

Building Back Gender-Equal:

Challenging Stereotypes and Gender Bias in Workplaces, Marketing and Communications to Build More Inclusive Societies

10:00-11:30 (Bangkok time, GMT+7), 10 June 2020

United Nations Virtual Forum on Responsible Business and Human Rights

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Background

Empowering women to participate fully in economic life is essential to building inclusive, sustainable and just economies along with improving the quality of life for women, men, girls, boys, families and communities. Facing the aftermath of the global economic shock created by COVID-19, women's economic empowerment will be even more essential if we are to ensure that the economic recovery is as rapid as possible and includes all members of society. The crisis has laid bare several long-standing issues that impede women's full and equal economic participation in the Asia-Pacific region, including the burden of unpaid care work, under-representation of women in leadership and management positions, domestic violence, sexual harassment, and the disproportionate concentration of women in low-wage, low-skilled jobs and the informal economy.

Many of these issues are ultimately rooted in gendered stereotypes and discriminatory social norms that affect individuals since the early moments of their lives. They affect women across business value chains, from female CEOs to women running small businesses to garment factory workers.

Spurred by COVID-19 lockdowns and work-from-home mandates, web traffic is surging, and people are spending more time than ever consuming media and information through screens, which means increased exposure to communications that may be potentially harmful. With its widespread influence and reach, the private sector is uniquely positioned to use the crisis as an opportunity to accelerate the dissemination of progressive communications, both within their companies and in external outreach. This is a chance to disrupt harmful gender stereotypes and lead the creation of a more gender-equal, resilient and inclusive society after the pandemic.

Session Description

The **Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs)**, developed by UN Women and UN Global Compact and celebrating their 10th anniversary in 2020, consist of 7 principles that provide a holistic approach for

private sector businesses to build more gender-inclusive business cultures across their value-chains from workplace to marketplace and community at large.

This session will use the WEPs as a frame and will be complemented by UN Women's and UNICEF's work through the **Unstereotype Alliance**, to surface the ways gender bias, stereotypes and communications practices create gendered impacts in businesses across multiple channels: leadership (occupational segregation linked to social norms and stereotypes), workplace (women workers' disproportionate share of unpaid care work and family responsibilities), marketplace (discriminatory job advertising and concentration of women in low-wage work) and community (reinforcing gendered roles through widespread marketing and advertising practices).

Panellists will explain and emphasize that COVID-19 is not creating new stereotypes but surfacing those that have long harmed women and girls, making it more important than ever to create change. Through brief presentations and interactive discussion, concrete recommendations and actions will be provided, and the private sector will be called upon to use the crisis as a catalyst to step up and commit to progressive communications and gender-inclusive policies to contribute to an inclusive business world moving forward

Session Objectives

This session aims to:

- Raise awareness of the business and societal implications of gendered and stereotypical marketing and communication;
- Get more businesses to view the pivotal role of communication across their business and in promoting gender equality, by transforming attitudes and norms that perpetuate gender-based discrimination;
- Provide concrete recommendations for immediate and long-term actions companies can take to break gender biases and commit to more gender-equal business practices;
- Celebrate the 10th anniversary of the WEPs and mobilize more companies to demonstrate leadership by signing the WEPs and joining the Unstereotype Alliance as a commitment to 'Build Back Gender-Equal'.

Questions

- How does gender-bias have a company-wide impact, from leadership through to employees and from recruitment to career progression?
- How is COVID-19 surfacing the urgency for businesses more than ever to commit to gender equality and impacts this will have on their business?

- How progressive marketing and communication can be a game-changer towards achieving SDG #5 'Gender-Equality' and create more inclusive societies at large?
- How can marketing communications during the COVID-19 crisis act as a positive force in driving gender equality for the benefit of all and avoid harmful gender stereotypes that increase the burden on women and girls?

Speakers

- **Ms. Vu Kim Hue**, Senior Labour Relations Manager, Crystal Group Limited
- **Mr. Stephen Loerke**, CEO, World Federation of Advertisers
- **Ms. Nishta Satyam**, Deputy Country Representative and O-I-C, India MCO, UN Women
- **Ms. Gerda Binder**, Regional Gender Advisor, UNICEF East Asia and the Pacific
- **Ms. Katja Freiwald (moderator)**, Regional Programme Manager, WeEmpower Asia, UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific