

STATEMENT

REGARDING GENDER GUIDANCE ON THE UN GUIDING PRINCIPLES

DFPA

THE DANISH FAMILY
PLANNING ASSOCIATION

This statement has been prepared by the Danish Family Planning Association for the side-event on “Gender guidance for the UNGP’s: From paper to practice” taking place at the UN Forum on Business and Human Rights 2019



THE NEED TO BUILD THE CAPACITY OF LABOUR INSPECTORS TO GO FROM PAPER TO PRACTICE

The Danish Family Planning Association (DFPA) works to promote gender equality and health globally, focusing on Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR). DFPA is a strategic partner to the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and works with the *Private Sector* to advance women's health and equality in workplaces.

DFPA's programme in East Africa confirms how women are very vulnerable to adverse business impacts. In these relatively conservative societies, women are not adequately integrated into the workforce and when they participate in the labour force, it is not on fair and equitable terms of employment. They struggle to maintain their rights to decent work, equality and health on equal footing with men.

To illustrate:

1. High national rates of sexual harassment and gender-based-violence (GBV) extend to the workplace in all three countries. In Uganda, 90 % of all women have experienced sexual harassment.
2. Many women work in labor-intensive industries like agriculture and garment. Most are young, unskilled and in low-paid positions, where male-management dictate the terms of employment. Hence, women's health issues are insufficiently prioritised in the workplace OHS programmes and insurance schemes. E.g.:
 - The right to paid maternity leave is not respected by some companies.
 - Too few companies accommodate the needs of lactating mothers.
 - Pregnant women are often at risk, due to chemical exposure and physically demanding work.
 - Toilet facilities are typically sub-standard and access to clean water is limited – this affects personal hygiene and health and can lead to urinary tract infections among women.

The result is that once married, many women with children exit the workforce, and are further marginalized due to economic disempowerment.

Recently, DFPA mapped existing labour laws in Kenya, Uganda and Ethiopia to identify gaps. This revealed that regulation gaps do exist, and these East African countries could indeed benefit from more gender-transformative and inclusive labour laws.

However, the key problem is poor implementation of existing labour provisions in the private sector. In Uganda, there are only 47 labour inspectors to oversee corporate compliance in 124 districts. The game-changer to accelerate women's right to equality and health is therefore to implement and enforce existing labour laws.

DFPA RECOMMENDATION # 1. TO COMPLY WITH THE GENDER GUIDANCE, STATES NEED TO TAKE URGENT ACTION TO:

1. Set aside adequate funding to train more labour officers to oversee corporate compliance.
2. Build the capacity of labour officers concerning the link between health, gender equality and OHS – not least regarding sexual harassment and GBV - in a work context.
3. Integrate health and gender equality in the workplace audits conducted by labour officers.

DFPA RECOMMENDATION # 2. TO COMPLY WITH THE GENDER GUIDANCE, COMPANIES MUST TAKE URGENT ACTION TO:

1. Integrate a health and gender equality lens in workplace policies and programs and establish KPI's.
2. Identify and document the scale of inequalities in the company, by developing sex-disaggregated data – and apply this data to analyse how poor health and GE impacts productivity and quality to build the gender business case.
3. Establish well-functioning operational level grievance mechanisms, covering sexual harassment and GBV.

DFPA ACTION IN THIS REGARD

DFPA believes the *Private Sector* is instrumental to improve health and gender equality of women and men.

DFPA works with its IPPF sister organisations, companies and employers' associations to build capacity and strengthen the business case - to the benefit of workers, enterprises and communities. Together, we document the link between good health, gender equality and business growth.

Recently, DFPA's partners got together and committed to focus on capacity building of labour inspectors. Furthermore, they pledged to advocate among duty bearers to include gender equality and SRHR in the National Action Plans on Business and Human Rights.