



# 3<sup>rd</sup> Roundtable on the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Benchmark

Bangalore - 9 December 2019  
Summary Report

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# Background



The World Benchmarking Alliance (WBA) aims to incentivise and accelerate the private sector's efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) developed by the United Nations in 2015. WBA has set out to achieve this goal by developing a series of benchmarks that will compare companies' performance on the SDGs. One of these benchmarks, which was identified as key following extensive consultations with various stakeholders in 2018, is the Gender Equality & Women's Empowerment Benchmark (GEWEB): a benchmark that focuses specifically on the role of companies in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment.

WBA aims to develop its benchmarks through consultation, dialogue and partnerships. The process of developing GEWEB has thus far been the following:

- Desk-based research and expert interviews on existing gender initiatives were conducted to identify current gaps in the field, relevant themes and industries to be included in the benchmark, leading to an [initial scoping report](#) (September 2018).
- Further consultations and dialogue with stakeholders took place to gather input for the methodology and create awareness around GEWEB, including a [roundtable](#) (Mumbai, India, March 2019). The roundtable brought together different stakeholders to identify the primary industry that GEWEB should target in

its first iteration and to identify key measurement areas. It was decided that the first industry to examine would be Apparel.

- A second [roundtable](#) for GEWEB was held (on the eve of the Women Deliver conference, Vancouver, Canada, June 2019) that brought together multiple stakeholders to further evolve the benchmark's measurement areas.
- Further desk-based research followed into the relevant principles and normative standards, reporting frameworks and sector-, product- and issue-specific initiatives that exist today that GEWEB could align with, learn and draw from. This process, paired with continued consultation with experts, led to the development of the [GEWEB draft methodology](#) (December 2019).
- A third roundtable was organized by WBA (Bangalore, India, December 2019) to present the draft methodology to the private sector.

The current report summarises the main outcomes and discussions with companies during the 3rd roundtable in Bangalore. The event took place on 9 December 2019 and it was a company-only event. Participants at this event were invited to provide feedback, as well as share insights and expectations for the further development of GEWEB. Twelve leading apparel companies with global operations were present at the roundtable. These represented about a third

# Background



of the 36 apparel companies in scope for the first benchmarking cycle of GEWEB, and two companies outside of scope.

The roundtable kicked off with an overview of WBA and how it seeks to drive the transformational change to achieve the UN SDGs. It was followed by an overview of GEWEB, its structure and the measurement areas. Breakout sessions were held so that the draft GEWEB indicators could be discussed in detail and participants could raise questions and offer candid feedback. Chatham House rules applied to provide a safe space where participants could speak freely and honestly. At the end of the roundtable, a quick summary of the roundtable as well as an overview of next steps were shared.

# Feedback on Draft Methodology



In general, there was consensus from the group that the proposed methodology of GEWEB is on the right track, both in terms of the key themes captured and the indicators drafted. Additionally, the key takeaways from the event are summarised as follows:

- **Define key concepts:** A number of terms referred to in the GEWEB methodology need to be more clearly defined to provide clarity to companies as to what is being assessed and what information they should provide as part of the assessment. These include, for example, the terms ‘supply chain’ and ‘gender-responsive.’
- **Clarify the (detailed) scope:** The GEWEB methodology needs to clearly state the portion(s) of a company’s global footprint it is addressing throughout the benchmark. This includes clarifying whether company headquarters, their retail stores and/or their supply chains (including specific tiers) are in scope.
- **Recognise the challenges:** Some components of the GEWEB methodology will be challenging for companies to provide data on, including living wage, supplier diversity and flexible work. The GEWEB methodology should reflect these challenges where possible.

“Some aspects of GEWEB are very aspirational, but getting people to think from a systemic perspective rather than just a transaction is the journey we need to take. Eventually we will get there as the pace for change is increasing.”

*Roundtable participant*

The following section presents more detailed feedback, per measurement area:

## Governance & Strategy

- **Consider the relative weighting:** One participant noted that this measurement area has been allocated a weighting of 20%, making each indicator in this section have a weighting of 2%, which is quite different (and lower) than the individual weighting of other indicators. It was suggested to ensure that the relative weighting of indicators be assessed overall to ensure the right balance is achieved.
- **Clarify the indicator labels:** It would be helpful to clarify the scope of these indicators as relates to a company’s full value chain. For example, a participant suggested that the first seven indicators should be labelled as ‘workplace indicators’ to make it clear to which part of a business the indicators apply to.

# Feedback on Draft Methodology



- **Define key terms:** Collective discussions revealed that there was confusion as to what was meant by a few key terms and therefore it would be helpful if these were clearly defined in the GEWEB methodology. Examples included “gender-responsive,” “strategic business priority” and “public commitment.”
  - **Assess Responsible Sourcing policies:** A participant noted that a gap in this measurement area is that an indicator does not exist that assesses a company’s Responsible Sourcing Policy. It was stated that most companies have a Responsible Sourcing Policy, and that Policy demonstrates a company’s commitment to addressing important topics with their suppliers, including human rights.
- ## Representation
- **Clarify leadership designation vs. band levels:** There was broad consensus for further clarification regarding the levels of leadership in an organisation due to differences in reporting by various companies. Some companies use band levels or reward levels rather than leadership designation. While this can be proprietary information that a company is unwilling to disclose, it would be helpful for the GEWEB methodology to provide clarity.
  - **Assess select indicators in both workplace and supply chain:** Certain indicator topics are focused in only one part of the value chain and some participants suggested they also be considered for other parts of the value chain. Examples include “occupational segregation” currently focused on the workplace, but not in the supply chain and “discrimination against pregnant/married women” currently focused on the supply chain, but not in the workplace.
  - **Refine key terms:** Some participants felt that select terminology used in the GEWEB methodology do not fully reflect the language of their everyday business. For example “worker” could be used solely in the supply chain, while “employee” could be used in the workplace. Similarly, “line manager” could be used in addition to “supervisor”, where an explanation could also be included to indicate the first level of management above workers.
  - **Refine supplier diversity:** Some participants felt that companies generally aren’t screening for whether their suppliers are women-owned or women-led businesses separately. As such, they felt that GEWEB should focus on either women-owned or women-led businesses, rather than focusing on both in one indicator. Furthermore, one participant indicated that GEWEB needs to consider the difference between “trade” (e.g. shoe/apparel factories) and “non-trade” suppliers (e.g. stationery, computer equipment, etc.).

# Feedback on Draft Methodology



## Compensation & Benefits

- **Evolve the flexible work indicator:** Participants noted that assessing flexible work benefits in the workplace seems “very ambitious”. It was suggested that in addition to maternity / paternity leave and childcare support, “other benefits” (e.g., additional leave where a worker is given a certain number of hours of extra leave in a set period to arrive late) could be assessed instead of flexible work so this measurement area takes into account different benefits models.
- **Clarify the application of workplace benefits indicators:** The methodology needs to specify whether the childcare support and flexible work workplace indicators (i.e., CB.W.3, CB.W.4) only apply to a company’s headquarters or also to their retail stores. These benefits, particularly flexible work benefits, are more difficult to offer to workers in apparel stores or to workers in company owned and operated manufacturing divisions.
- **Consider the challenges behind living wage:** Participants agreed that ensuring a living wage is paid to workers in company supply chains is very difficult. A key challenge noted in relation to the payment of living wages to supply chain workers is that it varies across countries. One participant suggested that the indicator should assess the systems / processes that companies have

in place to support the payment of a living wage in supply chains, rather than the payment of a living wage itself. Another participant suggested that companies that promote collective bargaining agreements should be given credit in this indicator. Some participants recommended that the indicator should be replaced with a gender pay gap in supply chains indicator whereby a company is assessed on whether there is a gap between genders in the compensation provided to supply chain workers above the minimum wage.

## Health & Well-Being

- **Note the feasibility of collecting and sharing requested information:** There was broad consensus among participants regarding the availability of information to be supplied for the Health & Well-being indicators. A number of participants perceived these indicators as a ‘minimum requirement’ from companies, certainly that which is related to occupational health and safety compliance.

## Violence & Harassment

- **Add an indicator for violence and harassment grievance mechanism in the supply chain:** One participant noted that there is a gap in the methodology in this measurement area.

# Feedback on Draft Methodology

One of the workplace indicators assesses a company's violence and harassment grievance mechanism but the same isn't assessed at the supply chain level. It was recommended that this gap should be addressed either by introducing a new indicator or making clear where the violence and harassment grievance process in the supply chain will be assessed in the methodology.

## Community

- **Expect rich content on community engagement.** Although the discussions around community engagement for companies were limited, there was a lot of interest among participants to share information on their community efforts.



## Next steps

The input and feedback received during this company roundtable reaffirmed the need for, and value of, GEWEB among companies and is currently being used to inform the continued development of the GEWEB methodology, which has just finished the public consultation phase. All stakeholder feedback received during the public consultation phase, including that which is set out above, is being processed and will be reflected in the final GEWEB methodology. The timing of this and other key milestones is as follows:

- The final GEWEB methodology which will be published in March 2020
- Data collection is expected to start in Q2 of 2020
- Data analysis will take place in Q2 and Q3 2020
- The first GEWEB is expected to be published in September 2020

WBA welcomes stakeholder feedback, questions, concerns, and recommendations throughout this process. For more information about GEWEB or to submit feedback contact us at [info.gender@worldbenchmarkingalliance.org](mailto:info.gender@worldbenchmarkingalliance.org)

# List of participating organisations



Adidas

Aditya Birla

Columbia Sportswear

H&M

Inditex

Lindex

Marks & Spencer

Primark

PVH

The Gap

VF Corp.

Walmart