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**ADDRESSING GENDER
INEQUALITY
IN THE WORKPLACE**

8 MARCH 2021
4PM-5.30PM GMT

Gender Inequality in the Workplace: Advancing Progress on SDG 5

Online Panel Discussion and Collaboration Forum
International Women's Day – March 8, 2021

Summary Report

Introduction

In honor of **International Women's Day 2021**, **Natura &Co** and **GlobeScan** hosted a **panel discussion and online forum** focused on addressing gender inequality in the workplace and advancing greater progress on **SDG 5 (Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls)**. During this innovative dialogue, panelists and participants shared ideas on how to accelerate progress on gender inequality by better supporting women in the workplace.

The event began with a panel discussion featuring an expert group of female leaders, and was then followed by an interactive, text-based discussion where forum participants shared their thoughts and examples on how we can accelerate progress toward achieving **SDG 5**.

Moderator:



Alys Key
Deputy Money and
Business Editor, The i Paper

During the event, we were joined online by more than **250 people** from **25 countries**, posting **140 comments**. The event was also simultaneously broadcast by LinkedIn. The collective contributions and examples shared by participants helped to make this a truly celebratory and impactful discussion.

This report summarizes the exciting and innovative ideas captured during the panel discussion and text-based forum.

Panelists



Angela Cretu
Chief Executive
Officer, Avon



Alessandra Orofino
Activist, Co-Founder
and Executive
Director, Nossas



Charmian Love
Co-Founder, B
Corp UK



Sanda Ojiambo
CEO and Executive
Director, UNGC

Progress and Optimism on Achieving SDG 5 by 2030

“What is most optimistic for me is that the path forward is clear. But we cannot make progress on gender issues by solely focusing on what women need to do. It is very important to empower ourselves, but it needs to be a partnership to truly move things forward.”
– Sanda Ojiambo

While we are **lagging far behind where we should be** on progress toward SDG 5, **there have been pockets of progress** in certain areas of gender equality:

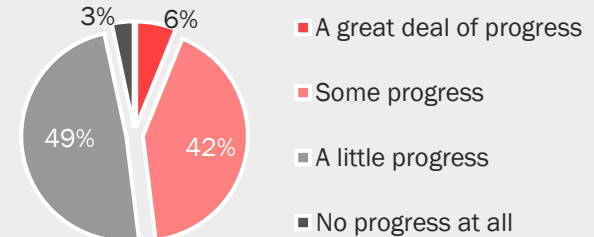
- **Restrictions on harmful cultural practices** such as bride price and female genital mutilation have gained momentum, as well as **improved access to education** for young girls.
- Promisingly, **gender parity has been pushed forward in corporate agendas** and has become more of a focus for companies over the past five years.
- **More women are serving as members of parliament and business leaders than ever before**, most recently with the US having the first female Vice President in the country.

While there is still a lot of work to be done, **there is general optimism that SDG5 can be achieved through shared partnership and commitment between genders**, which is essential to advancing progress on gender equality.

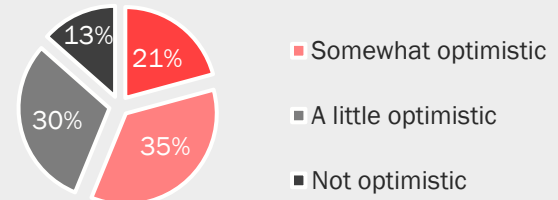
“What is most important is being hyper aware of the challenges we are still facing and having the urgency to act.”
– Charmian Love

Results from registration question polls reveal that while there has been little perceived progress on SDG 5, there is a strong sense of optimism that it can still be achieved by 2030.

How much progress do you think has been made on SDG 5 over the past five years?



What is your level of optimism that we can achieve SDG 5 by 2030?



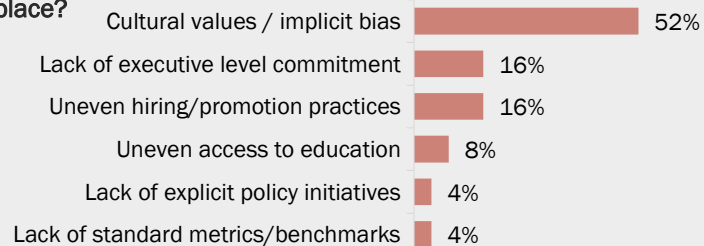
Key Barriers to Progress on Workplace Gender Equality

Several key barriers preventing progress on gender equality in the workplace were identified during the panel discussion and forum:

- **Gender roles / unpaid care work:** The unbalanced role that women play in providing childcare, doing housework, and associated social pressures that perpetuate the unequal responsibilities at home between genders. Women often have to make a choice between a career and a family. Social stigmas prevent men from taking paternity leave, leaving the burden on their partner.
- **Sexual assault / violence against women:** Microaggressions against women in the workplace and the threat or lived experience of sexual assault or violence can keep women out of certain jobs and functions in society.

Forum participants voted via an in-forum poll and identified cultural values / implicit bias as the most significant driver of workplace gender inequality.

What do you feel is the biggest driver of gender inequality within the workplace?



- **Access to education:** In many countries, young women still cannot access education, and investments in women's education are not made in many countries as women are seen to be more valuable as homemakers.
- **Industry biases:** Biases around what subjects or industries are seen as socially acceptable for women to participate in (i.e., STEM).
- **Lack of women in leadership positions:** Significant gap in women's representation in leadership positions across all sectors.
- **Non-holistic approach:** Women's empowerment is often approached as an isolated, linear issue. However, it is deeply interconnected to race, education, economic empowerment, etc., and we must use a multisectoral approach to truly tackle the issue and its barriers.

🗨️ *Once there is gender inequality at home, there will be gender equality in the workplace.* 🗨️
– Alessandra Orofino

🗨️ *When you talk gender; you need to talk health; you need to talk education; you need to talk economic empowerment; you need to talk about community mobilization. It is not a single-track solution that is going to help dismantle all these barriers.* 🗨️
– Sanda Ojiambo

COVID-19's Impact on Workplace Gender Inequality

Any crisis has never been gentle to women – there is always a disproportionate impact.
– Angela Cretu

COVID-19 is seen as having a disproportionate impact on women and has exacerbated existing gender inequalities in the workplace:

- **Women bear the brunt of work at home and are often solely responsible for childcare.** With children intermittently out of school, women are required to care for their children, often providing homeschooling while **juggling these tasks alongside their job**. This can affect their performance at work, which can be held against them, affecting career advancement opportunities and **perpetuating gender-imbalanced workplaces**.
- Women are facing economic difficulties as a result of the pandemic, as their **jobs and livelihoods are more vulnerable**. **Female job loss rates are particularly high** given the industries they often participate in (i.e., retail, food service, etc.), and **women have disproportionately had to drop out of the workforce** due to demands at home.
- COVID-19 has had a significant **impact on women-owned micro-businesses and female entrepreneurship**. Women tend to run small or micro-businesses, a category that has been most impacted by COVID-19. Women have lost investments in these businesses and face increased difficulties in accessing financing.

Participants shared ideas for how to combat these impacts of COVID-19 on women in the workplace:

- Employers should **offer women flexible work arrangements** to help them balance the demands of work and home.
- Companies should **provide a network of support or programs to mentor and support women and address stress and mental health** issues.
- **Adjust and rethink how employee success is measured**, with KPIs, goals, and career paths that reflect the multitude of responsibilities that women have at home and at work.
- **Improving affordability and accessibility of childcare**, supporting funding for universal childcare.
- **Economic stimulus funding focused on gender** to allow the re-emergence of women's small and micro-enterprise work.
- **Crises policies and benefit packages** to be prepared for future crises and the burden that is placed on women throughout (reduced hours, increased flexibility, etc.).



The Role of Business

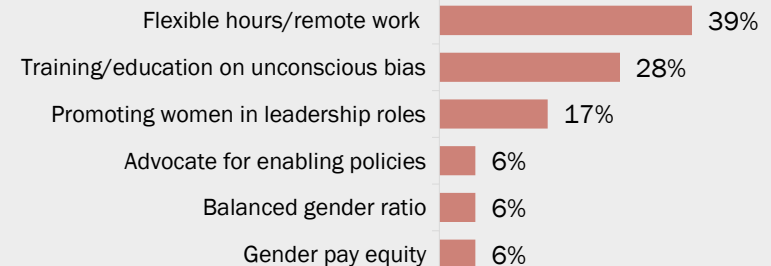
There is a clear perception that business can help to overcome the many barriers preventing gender equality in the workplace. These are some of the ideas that can be adopted by companies:

- Businesses need to recognize that **different employees flourish under different circumstances and allow for flexibility in the workplace. Traditional, rigid, male-dominated workplaces need to be transformed** in order to accommodate different lifestyles and engage professional value in a flexible way, while **erasing the false dichotomy between work life and family life.**
- It is critical that **businesses look not only at gender but also at other elements of equity such as ethnicity and sexual orientation. Addressing unconscious bias through training courses and deep listening** and having the courage to initiate challenging conversations are critical and will drive more long-term positive change within organizations.
- Businesses should **take affirmative action to put women in leadership roles**, as having **representation at a senior level is critical in influencing younger generations and setting a new era of change.** Selecting candidates for senior positions by looking beyond time served or presence in certain networks, and instead focusing on mindset and capability. **Creating a leadership team with a balance of gender as well as ethnicity and LGBTQ+** to ensure there is fair representation is also important.

- Businesses should **speak out and play an advocacy role** in facilitating gender equality in the workplace. This should **extend beyond their own direct operations** and should **focus on advocating for new industry standards.**
- Companies should **demonstrate full transparency with their employees on compensation and existing gender pay gaps.** Businesses and governments must collaborate to measure full transparency for equal pay.

Forum participants voted via an in-forum poll and suggest allowing flexible hours and remote work and providing training on unconscious bias are most important for businesses to prioritize.

Which of the following should businesses prioritize in reducing workplace gender inequalities?

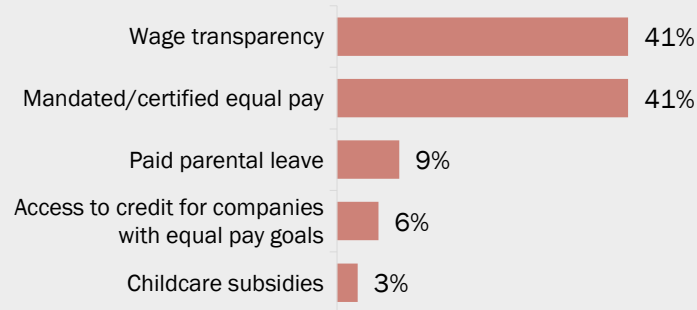


Overcoming Barriers and Looking Ahead

🗨️ We need to take a 360 look at what it means to really support women within the workplace because there are many fundamental unseen barriers and biases that we must address. 🗨️
– Sanda Ojiambo

Forum participants voting via an in-forum poll suggest that businesses should collaborate with governments to promote wage transparency and mandated equal pay.

Which of the following enabling public policies should businesses play a more active role in advocating for to advance workplace gender equality?



🗨️ There is a role for our businesses and governments to really come together and measure in full transparency for equal roles, equal pay, no matter the level in the organization; no matter the geography; no matter the culture. 🗨️
– Angela Cretu

Though the panel discussion and forum, two key lessons were shared that are fundamentally important lenses to apply in evaluating progress on workplace gender equality:

- There must be a **multisectoral, systems-wide approach** to make real progress. There is not one single solution, as the **many barriers are interconnected**. Equality in the workplace **begins with access to education** and allowing women to flourish from the start, and includes **economic freedom, racial equality, and safe workplaces** without the fear of sexual harassment. There are a multitude of interlinked factors that **need to be holistically addressed** to create lasting change.
- **Gender equality in the workplace cannot be a cause championed by women alone. Young boys and men need to be engaged in these challenges** and educated around the discrepancies between genders. Sharing real cases and statistics on women's disempowerment in the workplace can help them understand the reality of the situation. **Men need to be prepared and educated from a young age to understand unconscious bias and predatory behavior**. Everyone must be engaged and at the table in order to drive lasting outcomes.

Thank you

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Established in 1987, GlobeScan has offices in Cape Town, Hong Kong, London, Paris, San Francisco, São Paulo and Toronto, and is a signatory to the UN Global Compact and a Certified B Corporation.

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