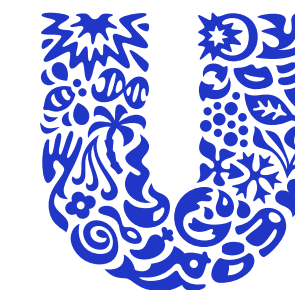




# Integrating gender equity across Unilever's value chain



Unilever



# Introduction

We want to create more opportunities for women and girls and transform the unfair systems that currently hold them back. The Gender Equity Resources presented here and developed with International Center for Research on Women aim to do just that.

Unilever is boldly driving positive change for gender equity across the corporate landscape and is taking important steps to tip the scales on systemic inequities. ICRW Advisors is thrilled to have co-developed the Gender Equity Resources, including the Gender Equity Assessment Tool (GEAT), with Unilever to uncover gaps and opportunities for women and girls around the world.

Together, we have removed the complexity of what good programming looks like for equal opportunities for all. We know that GEAT will be a powerful resource to advance women's economic empowerment across workforces, global supply chains, and communities.

**Ann Warner**  
Interim CEO, ICRW

Achieving gender equity is not just fundamental for society but makes our business stronger. Unilever has a long-standing commitment to supporting women through the Sustainable Living Plan. Now with the Compass strategy, we want to continue to act as a beacon for equity, diversity and inclusion, going beyond gender to support other under-represented groups.

Unilever has a far-reaching value chain with a broad range of sustainability initiatives. Many of which haven't yet explored their impact on women and girls. The Gender Equity Resources by ICRW will help us understand which drivers of gender equity we need to invest in to aid the pursuit of our belief that no woman or girl should be left behind.

**Rebecca Marmot**  
Chief Sustainability Officer, Unilever

<b>The business case for investing in gender equity</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Developing Unilever's Gender Equity Resources</b>	<b>4</b>
The Gender Equity Drivers	5
The Gender Equity Model	6
The Gender Equity Model – in practice	7
The Gender Equity Assessment Tool	8
The Gender Equity Assessment Tool – in practice	9
<b>Next steps and opportunities</b>	<b>11</b>



# The business case for investing in gender equity

Research has shown that addressing gender inequity across business produces positive commercial and social impact. The impacts range from increased innovation, risk management, profitability and productivity, to improved safety, livelihoods, and skills for women around the world. A growing number of companies understand that improving gender equity is both the right thing to do and a critical part of a sound business strategy.

**Unilever is committed to driving gender equity and contributing to Sustainable Development Goal 5.** Unilever signed the UN Women's Empowerment Principles to help drive this agenda. The Sustainable Living Plan worked to leverage its initiatives, advocacy, and global partnerships to fuel gender-equitable economic growth, which in turn empowered 2.6 million women by 2020.

**Unilever is bringing gender into the mainstream.** The Compass strategy sets out how Unilever will grow a purpose-led business while making sustainable living commonplace.

Various initiatives and brands, like Dove, Sunlight, Glow & Lovely, have a key focus on providing skills and opportunities for women and girls. However, Unilever wants to drive impact across *all* sustainability initiatives and bring gender equity to the forefront of how those initiatives are designed and implemented.

*The Unilever Compass strategy sets out how Unilever will grow a purpose-led business while making sustainable living commonplace.*



# Developing Unilever's Gender Equity Resources

Unilever commissioned ICRW Advisors to develop a set of resources to help embed drivers of gender equity across all of their sustainability initiatives. The resources aim to support Unilever to make meaningful progress towards gender equity when designing sustainability initiatives, setting goals and priorities, and assessing progress.

**Evidence-based research.** To create Unilever's Gender Equity Resources, ICRW reviewed existing gender markers, benchmarks, and assessment frameworks. Various multilateral organisations, UN agencies, development finance institutions, and international non-profits have developed tools to mainstream gender at the project and programme level. Some of the frameworks that ICRW reviewed include:

- OECD DAC Gender Equality Policy Marker
- UN Country Teams Gender Marker and SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard
- CARE International's Gender Marker
- Save the Children Gender Equality Marker
- European Commission Gender-Age Framework
- African Development Bank Gender Marker System

- Inter-Agency Standing Committee Gender with Age Markers

These tools served as an inspiration and source of learning to build a model more tailored to a private sector actor like Unilever.

## **Adapting tools for the private sector.**

Most of the existing frameworks and tools are developed in the public domain and cater best to humanitarian and international development projects. Their complexity and extensiveness impacted the ease of use and transferability for a private sector audience. ICRW's research revealed the need for tools that could adequately enable private sector actors – like Unilever – to design, measure, and track progress on gender initiatives and goals. The ICRW team was tasked to strike a balance between complexity, technical rigour, and applicability to create user-

friendly tools that could be easily adapted and used by Unilever across functions and brands in its value chain.

Unilever's **Gender Equity Resources** comprise three components:

- **Gender Equity Drivers:** Captures the critical building blocks to drive transformation for Unilever's gender equity and women's empowerment agenda.
- **Gender Equity Model (GEM):** Links the drivers of gender equity and the desired goals of the business.
- **Gender Equity Assessment Tool (GEAT):** Assesses the extent to which any initiative/s has embedded gender considerations and identifies Action Pathways to help them do so.

Together, they provide a robust foundation for Unilever to guide, track, assess, and better communicate about how its work is advancing a gender equity agenda.





# The Gender Equity Drivers

Unilever, in collaboration with ICRW Advisors and other key gender experts, identified five critical drivers to enable transformation for its gender equity and women's empowerment agenda:

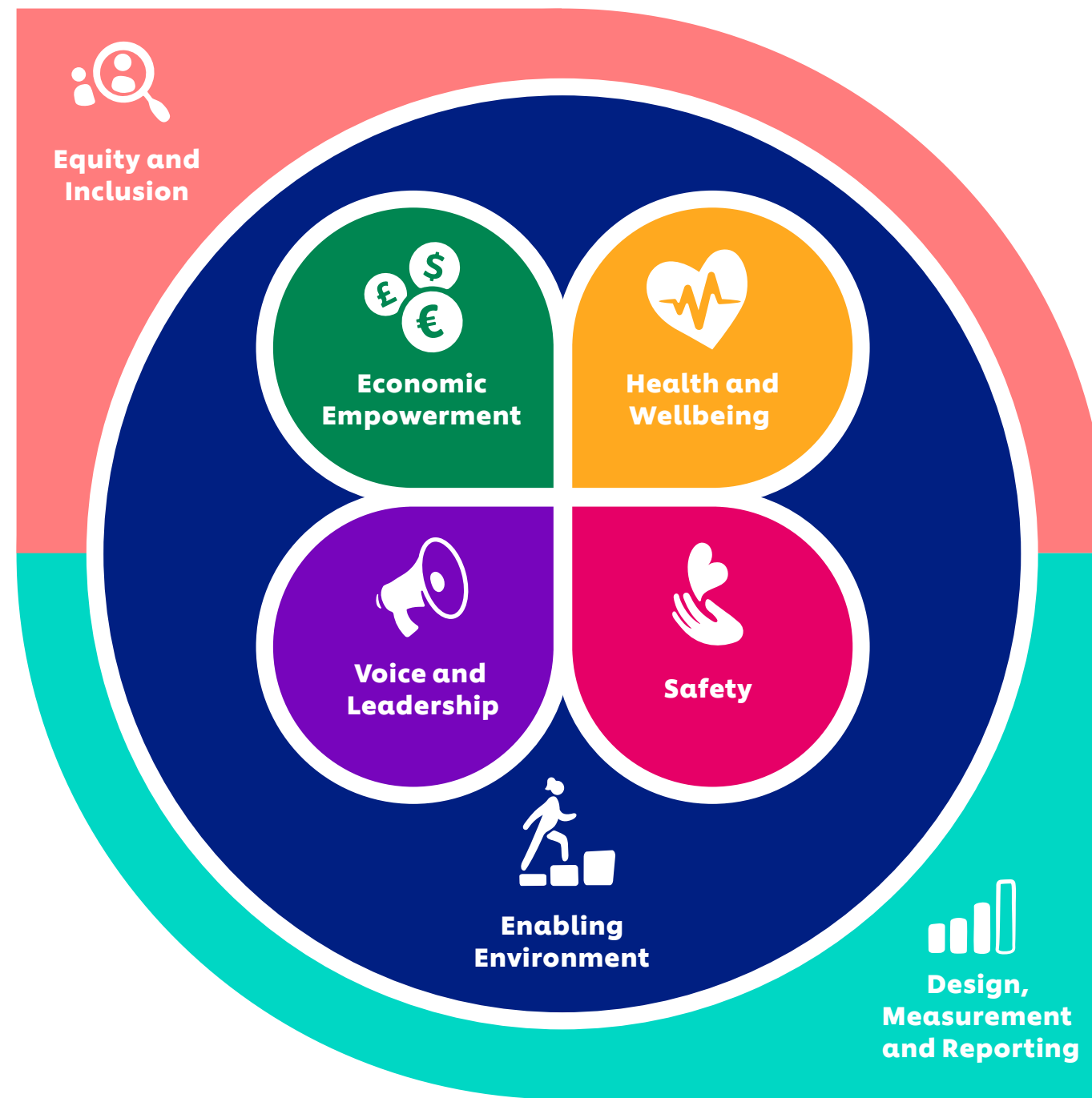
Being **Economically Empowered** means having access to the knowledge, skills, assets, and opportunities that one needs to advance.

**Health and Wellbeing** results from having access to resources that cater to one's physical, mental, and emotional health.

**Safety** includes an assessment of potential risks, such as gender-based violence and harassment, the efforts to reduce such risks, and access to needed support services in instances of violence.

**Voice & Leadership** is demonstrated through one's individual self-confidence and participation in leadership roles or through a collective movement of people coming together to act on a particular cause.

**The Enabling Environment** encompasses social norms, formal (eg, internal workplace policies and procedures), and informal systems (eg, cultural practices or social norms), as well as institutional regulatory laws and policies that dictate and influence society.



**Equity and Inclusion** recognises that people start from different places and face different barriers, and includes taking action to bring those barriers down. It also understands that people have multiple identities beyond gender, for example race, ethnicity, age, disability, and that these identities often overlap.

**Design** involves creating programmes to meet the needs of participants; **Measurement** is about tracking who is/is not participating in an initiative and the impacts created over time; and **Reporting** involves sharing back information to participants and other key stakeholders to ensure transparency, accountability, and improvement.

The five Drivers of Gender Equity were developed through rigorous, evidence-based research followed by a multi-stakeholder consultative process. ICRW distilled key gender empowerment themes from existing literature and incorporated a private sector lens into the findings; the drivers were co-created through a series of conversations with an independent advisory panel.

# The Gender Equity Model

To operationalise and track impact across the Gender Equity Drivers, ICRW Advisors next supported Unilever to develop the Gender Equity Model (GEM). GEM helps Unilever understand how their sustainability initiatives and programmes create pathways towards desired gender and sustainable growth results.

The Gender Equity Model also helps Unilever map how it integrates and catalyses gender equity across its work to foster business practices that create opportunities and outcomes for women.

The GEM is divided into four parts:

- **The extended value chain** – how Unilever engages with stakeholders in its extended value chain.
- **Approach** – Unilever’s initiatives, policies, practices, and programmes.
- **The five Gender Drivers** – Economic Empowerment, Health and Wellbeing, Safety, Voice and Leadership, and an Enabling Environment.
- **Desired goals** – the effects on the broader community towards economic and sustainable growth.

## Unilever’s Gender Equity Model



# The Gender Equity Model – in practice



## In the workplace

Unilever aims to create equitable working conditions and opportunities for female employees. A few examples are:

- Supporting **pay equity** and eliminating pay gaps.
- Using **gender balance mandates** for recruitment and leadership advancement.
- Being a vocal **advocacy and policy leader** on parental leave and equal pay.
- Providing training to **reskill/upskill** employees for the future of work.
- Creating **flexible work options** for work-life balance and enhanced employee wellbeing.



## In the extended supply chain

Unilever aims to integrate gender equity across its work with suppliers and retailers. A few examples are:

### Suppliers:

- Sourcing from **diverse suppliers** by building diverse supplier pipelines.
- Working with suppliers to ensure a **living wage** and advocating for industry-level policy changes to support living wages.
- Providing **safety, leadership opportunities, advancement and voice** for women-owned suppliers, female farmers, and factory workers.

### Retailers:

- Enhancing **access to finance and digital sales platforms** for female-owned retailers.
- Delivering **training to help female entrepreneurs** running last-mile distribution businesses.



## Through the brands

Unilever brands deliver gender equity throughout marketing campaigns, products, and programming. A few examples are:

- Selling **products that reduce women's time burdens** and enhance health and wellbeing.
- Using **advertising and marketing** strategies to **shift gender social norms** and call attention to the harms of adverse stereotypes, sexism, and harassment.
- Engaging in **advocacy** and industry collective action to propel changes and best practices.
- Deploying purpose-driven programmes to **equip women with skills and resources**, enhance confidence and leadership.



# The Gender Equity Assessment Tool

The Gender Equity Assessment Tool (GEAT) is a self-diagnostic tool created to support Unilever initiative leads and teams to assess gender integration within their programmes, to monitor their contributions towards Unilever’s broader gender equity goals, and to support them to take action to improve their results.

The GEAT can be used across all Unilever initiatives and programmes including those led by brands. It can be applied across all stages of a sustainability initiative to assess whether gender has been meaningfully incorporated across multiple entry points, such as in programme design, delivery, and monitoring.

The GEAT scores and tracks how Unilever initiatives evolve from having no/limited gender consideration (not designed to account for gender differences and that create limited gender equity outcomes) to having strategic gender consideration (designed with gender in mind and can break down barriers to contribute to gender equity). The tool provides Unilever teams with recommended Action Pathways categorised by the Gender Equity Drivers to improve their programmes and enhance their impacts on women and girls.

The Action Pathways provide guidance on how to improve and strengthen interventions across Unilever’s five Gender Equity Drivers,

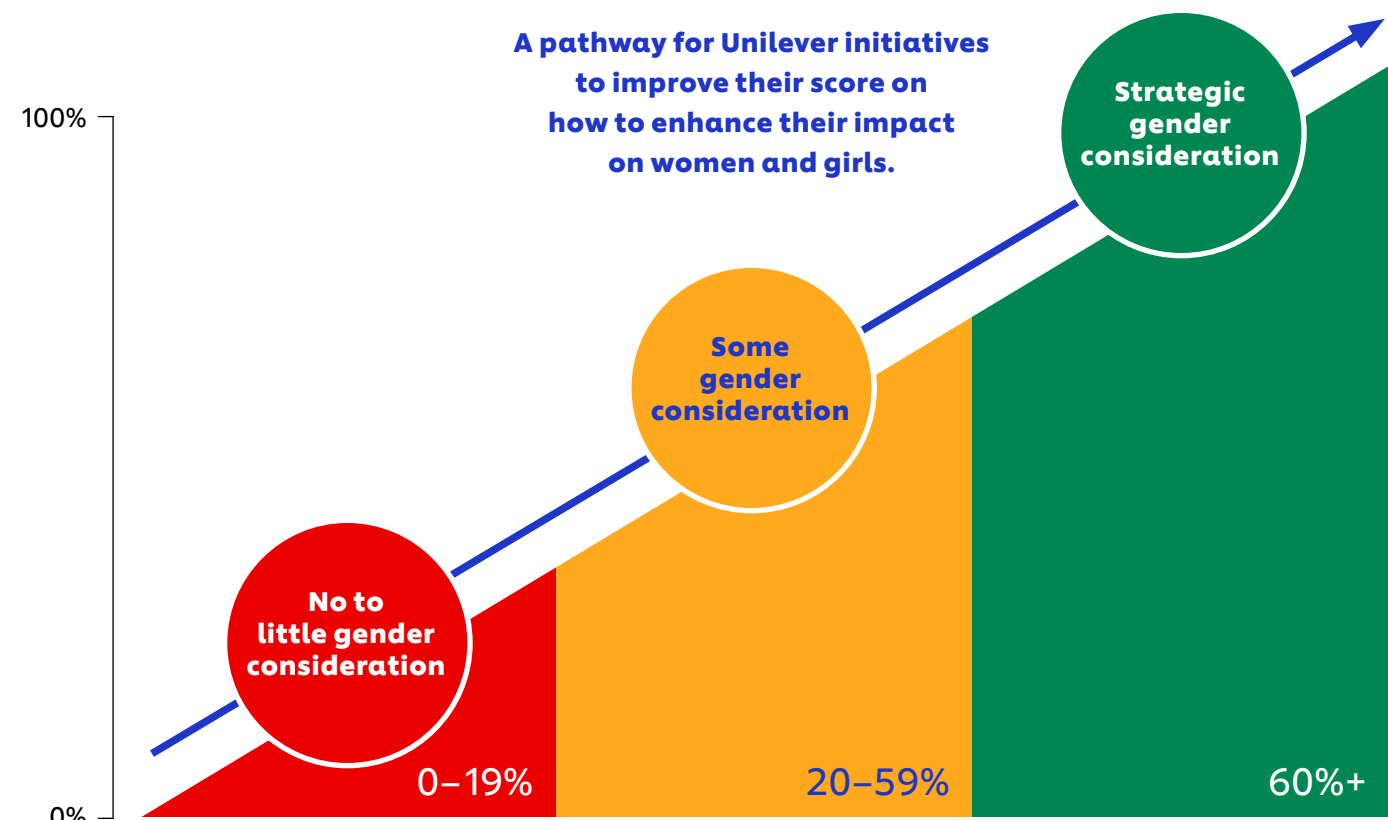
through their design, measurement and reporting, and with a lens of equity and inclusion. They are specific to where the initiative sits in Unilever’s extended value chain and set out a list of best practices tailored to the relevant audience on which the initiatives are focused. This means that each sustainability initiative will have customised recommendations to determine what areas to prioritise to move towards a more Strategic Gender Consideration.

Applying the GEAT follows a 3-step process:

- **Step 1:** Initiative leads complete the GEAT survey, a set of 31 questions that helps them assess the level of gender integration within their initiatives. The questions are categorised according to the Gender Equity Drivers.
- **Step 2:** Upon completion of the GEAT survey, initiative lead receives a GEAT scorecard to show where their initiative falls along the GEAT Rating Scale (see right).
- **Step 3:** After receiving the GEAT scorecard, initiative leads will be provided with an Action Pathway guide document, which outlines a menu of opportunities and interventions they can implement to move their initiative along the assessment scale to enhance its impact on women and girls.

## The GEAT rating scale

A pathway for Unilever initiatives to improve their score on how to enhance their impact on women and girls.



- Gender agnostic.
- Does not consider differential impact on women and under-represented groups.
- Gender-disaggregated data not collected.
- Aware of how gender impacts value chain operations and has identified key opportunities to integrate a gender lens.
- Gender-disaggregated data collected.
- Gender equity is core to the initiative’s goals, objectives and outcomes.
- Seeks to understand challenges experienced and barriers faced by women and other under-represented groups and aims to address them.
- Gender-disaggregated data regularly collected and a robust measurement and evaluation plan are in place.



# The Gender Equity Assessment Tool – in practice

## GEAT pilot results

Once finalised, Unilever piloted the GEAT to understand the extent of gender integration across eight of its social sustainability initiatives. The sample was from across different parts of the extended value chain: five were brand/community initiatives, two were supply chain initiatives, and one was a workplace initiative. The GEAT Pilot results showed that 63% of initiatives fell under the 'Strategic Gender Consideration' score rating, while 37% had achieved 'Some Gender Consideration'.

The pilot was small and focused on assessing projects that already had a focus or interest in gender equity, so the distribution of scores is not reflective of broader Unilever social sustainability initiatives.

## Case studies from the GEAT pilot

While the case studies are examples of actual efforts currently underway within Unilever, the outputs of these activities should be measured over time to determine if and how they lead to the desired outcomes in Unilever's Gender Equity Model. Featured here, and on the following page, are two examples from the pilot.



## Shakti Nigeria empowering women's lives, one woman at a time

Shakti Nigeria enables women in rural areas to become micro-entrepreneurs and earn a livelihood by selling Unilever products through a door-to-door sales model. Shakti Nigeria has reached over 5,000 Nigerian women entrepreneurs.

**GEAT score:** 63%; strategic gender consideration.

**Drivers of gender equity addressed:** Economic empowerment, Safety, Voice and leadership, Enabling environment.

### Gender best practices:

- Collecting data and feedback from women and marginalised groups.
- Using participatory methods and workshops in design and monitoring.
- Considering and creating safety measures to mitigate gender-based risk and vulnerability.
- Conducting behavioural change campaigns to challenge social attitudes, including engaging men.

Overall, this initiative was designed with a strong gender lens and advances many of the key drivers of gender equity. Opportunities exist to better understand the challenges that women face as Shakti micro-entrepreneurs. This includes redesigning Shakti with health benefits and other support, such as medical insurance and childcare, to enable them to more effectively engage with it.



## Vanilla for Change bridging the generation gap within the vanilla sector

The Vanilla for Change Initiative in Madagascar offers direct support to farmers to improve their livelihoods. The initiative has impacted over 3,000 Malagasy and trained 2,000 young people in Youth Committees, improving life skills and career prospects.

**GEAT score:** 34%; some gender consideration

**Drivers of gender equity addressed:** Economic empowerment, Safety, Enabling environment

### Gender best practices:

- Providing education and leadership training to women.
- Having regular consultations with initiative participants, government actors and other stakeholders to advocate and enhance effectiveness.
- Collecting sex-disaggregated data to understand impacts and participation.
- Conducting safety and sexual health training for participating youth.

Overall this initiative was not designed with an intentional gender lens but still advances a few of the drivers of gender equity. To improve the gender impact of the initiative, young women farmers in vanilla producing-communities could be specifically targeted. This target group would then learn the skills that will help them to adapt to climate shocks, access loans and understand finance.



A few learnings that emerged from the Shakti Nigeria and vanilla pilot include:

- **Tool fit:** Unilever has a wide breadth and diversity of programmes across multiple levels. The tool was revised after the project pilots but may need further refinement to be applicable more broadly and universally across Unilever's portfolio. The pilot also revealed the need to develop better understanding of the types of initiatives that GEAT can be applied to (strategic, programmatic, etc).
- **Usage buy-in:** A deep understanding of gender equity is still new for many Unilever staff, so the pilot revealed a need to build capacity around gender equity as well as build buy-in and enthusiasm for the tool. Additionally, there is a need to help teams better understand when to use it, and how it can be useful for their work.
- **Data reliability:** Since GEAT data is self-reported, the pilot revealed a need to build capacity among Unilever staff to reliably report gender activities and outcomes and create triangulation mechanisms to ensure GEAT scoring matches accuracy of results.

Despite these challenges, the pilot was a success as it enabled ICRW Advisors and Unilever to test the survey and provide targeted recommendations on how to strengthen contributions to gender equity among a committed cohort.



# Next steps and opportunities

Developing Unilever's Gender Equity Resources is a critical first step to establishing a structured and standard approach to mainstreaming gender across Unilever's work. Through the creation and use of the Gender Equity Drivers, the Gender Equity Model and the Gender Equity Assessment Tool, Unilever has a unique set of resources that can help operationalise its gender commitments.

ICRW feels there is opportunity for Unilever to increase its impact on women and girls by systematically using the Gender Equity Resources. Suggestions to deepen this work include:

- **Broaden the scope beyond gender equity:** There is an opportunity to consider expanding the model and the tools to encompass and link to diversity and intersectionality, all of which should be further mainstreamed across Unilever's work.
- **Build internal gender champions:** There is an opportunity to continue to build staff knowledge and ownership of this work across Unilever teams (eg through webinars, additional pilots, or multi-stakeholder discussions). Additional incentives

and evidence can be built around why gender is critical and how the set of tools can be leveraged to drive real results across different workstreams.

- **Advance gender work in supply chains:** There is growing demand for due diligence in corporate supply chains to be more human-rights focused, which creates opportunities to advance equity. For example, Unilever's suppliers could integrate the Gender Equity Drivers into their due diligence processes, or Unilever's sourcing managers could explore how their purchasing and sourcing practices impact women's rights in supply chains. This work is ongoing across Unilever and opportunities exist to further deepen this work.



**Unilever PLC****Head Office**

100 Victoria Embankment  
London EC4Y 0DY  
United Kingdom  
T +44 (0)20 7822 5252  
F +44 (0)20 7822 5951

**Registered Office**

Unilever PLC  
Port Sunlight  
Wirral  
Merseyside CH62 4ZD  
United Kingdom

Registered in England and Wales  
Company Number: 41424

For further information or if you wish to  
try out the tools, please contact:

**Sandra Fontano, Unilever**

Sandra.Fontano@unilever.com, or

**Rachel Oguntola, ICRW**

roguntola@icrw.org

**Produced by**

Unilever Sustainability Function

**Design**

The Ayres Design Company Ltd  
www.theayres.co.uk

**Feature photography**

Unilever, Symrise AG

**Acknowledgements**

We would like to thank the following  
organisations for their valuable comments  
during the development of these resources:  
BSR, CARE International, ICRW, Oxfam, Save the  
Children, UN Women, Women Deliver.

**Unilever** Anouk Heilen, Sandra Fontano,  
David Russell, Esha Sheth, Winfridah Nyakwara,  
Evelyn Espinal.