

P&G reaffirms commitment to drive gender equality in Africa

Procter & Gamble (P&G) announced new declarations aimed to propel gender equality across Asia Pacific, the Middle East and Africa, at its third annual #WeSeeEqual summit for the region which took place on 17 February 2021.



Credit: P&G

Procter & Gamble (P&G) announced new declarations aimed to propel gender equality across Asia Pacific, the Middle East and Africa, at its third annual #WeSeeEqual summit for the region which took place on 17 February 2021. Hosted virtually for the first time, the event saw advocates and personalities from private and public sectors come together to address the challenges of gender and women's equality, which have been severely impacted by the pandemic.

Built on the theme '#Unsaid and #Undone', the summit brought together leading voices on gender equality to challenge the current discourse and commit to the actions needed for progress.

P&G president for Asia Pacific, Middle East and Africa, Magesvaran Suranjan, announced the following declarations made by the company:

- To educate more than 30 million adolescent girls on puberty and hygiene across Asia Pacific, the Middle East and Africa, through its Always and Whisper 'Keeping Girls in School' programme over the next three years. The goal for the Africa region alone is to reach 125,000 girls by 2025.

- Committing to spending a cumulative total of \$200m by deliberately working with women-owned businesses across the Asia Pacific, Middle East and Africa region, by 2025.
- Introducing 'Share the Care', a new parental leave policy across the region, which entitles all new parents to a minimum of 8 weeks' fully paid leave, with an additional 6 weeks' recovery leave for birth mothers.
- Committing to achieving a 50-50 gender balance across its management workforce in Asia Pacific, the Middle East and Africa by the end of calendar year 2022.



Gender equality - Past, present and future

Dhesigen Naidoo 1 Dec 2020



Gender equality progress at risk

Magesvaran Suranjan said: "We have made great progress on gender equality and we can't allow it to be eroded. We need to act now to ensure that while we continue responding to the health and economic crisis, we find ways to progress women's economic empowerment and equality, in education, in the home and in the workplace. At P&G, we will keep using the voice of our company in forums such as #WeSeeEqual to drive discussion and action on the issues that matter."

Held in partnership with UN Women, the third annual regional #WeSeeEqual Summit engaged business leaders, government officials and celebrity influencers in candid conversations around gender equality – the focus of UN Sustainable Development Goal #5 – as well as discussions around strategic actions moving forward to address gender inequality.

In addition to global and regional P&G leaders, the Summit also saw participation of influential personalities and global leaders, including Anita Bhatia, UN Women deputy executive director; Indra Nooyi, former chief executive officer and chairman of PepsiCo and South Africa's own media personality, entrepreneur and philanthropist Bonang Matheba.

UN Women deputy executive director Anita Bhatia said, "Progress made over the last few decades in gender equality is at risk of being rolled back due to the impact of Covid-19. But the pandemic has also forced us all to think differently and given us the opportunity to re-build better – without the power imbalances and gender discrimination of the past.

"For that to happen we need to work together with partners, including corporates, governments and civil society. Today's

#WeSeeEqual Summit and other multi-stakeholder initiatives like the Action Coalitions of the upcoming Generation Equality Forum are crucial opportunities for change and progress towards achieving gender equality once and for all.”



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The acknowledgment of societal and family challenges, the importance of equality-based policies, the recognition of stereotypical expectations of men, and the role of advertising and media in changing bias were some of the key topics discussed across the various panels throughout the summit.

To inspire corporates and society alike, the summit also hosted P&G chief brand officer Marc Pritchard alongside Bonang Matheba, to share their experiences and insights on leveraging their voice in advertising and media to reach millions of people, challenge rigid gender roles and empower both men and women.

“Never has there been a time when women’s voices are so important and I’m thrilled to be part of a global movement coming together for a common purpose, to make a difference towards gender equality. To be speaking alongside such strong women, who are all committed to meaningful change, is a great honour for me.

“For those of us able to reach millions with a single post, we need to be mindful of the narrative we are putting out as our voices can help shine a light on essential discussions, that can affect the change in the world we want to see,” said Bonang Matheba.



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P&G Young Leaders Council launched

In addition to the declarations, the 2021 Summit also saw the establishment of the P&G Young Leaders Council which serves to advise the company on gender equality matters internally and externally.

Vilo Trska, P&G vice president Southern Africa added that initiatives of this magnitude, that spark healthy debate and courageous conversations, remain necessary and important in order to drive meaningful change in this arena.

The #WeSeeEqual programme was recently recognised with the U.S. Secretary of State’s Award for Corporate Excellence for Women’s Empowerment. P&G is advancing gender equality through various initiatives region-wide as part of its commitment to equality and inclusion and is part of the company’s efforts to deliver ‘2,021 Acts of Good in 2021.

As one of the world’s largest advertisers, P&G said that the company and its brands will also continue to leverage their influential voice in media and advertising to drive further awareness, tackle gender bias, spark conversations and motivate change.