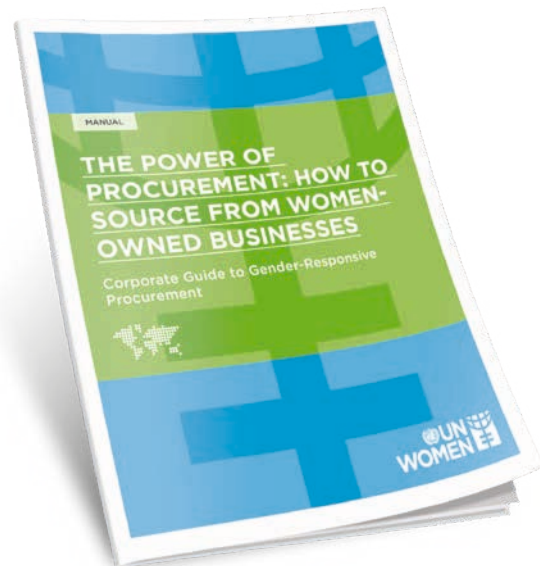
www.weps.org/resource/global-supply-chain-coalition-expert-roundtable-advancing-gender-equality-global-supply



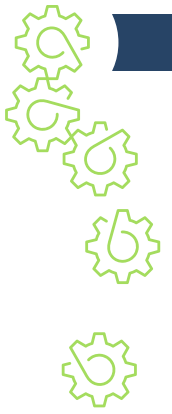
www.weps.org/resource/weps-gender-responsive-procurement-assessment-tool



www.weps.org/resource/gender-responsive-procurement



www.weps.org/resource/power-procurement-how-source-women-owned-businesses



www.weps.org/resource/rethinking-gender-responsive-procurement-enabling-ecosystem-womens-economic-empowerment



www.weps.org/resource/procurements-strategic-value-why-gender-responsive-procurement-makes-business-sense



www.weps.org/resource/building-gender-responsive-procurement-lessons-research-and-practice



www.weps.org/resource/legal-frameworks-gender-responsive-procurement-comparative-review-regulatory-and-policy



ENDNOTES

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