

PRIVATE SECTOR PULSE CHECK



WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT PRINCIPLES

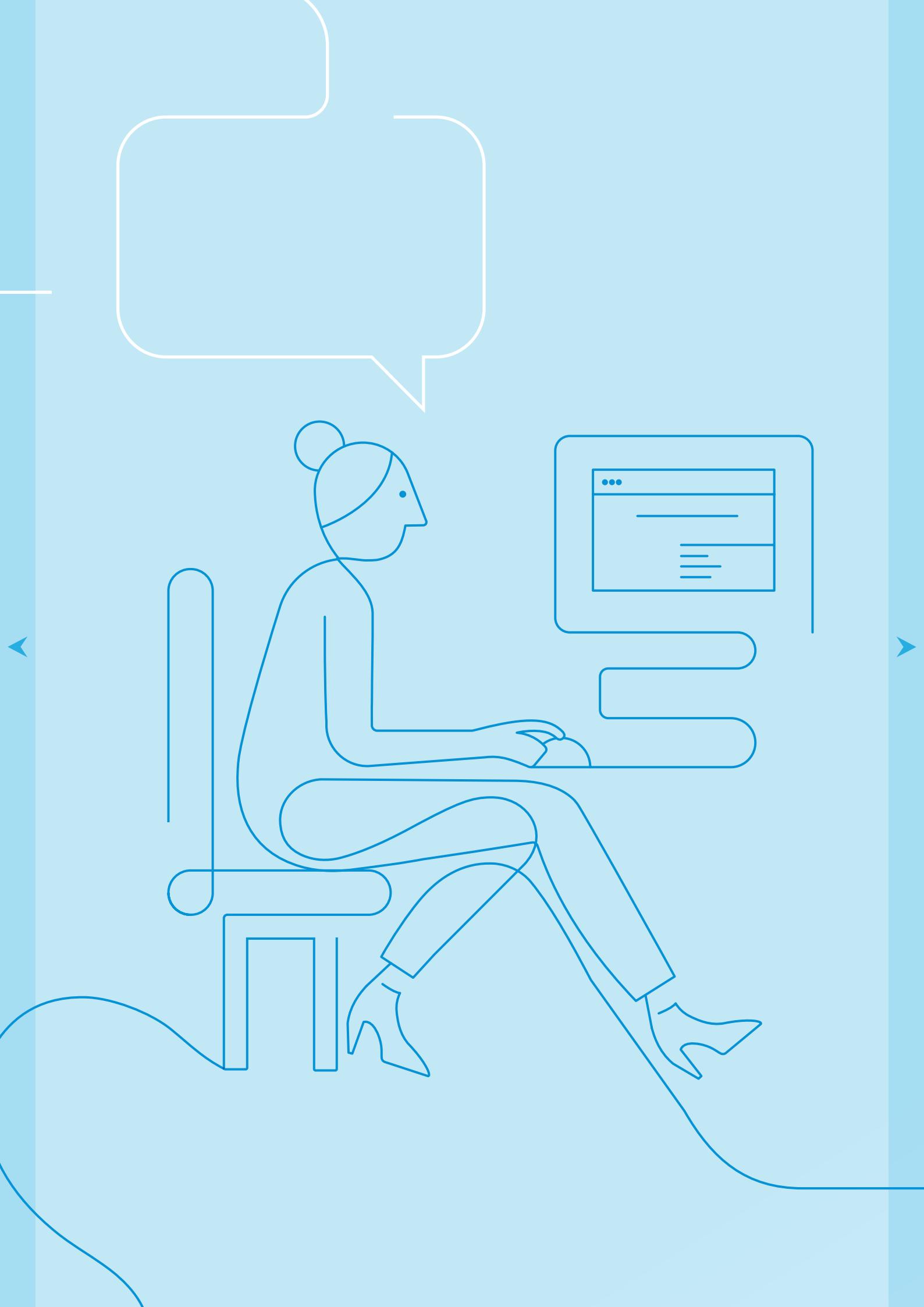
Established by UN Women and the
UN Global Compact Office



THE EFFECTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON WOMEN AND BUSINESSES

A SURVEY OF 65 CEOS AND BUSINESS LEADERS
IN ASIA AND EUROPE







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Katja Freiwald

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UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

Supporting businesses in their COVID-19 recovery is essential as economies re-emerge with vigour and infrastructure for long-term resilience. Doing so is important given that businesses, including small companies which employ or are run by women, are the backbone of societies and generate more than two thirds of jobs globally. At UN Women, we want to help by facilitating sharing of insight and knowledge, especially for those furthest into the crisis.

In this report, we provide insight from 65 business leaders, collected via semi-structured interviews across Asia and Europe from March to May 2020. This includes feedback and recommendations on how organizations steered their responses, safeguarded women employees and maintained business continuity.

COVID-19 is a critical crossroad for gender equality. Closing gender gaps in work and society could add USD \$12 trillion to global growth, a third of which will come from the Asia-Pacific. While many of us are still in the depths of the crisis, COVID-19 is already presenting new opportunities for solidarity and collaboration. We urge that businesses and policy makers remain focused on the path of inclusive, sustainable growth, confident that this path is navigable towards a worthy destination.



Hilde Hardeman

Head of Service for Foreign Policy Instruments (FPI)
European Commission

In acknowledging this report, Hilde Hardeman, Head of the European Commission's Service for Foreign Policy Instruments (FPI), has underlined the importance of consciously integrating a gender perspective into response measures to ensure a more inclusive recovery overall – as increasing evidence shows that the pandemic has disproportionately hurt women.

“ The COVID crisis has demonstrated once more how women and girls bear the brunt when our societies and economies come under pressure. We must now put women at the centre of recovery, to rebuild back better. This is crucial for all, women and men, this is crucial for the world today and for the future. ”



BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT

The COVID-19 pandemic has placed the world at a crossroads: From here, efforts to achieve gender equality can either slow or be accelerated as economies begin the path toward recovery. Asia is the only continent where women's labour force participation rates have been stagnating or even decreasing,¹ and it is estimated that closing this gap could add USD \$4.5 trillion to Asia-Pacific economies by 2025.² **With increasing evidence that women are being hit hardest by the crisis, gender-blind response strategies will impede women in their rights and opportunities and pose a serious risk to regional economies.** The private sector will play a major role in shaping economic recovery, and thus has a responsibility to incorporate a gender lens into response measures that ensure a more inclusive recovery overall.

WeEmpowerAsia, a UN Women programme funded by and in partnership with the European Union, is working to increase the number of women who lead and participate in business in China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam in

order to promote inclusive and sustainable growth and build more gender-sensitive trade and supply chains between European and Asian markets.

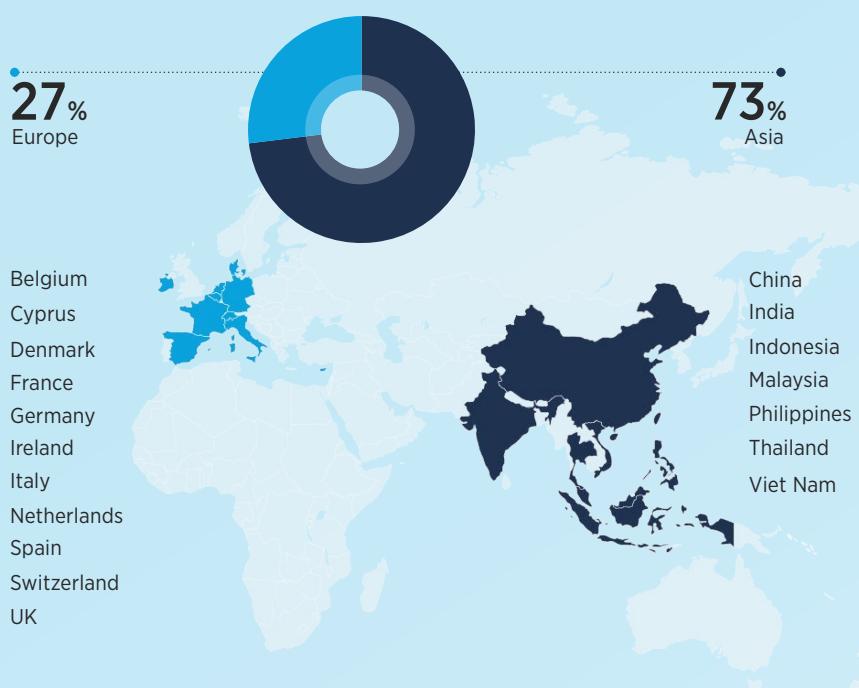
WeEmpowerAsia gathered perspectives on how the pandemic has affected businesses and women through 65 semi-structured interviews with private sector CEOs and leaders in the Asia-Pacific and in Europe between March and May 2020. This report summarizes the key findings, giving the business leaders' perspectives in their own voices.

The picture is diverse. Impacts on businesses and women varied by sector, size and location. But what emerged clearly is the **powerful role the private sector can play to use the crisis as an opportunity to accelerate progress towards building more inclusive business practices and culture to ensure that economies and societies "build back better."** Overall, while most businesses have been supporting their employees, there is a clear need to more consciously integrate a gender perspective into COVID-19 response plans to ensure a more inclusive recovery.

Company Location (by Countries)

Europe: 11 countries

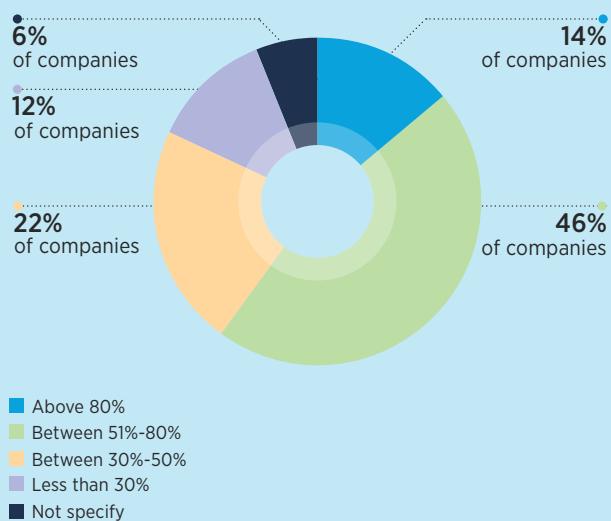
Asia: 7 countries



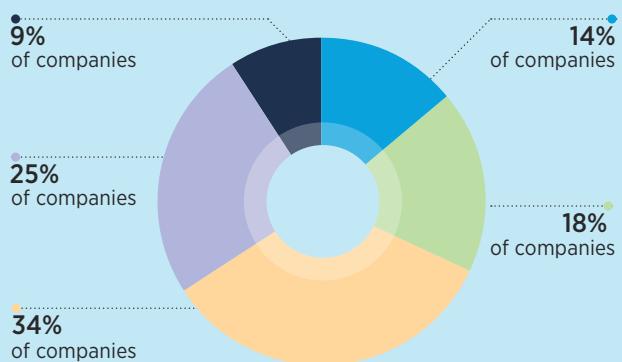
¹ ILO (2016). [Transformation of Women at Work in Asia: An Unfinished Development Agenda](#)

² McKinsey Global Institute (2018). [The power of parity: Advancing women's equality in Asia Pacific](#)

Women Employees (by Percentage)



Women in Management (by Percentage)



Rating of COVID-19 Impacts on Business



Businesses worldwide have been significantly impacted: We asked our interviewees to rate, on a scale of 1-10, with 10 being the highest, the extent to which the pandemic had impacted their companies: **52 per cent rated it 8-10; 40 per cent rated it 5-7; and 7 per cent rated it 1-2.** (The other 1 per cent did not respond to the question.)

01

ALL BUSINESSES ARE AFFECTED BUT SOME FACE INCREASED VULNERABILITY

Effects on businesses varied widely depending on sector, size and location. But the business leaders commonly cited the inability to hold in-person events; difficulty shifting to work from home modality; decreased cash flow; shutdowns of factories and other production facilities; and supply chain disruptions. Overall, **technology, biomedical and pharmaceutical, and banking companies have**

been least affected, and in some cases have seen increased customer demand. In terms of the most affected, responses support global evidence that **the hardest-hit sectors are retail, garment and tourism.** Female workers are disproportionately concentrated in those sectors,³ making them vulnerable to losing their jobs or having their working hours cut.



“ The crisis has adverse effects on global supply chains. When I look at the most vulnerable, a good part of which we can find in Asia – particularly the Indian subcontinent, we know for a fact that when factories don't get paid the most vulnerable are immediately impacted. We know that most of these vulnerable workers are women, especially when you look at the textile sector where a clear majority of workers are women. **”**

– Christian Ewert, President, amfori (global organization) and WeEmpowerAsia Champion

Supply chain disruptions have had **greater impact on small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), which are already more vulnerable to economic shocks than large companies in normal circumstances.** About 96 per cent of all businesses in the Asia-Pacific are SMEs,⁴ and many of them are suppliers to multinationals that have been forced to slow or halt production. SME leaders interviewed said that in trying to survive the pandemic, they faced challenges including limited cash reserves; inability to get licenses to make hygiene products in demand due to

COVID-19; and delays in payments from customers. The CEO of an Indian garment company who wished to remain anonymous mentioned the **particular vulnerability of women-owned businesses that depend on the bigger suppliers that they produce for:** “We will need to figure out how to be creative with our finances and really make sure that we are not just putting our consumers and employees [first], but also taking care of our supply ecosystem or mentoring ecosystem, because a lot of these small industries ... [are] owned by women.”



“ Within a few days of the global pandemic and lockdown in India, a company with INR 7000 Crores (USD \$920 million) gross revenue requested us to reduce our pricing by 50 per cent for them. These are tough times for the entire ecosystem and therefore, our appeal to big businesses is to lead by example by standing by their startup or MSME partners. **”**

– Gagandeep Bhullar, Founder and CEO of Indian IT company SuperHuman Race

³ ILO (2020). Policy Brief: The World of Work and COVID-19

⁴ Asian Development Bank (2018). The Role of SMEs in Asia and Their Difficulties in Accessing Finance

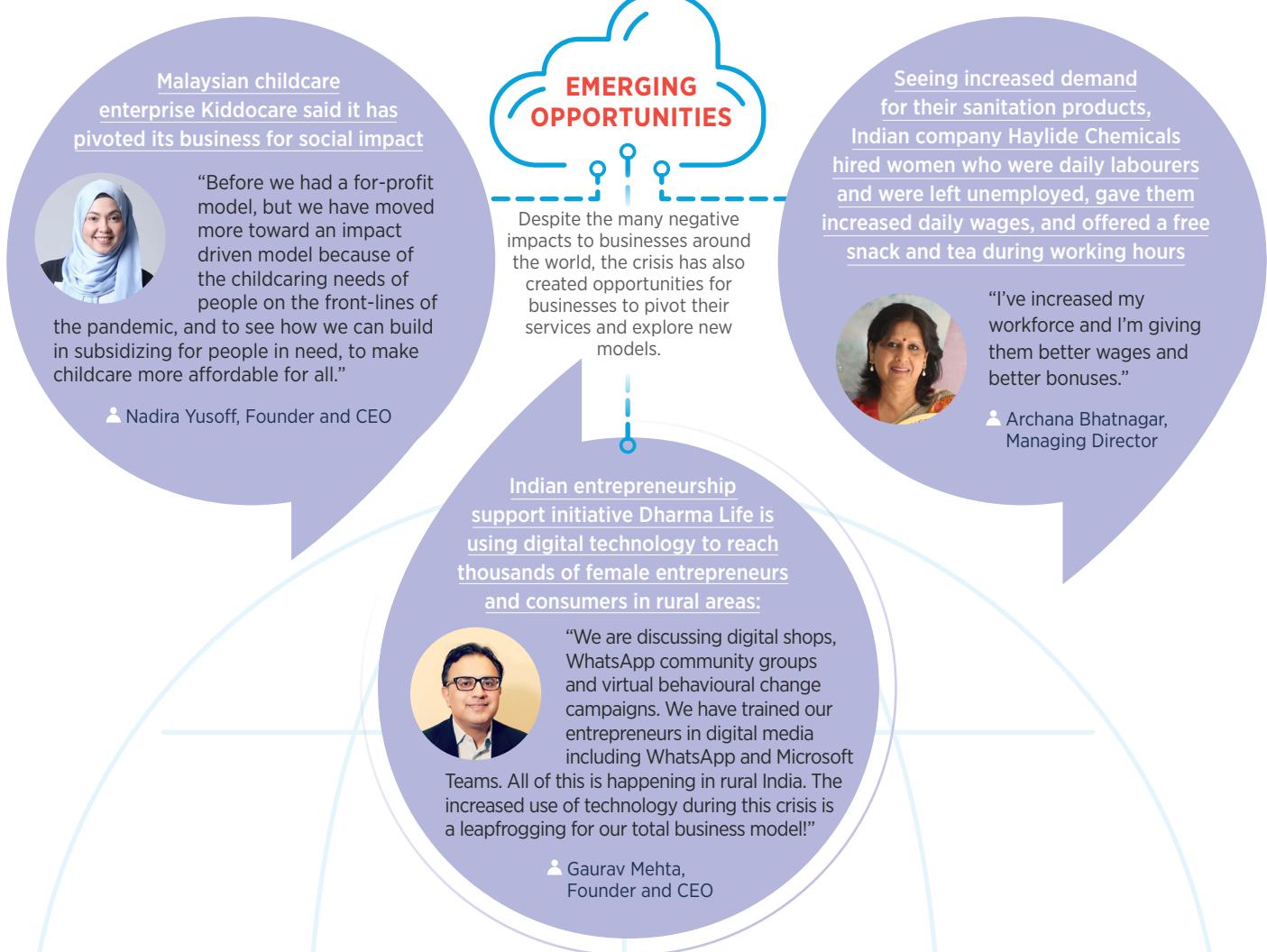
Research has confirmed the severe impact on SMEs and the particular vulnerability of women-owned enterprises. In UN Women's May 2020 survey of female entrepreneurs in Asia and Europe,⁵ **90 per cent said their business was negatively or very negatively affected by COVID-19.** Half of the respondents also said they were spending less time on their businesses due to an increase in caregiving responsibilities at home. Nearly all the SME leaders interviewed for the

present report said they were concerned about whether they could get funding for future development. Several female entrepreneurs said they had difficulties getting funding even in normal circumstances. Such accounts are in line with research that women-owned SMEs face gender-specific barriers to success,⁶ and since COVID-19 is hitting SMEs particularly hard,⁷ female entrepreneurs will face more difficulties raising funds post-pandemic.



“ The people who work for me are all motivated but in the last three years I found a lot of women complaining, ‘I can’t get the attention of investors – they are clearly biased because I’m a woman and I’m too young.’ Or they say, ‘I am a woman and I have obligations as a mother and as a spouse and don’t have the time to go to all these events that the young people go to. I cannot go to the places where I have to make pitches for funds, so I miss out on the funds.’ **Especially in Europe, there is zero help for women entrepreneurs unless you really are a fighter.** **”**

– Isabella de Michelis di Slonghelo, CEO, Ernieapp Ltd, Ireland



⁵ UN Women (2020). *Asia Pacific Needs Assessment for More Gender-Inclusive Entrepreneurship*

⁶ UN Women (2020). *Guidance for Action: Supporting SMEs to ensure the economic COVID-19 recovery is gender-responsive and inclusive*

⁷ OECD (2020). *Coronavirus (COVID-19): SME policy responses*

THE CENTRAL ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY

The crisis has magnified the importance of technology to business continuity, new business development and networking. Nearly every company leader spoke about the central role of technology in their response strategies. Examples of technological innovation are numerous: Dharma Life using WhatsApp; KiddoCare piloting virtual nannies; and Industree Foundation, an apparel social enterprise in India, exploring new ways to train women in remote rural areas with limited access to technology.

Youth entrepreneur Moh Suthanisy recounted how she started her delivery service Happy Grocers, which alerts farmers to orders through text messaging and uses social media to advertise in Bangkok.



"The farmers and fishermen couldn't sell their produce because of the city lockdown and the fewer numbers of people in the markets, so I thought that if I could connect to them directly and delivered to their doors, they will have a chance to distribute."

— Co-Founder, Happy Grocers, Thailand

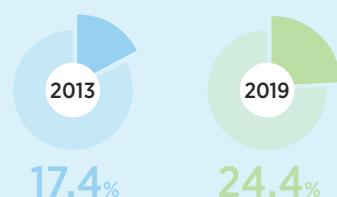
These examples are a testimonial to the power of female and young entrepreneurs to innovate and develop more inclusive business models to adapt to the demands of the future. Yet, the shift and reliance on technology to survive and recover from the pandemic also demonstrates the particular vulnerability of women, who have less access to technology compared to men, have fewer IT skills, and are concentrated in direct service jobs that cannot be shifted online.⁸

Such accounts are in line with research that women-owned SMEs face gender-specific barriers to success,⁹ and since COVID-19 is hitting SMEs particularly hard, female entrepreneurs will face more difficulties raising funds post-pandemic.

Further, the digital gender divide in the Asia-Pacific has been growing: Between 2013 and 2019, the internet usage gap between men and women rose from 17.4 per cent to 24.4 per cent.¹⁰ Harnessing technology in gender-sensitive ways throughout COVID-19 response and recovery strategies offers a powerful opportunity to move the needle on digital

gender equality. It is more important than ever to get girls into STEM education; give digital skills training to female workers and entrepreneurs; promote women in technology programs, and invest in increasing access for women and girls to technology, especially in rural communities.

Digital Gender Divide in the Asia-Pacific



“ The challenges that existed before have now increased. For example, digital technologies. Technology is essential and women are not there yet. This is going to be really important. If as a CEO, I have to dismiss someone, I will dismiss a position that is not essential, and technology is essential. We have to make an effort to be there. **”**

— Nerea Torres, CEO, Siemens Logistics, Spain

⁸ OECD (2019). *The Role of Education and Skills in Bridging the Digital Divide: Evidence from APEC Economies*.

⁹ UN Women (2020). *Guidance for Action: Supporting SMEs to ensure the economic COVID-19 recovery is gender-responsive and inclusive*

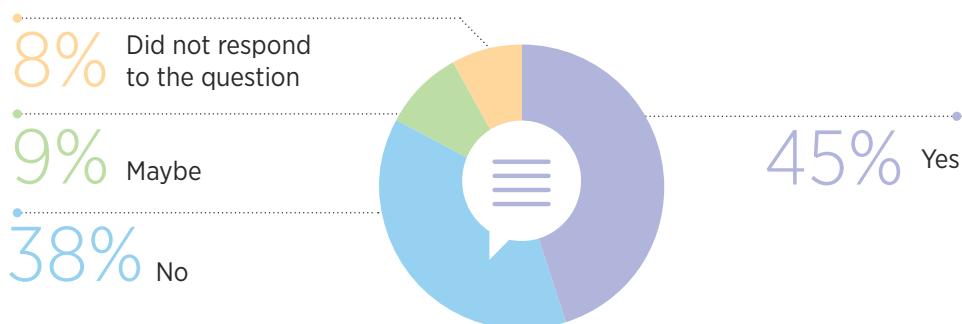
¹⁰ International Telecommunication Union (2019). “*The digital gender gap is growing fast in developing countries*,” in *Facts and Figures 2019: Measuring Digital Development*

02 ARE FEMALE EMPLOYEES AFFECTED DIFFERENTLY?

The survey respondents reported coronavirus impacts on employees that, as with businesses operations, varied widely depending on the company's location, size and sector. Almost all said their employees had adjustment difficulties

over health and finances, creating a work-life balance while working from home, and switching to remote working. **Perspectives on whether women were being impacted differently from men were mixed:**

Are women employees impacted differently?



While there is significant evidence of greater coronavirus impacts on female workers,¹¹ and especially in the Asia-Pacific,¹² many of our interviewees said both men and women were being impacted equally. "It's not a gender matter, not at all," one person said. Still, **many did point out that most women have been disproportionately bearing the increased burden of unpaid care work at home.**



“ Parents have an extra burden because they need to keep the family running while they are at home. But many of the domestic tasks still are disproportionately allocated to women. Quite simply, women take more of the responsibility for the home and must juggle family tasks with work tasks. **”**

- Niels Peter Van Doorn, COO, European Banking Federation, Belgium



“ During company calls, we talk about work but also about how things are going at home. We ask our male employees what they are contributing and we insist that women not overdo it because you know, the burden of all this while working from home falls largely on women. It's quite difficult for women during these times. There's a lot of pressure on them and it can obviously affect their mental health. **”**

- Vaishali Sinha, Chief Sustainability Officer, ReNew Power, India

¹¹ ILO (2020). [ILO Monitor : COVID-19 and the world of work. Third edition. Updated estimates and analysis](#)

¹² UN Women (2020). [The First 100 Days of COVID-19 in Asia and the Pacific: A Gender Lens](#)

Deeply ingrained social norms dictate that women take care of children and the elderly and perform the bulk of domestic chores around the world. Although this work often goes invisible, it equates to significant economic contributions.

In the Asia-Pacific, women perform a daily average of 4.1 times more care work than men, and up to 11 times more in some countries.¹³ There is mounting evidence that COVID-19 has increased women's care burden around the world and in the Asia-Pacific.¹⁴ For example, in UN Women's May 2020 survey of female entrepreneurs, 50 per cent reported that they were spending less time on their business activities because their caregiving responsibilities had increased.¹⁵ Several countries in the Asia-Pacific have declining female labour force participation rates.¹⁶ Combined with a 15% pay gap between men and women in Asia,¹⁷ this makes it more likely that women will be the ones staying home to care for children while their

higher earning male partners return to work. As such, women's additional care responsibilities resulting from COVID-19 pose a serious risk to women's equal economic participation and in the region.

Evidence from around the world also points to a **shadow pandemic** in the form of domestic violence, as many women are forced to stay home and family tensions are high.¹⁸ In China, some police stations received double the number of reports in January 2020 compared to the same period in 2019.¹⁹ The Social Development and Human Security Ministry in Thailand revealed that domestic violence incidents have nearly doubled since the onset of COVID-19.²⁰ None of our respondents mentioned receiving any reports of domestic violence from their employees. But several companies said demand for and use of their helplines and employee assistance programs has increased, and some said this could be related to domestic violence.

Women's Unpaid Care Work Around the World²¹



Women on average spend
4.1 hours/day
on unpaid care and
domestic work, compared to
1.7 hours/day
for men



Women's unpaid contributions
to healthcare equate to
2.35%
of global GDP, or the
equivalent of
USD \$1.5 trillion



When women's contribution
to all types of care (not just
healthcare) is considered,
this figure rises to
USD \$11 trillion

¹³ ILO (2018). Care Work and Care Jobs for the Future of Decent Work

¹⁴ UN Women (2020). Women's Unpaid and Underpaid Work in the Times of COVID-19; UN Women (2020). The Impact of COVID-19 on Unpaid Care and Domestic Work in Afghanistan; UN Women (2020). Unpaid Care Work Burden in the COVID-19 Crisis: Power, Kate (2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the care burden of women and families

¹⁵ UN Women (2020). Asia Pacific Needs Assessment for more Gender-Inclusive Entrepreneurship

¹⁶ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.ACTI.FE.ZS?locations=Z4>

¹⁷ Korn Ferry Gender Pay Index (2018). Two Cents: Mind the Gender Pay Gap

¹⁸ UN Women (2020). Infographic: The Shadow Pandemic – Violence Against Women and Girls and COVID-19

¹⁹ Wangqing, Zhang (2020). Domestic Violence Cases Surge during COVID-19 Epidemic

²⁰ Rem Thailand (2020). Abuse on rise amid outbreak

²¹ UN Women (2020). COVID-19 sends the care economy deeper into crisis mode

03 RESPONDING WITH A GENDER LENS: GOOD PRACTICES

Unilever Thailand CEO Robert Candelino says an inclusive business culture has become even more important during the pandemic, as the way a company responds during a crisis signals their core values to current and future customers and employees. Gender equality has been in the core of Unilever's business strategy over the last decade and Unilever Global was one of the first signatories of the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs).

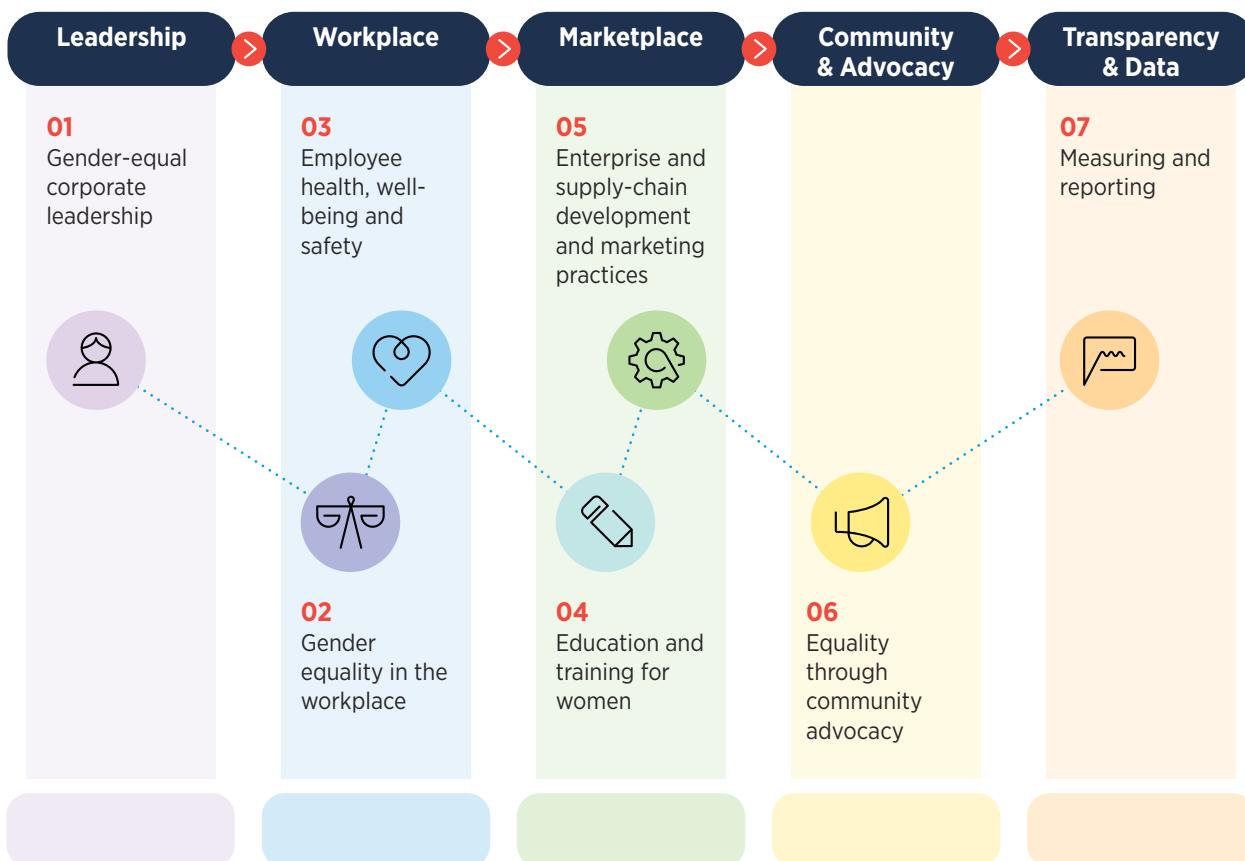


“ Especially important in a crisis like COVID-19 are the principles the company has, and the purpose the company and its people are driven by. A crisis like this magnifies who you really are. **”**

- Robert Candelino, CEO, Unilever Thailand

The Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs), which UN Women and United Nations Global Compact jointly developed 10 years ago, guide businesses to create a more inclusive culture, from the company leadership to the workplace to the wider community.²²

The Women's Empowerment Principles Value Chain Approach



²² <https://www.weps.org/>

Although only **13 of the 65 companies that participated in the survey are WEPs signatories**, interviews surfaced several best practices that companies are implementing across the five key WEPs pillars.

Leadership

- Several companies have reaffirmed their commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment.



"Of course we are going to continue our work to support women's empowerment. More than ever, we encourage companies to promote more women in leadership positions. The crisis calls for management innovation and gender diversity will be a key driver to uncover such new models. We are all going to promote this more than ever."

- Chia-Lin Coispeau, Founding Partner of Maverlinn Advisory Services in China

- The founding team at the SuperHuman Race, an Indian technology startup, has invested personal savings in the company to keep the business afloat and thereby avoid employee layoffs or pay-cuts.

"At SuperHuman Race, we believe that since employees don't have a risk and revenue sharing relationship with employers, it is unfair to pass the burden of a crisis on employees. So, any sacrifices that have to be made will be made by the directors of the company and neither employee pay nor jobs will not be impacted in any way".

- Gagandeep Bhullar, Founder and CEO of Indian IT company SuperHuman Race

Workplace

- In Philippines, IBM has reaffirmed its long-standing commitment to work from home policies and flexibility for employees who need to care for families. It has started virtual peer support groups for employees. Another company in the Philippines, Novare Technologies, also said it recognizes the specific needs of female employees:



"When we are on a call and we hear, 'Mama, I need this,' or someone crying in the background, we adjust to it. It is okay, tend to your children first. It is something that we truly understand." - Christopher Cometa, COO



"Industree Foundation, an Indian apparel social enterprise, is offering virtual training on soft skills for factory workers who have lost their jobs while exploring options for them to work at home" - Susan Bhaktul, CEO Apparel Industree Foundation

- Several companies have expanded employee assistance programs. For example, Malaysian finance company Balai PNB hired an in-house psychologist to be available for any employee feeling stressed. Though established prior to the pandemic, Grab Indonesia displays a long-standing best practice by having a dedicated team, trained by experts, to handle domestic violence complaints raised by employees.
- Several companies are offering e-learning courses for workers. These provide virtual meditation, physical exercise, and education and entertainment for children.



The importance of mentorship and female peer support networks:

Though many companies are offering virtual support groups, not many of these groups are targeted at female employees. Yet, several female interviewees stressed the importance of having mentoring and support networks for women. With the cancellation of offline events that normally offer networking and the chance to find solidarity among other women entrepreneurs and workers, it will be more important than ever to support innovative digital measures to ensure these opportunities are not lost.

Marketplace

- Several companies are developing strategies to support their supply chains. These strategies include increased and deeper engagement with suppliers to understand their specific needs and extending employee benefits to workers employed in supply chains:



"You need to extensively dialogue with all actors in your supply chain on how this can be overcome together. Assuming in four months we go back to a new normal, you will still need to rely on your supply chain. If your producers have gone bankrupt, this is not going to help you in anyway. We need dialogue, solidarity and collaboration to overcome this." – Christian Ewert, President, amfori

- In the Philippines, SM Investment Corporation is offering rent abatements to tenants, many of which are SMEs, in its office buildings.
- Dragonfly360 Thailand is using its reach and influence to support female entrepreneurs:



"We're trying to support small communities and female entrepreneurs. Everyone from every income level is suffering. We are trying to figure out how to support these business models and raise their profile because we have the network and the public relations to do so." – Pranapda 'Pam' Phornprapha, Founder, Dragonfly360 and Managing Director, Siam Motor Company

Community & Advocacy

- Dharma Life in India is leveraging its network of 15,000 female entrepreneurs to deliver government messages on COVID-19 to people in rural areas where access to information is limited.
- Recognizing that women are under increased responsibilities for care and domestic work, ReNew Power in India is partnering with NGOs, consultants, local government and other corporates to distribute meals throughout their local community and explore funding and solutions for healthcare, infrastructure, and financial support.

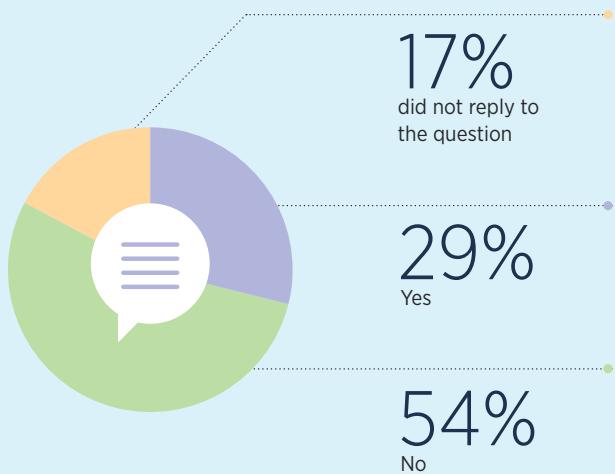
Transparency & Data

- The Indian branch of a multinational consumer goods company that chose to remain anonymous has expanded its pre-COVID-19 commitment to gather more gender and diversity data and to report gender pay statistics in its biggest markets worldwide. **"We are setting a new benchmark ... lessons that people can learn from."** – Anonymous, Diversity and Inclusion Lead
- An organization promoting ethical trade within the private sector emphasized the importance of collecting gender-disaggregated data in the current context: **"There is an opportunity here to dig into whether women are being given a voice in new business models, whether this is a successful new strategy for return to work, whether there have been difficulties over these past months, and what responsibilities businesses have, especially if there is now an increase in domestic violence. It's that kind of ground-level data that could be really helpful in formalizing plans to tackle the crisis."**
– Global Ethical Supply Chain Organization

04 A MORE GENDER-CONSCIOUS APPROACH IS NEEDED

Company leaders said they were concerned about the different needs of employees, but less than one-third reported taking specific measures to support women employees.

Are you taking specific measures to support female employees?



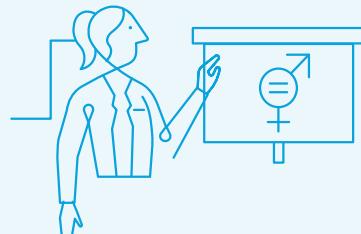
Among the majority who did not take measures, many insisted that their companies were “gender neutral” both before and during COVID-19. One interviewee said the because the founder of the company was a woman, “[there is no problem with regards to gender – no pay gap or anything like that.](#)”

Another respondent, a female CEO, said her policies on employees did not have any gender bias – but didn’t appear to take into account that such policies may disproportionately hurt women, who typically hold

the most vulnerable jobs:

“If we have some favorable policies for female workers, such as special welfare or care, I won’t stop them at this time. But when it comes to hourly workers or non-contracted employees, then if I am trying to optimize employee structure, their importance is low. So ... when I reduce expenses, I won’t care about whether you are female or male, I have to lay you off.”

Interviewees did provide examples of practices that support employees in ways that benefit women, as described above.



Still, **the fact that only 29 per cent of those interviewed took actions that specifically targeted women – when evidence overwhelmingly shows the pandemic has disproportionately hurt women – shows that businesses need to more consciously integrate a gender perspective into their responses to the pandemic.**

05 A CALL TO ACTION

As businesses slowly shift from immediate response to long-term recovery, it is important to ensure that gains made on gender equality are not lost. **Seventy-nine per cent of respondents said their company had made commitments before the pandemic to support women's empowerment. When asked if they thought the pandemic would affect these commitments, 51 per cent said no.** Many see these initiatives as inherent to the company culture, as exemplified by Sharinee 'Shannon' Kalayanamitr Partner at Pan-Asian venture capital company Gobi Partners:



"Historically we have undertaken many initiatives for women's empowerment: We regularly support women's entrepreneurship workshops, speak at conferences and provide mentorship sessions. Today, 31 per cent of our portfolio companies have women founders, and we have pledged USD \$50 million to actively invest in and help women entrepreneurs, as we know that women are not being allocated sufficient funding worldwide. This is all part of our company's DNA and we will continue this work no matter what results from the pandemic."

Still, **37 per cent said it would affect their ability to carry out these commitments.** They mainly mentioned planned in-person activities that are difficult to shift online, such as sports camps for girls and trainings for rural women. When asked about the outlook for gender equality, responses were mixed.

Twenty-six per cent did not respond to the question. Twenty-one per cent predicted that the pandemic will lead to greater progress on gender equality.

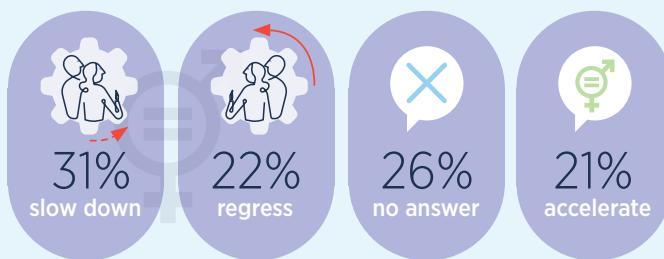
Of those who saw a positive outlook, some said it would open up opportunities for women to shine as leaders and innovators and for men to step up and do their share of the housework. Several also said the shift to performance measurement based on outcomes rather than on being present would benefit women who are not always able to stay at work late or attend after-hours networking events.



"The COVID-19 pandemic showed the world how female leaders, doctors and housewives can greatly contribute to the safety of people in every family, business and operation. This is an opportunity for women to strengthen their roles. So I think the pandemic will increase progress on gender equality."

- Phung Nguyen Hai Yen, Deputy CEO, Vietcombank

How will COVID-19 affect progress towards gender equality?



during a time like this, concerns about women's empowerment and gender equality get swallowed because people are just trying to survive." Several leaders also emphasized the importance of maintaining awareness of how COVID-19 has impacted women differently.

While some saw a promising outlook, the majority of those interviewed saw risks to gender equality. Many expressed concern that gender equality efforts would be pushed to the back burner as companies focus on financial survival. As Pranapda 'Pam' Phornprapha states: "Unfortunately,



“ The gender perspective that we apply in a lot of decision-making, especially in recruiting during normal times, they're just thrown out of the window during a crisis, and that is something we will have to be very, very mindful of. **”**

- Niels Fibæk-Jensen, CEO and cofounder of Danish fintech company Matter



“ We must raise awareness and appreciation of how complicated this situation has been for women. We need to mentor both female and the male leaders on this so that these problems will stay on their radar screens. **”**

- Dorothee Belz, Founder and Managing Director of German consulting company Go Digit

Overall, the diversity of opinions highlights the importance of gathering more data and gaining a deeper understanding of the gender-specific impacts in the crisis and response phases. Although the companies surveyed have carried out several good practices that benefitted women, the fact that many failed to see the gender-specific impacts and specifically support female employees reveals a broader need for more gender-sensitive private sector policies.



WHAT CAN COMPANIES DO NOW?

STEP 1

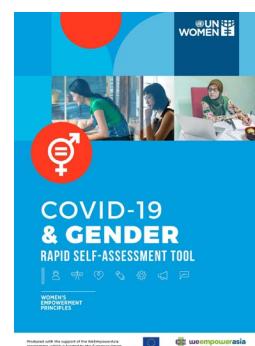
Show leadership and commitment by signing the WEPs:

Publicly commit to taking a gender-inclusive stance in your response and recovery strategy by signing the WEPs and joining a WEPs practice and exchange network of 3,210 companies worldwide, including more than 700 in the Asia-Pacific.

STEP 2

Take the COVID-19 & Gender Rapid Self-Assessment Tool

This is a free and easy-to-use resource that WeEmpowerAsia developed to help businesses incorporate a gender perspective into their response and recovery plans. Building on the seven Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs), this tool enables companies to assess their COVID-19 response and ensure they are supporting women during and beyond the crisis with gender-sensitive measures throughout their value chain in five areas: leadership, workplace, marketplace, community and sex-disaggregated data.



STEP 3

Create an Action Plan:

The full toolkit includes detailed guidance and an Excel-based version that can be used to create a personalized action plan based on what steps the company has taken to date. The toolkit categorizes recommended actions into low, medium and high priority, providing companies with a clear path forward.



For more information:

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