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Advocating corporate policy change on women's health and family planning: Lessons from the environmental movement

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POLICY BRIEF

Advocating Corporate Policy Change on Women's Health and Family Planning:

Lessons from the Environmental Movement

This brief presents key lessons from the environmental movement on effective strategies for driving changes in corporate policies and practices and creating new mechanisms for holding business accountable for environmental impacts. Corporate policies and voluntary and "soft law" standards may be unfamiliar to many women's health advocates, but they are likely to have increasing importance in the years to come. There is much to learn from the experiences of the environmental community.

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Evidence

Introduction

Over the past 30 years, a growing movement—broadly known as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)—has influenced corporations to assume more responsibility for the social and environmental effects of their business operations. This movement has grown with the rise of globalization, which has changed the basic business structure of product development and manufacturing. Major corporations, or "brands," increasingly manage the design and marketing of their products, but have turned the production of them to national manufacturers, or "suppliers," in developing countries. Suppliers, largely in Asia, Africa and Latin America, produce shoes, clothing, electronics, toys, processed foods, and many other goods like tea, cocoa, palm oil and cut flowers in local factories or farms and ship them to Western markets where they are sold under a brand label. Activists around the world became concerned about poor working conditions in supplier factories and farms, and the harmful effects of these lightly regulated industries on the environment and local communities. Civil society organizations, followed by governments, began demanding more accountability from multinational companies for the social and environmental consequences of their business.

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Environmentalists, led by non-governmental organizations and activist groups, have successfully lobbied major corporations to adopt policies aimed at improving sustainability on a number of environmental issues, including climate change, deforestation, and waste. These groups often play overlapping roles in efforts to hold corporations accountable for their social and environmental impacts, such as:

- The development of new corporate codes, standards, and benchmarks or the revision of existing ones.
- The training of workplace auditors and monitoring of workplaces.
- The development or revision of assessment guidelines and checklists.
- The development of reporting standards and rankings.
- The promotion of best practices and innovations.
- The recognition of good corporate actors and criticism of poor ones.

What's Missing from Corporate Codes and CSR Standards? Women's Health.

In the last decade, environmentalists and other civil society groups have been part of an increasingly sophisticated system of standards and mechanisms to hold companies accountable and establish policies and programs to protect workers, communities, and the environment. These standards are organized around specific sectors (e.g. mining, electronics, ready-made garment industry) or commodities (e.g. palm oil, coffee) and seek to improve the processes by which products are grown, produced, and traded, and it is increasingly common practice for companies to adopt these standards voluntarily or source from suppliers that do. These CSR standards are most visible to the public in the form of product certifications, such as Rainforest Alliance certified cocoa, Fair Trade coffee, and Better Cotton.

Yet, one area that is often poorly addressed in these largely voluntary standards and related enforcement mechanisms is health, particularly family planning, reproductive health, and maternal, newborn and child Health (FP/RH/MNCH). Occupational health regulations for the workplace focus mainly on critical safety issues: fire and building safety, protective equipment, adequate ventilation, and the like. Corporate codes and CSR policies have historically adopted this more limited approach to health, as there were few strong advocates for a broader approach to worker health that would include FP/RH/MNCH. The quality and effective functioning of health facilities in factories, farms and other workplaces have rarely been addressed in corporate standards. The result is that corporations and their suppliers in low- and middle-income countries have had few incentives to make worker health, much less FP/RH/MNCH, a priority because the standards, mechanisms, and policies that influence corporate actions are largely silent on worker and women's health.

The issue of health standards and practices at the workplace is becoming even more pertinent given the increase in women and migrant laborers in developing countries who work in the complex global supply chains of multinational companies. Women represent approximately 80% of the global workforce in the garment manufacturing sector and a large share of workers in other manufacturing sectors, such as home goods and electronics (BSR 2010). In China, while women comprise 44% of the overall workforce, they represent approximately 60% of workers who migrate from rural areas to cities to work in factories (BSR 2013). In agriculture, women make up, on average, 43% of the labor force in developing countries (FAO 2014). A 2010 McKinsey study found that companies who have invested in programs to expand women's employment opportunities, training, and access to finance in developing countries have already measured improved profits or anticipate a future increase in profits as a result of these efforts (ICRW et al. 2014), demonstrating that there are sound business reasons to invest further in women workers, in addition to CSR-related concerns.

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The rise of what might be a called a CSR system (Wofford et al. 2016) of voluntary or "soft law" standards and enforcement mechanisms offers an important opportunity to strengthen workplace health services and policies that already exist in factories and farms, as well as extend new health services to millions of workers by leveraging civil society and global institutions that influence corporate practices.

Global Policy Backdrop

This system of social and environmental standards is also affected by the shifting global policy landscape. Three notable initiatives will serve as the backdrop for corporate policy change in the coming years, particularly regarding health, women's empowerment, and gender equality:

1. Sustainable Development Goals
2. Family Planning 2020
3. Women's Empowerment Principles.

1. Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by world leaders in September 2015 and officially entered into force on January 2016, serve as the framework to guide global development activities through 2030. Unlike the Millennium Development Goals, the business community helped shape the SDGs and made commitments to supporting their implementation. SDG 17 (partnerships) explicitly recognizes that development requires a business role, in partnership with government and civil society. The SDGs most relevant to global efforts on FP/RH/MNCH are:



One target in Goal 3 is, by 2030, to "ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, including for family planning, information and education, and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies and programmes."

This direct call to address FP/RH/MNCH in global development represents a significant opportunity to engage corporate actors, both to encourage governments to incorporate these issues into their national policies as well as to ensure this target is being met within a company's business operations. Environmental issues are, of course, a prominent feature of the SDGs and are addressed in Goals 6, 7, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15. With their strong emphasis on addressing health, gender, and the environment in international development through partnerships, the SDGs provide a platform for health actors to advocate for corporate policy change on women's health and access to FP/RH/MNCH services.

2. Family Planning 2020

Another global movement that could offer a vehicle for women's health advocacy is the Family Planning

2020 (FP2020) initiative, a global partnership to enable 120 million more women and girls to have access to and use contraceptives by 2020. The partnership prioritizes efforts on four cross-cutting initiatives:

1. Driving country-level support for FP2020 goals
2. Promoting data use and performance management
3. Sharpening the focus on global advocacy, rights and youth
4. Facilitating dissemination of knowledge and evidence

Bringing together a diverse set of actors from government, civil society, multilateral organizations, donors, the research community, and the private sector, this partnership provides an avenue through which to engage corporations on FP/RH/MNCH policy and reinforces the mandate laid out by the SDGs.

3. Women's Empowerment Principles

Finally, the Women's Empowerment Principles, a collaboration between UN Women and the UN Global Compact, aim to empower women to participate fully in economic life across all sectors and throughout all levels of economic activity. This initiative focuses primarily on the business community and comprises seven core principles, including Principle 3, which is to ensure the health, safety and well-being of all women and men workers. Over 1,300 companies have now signed onto these principles, and they provide a potential platform for collective CSR action around women's health and access to FP/RH/MNCH.

As corporations are increasingly receptive to engagement on gender- and health-related challenges, the environmental movement provides a strong example of corporate policy change for the global health community. This brief summarizes key points from the experience of the environmental movement, and lessons the global women's health community can apply to their own work.

Methods

Research for this brief was conducted through a desk review of publicly available reports and documents from environmental organizations, peer-reviewed journal articles, and CSR-focused news and blog sites. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted with employees from nine environmental organizations, with a focus on staff that engage companies on CSR and sustainability as well as those who interface with standards and certifications.

TABLE 1: LIST OF ORGANIZATIONS INTERVIEWED AND CONTACTED

Organizations Interviewed (# of people)
World Wildlife Fund (1)
Conservation International (1)
Greenpeace (1)
The Forest Trust (1)
Oxfam America (2)
World Resources Institute (1)
Union of Concerned Scientists (1)
Ceres (1)
Sierra Club (1)
Organizations Contacted but Not Interviewed
The Nature Conservancy
Rainforest Alliance
Environmental Defense Fund
Rainforest Action Network

Findings

Environmental groups take several different approaches to engage the private sector. These approaches tend to reflect the particular goals, mission and capacity of each organization, and each organization tends to utilize tactics and approaches for which they have a comparative advantage, based on their reputation, resources, and reach. The research for this project found several broad approaches to be common across the environmental organizations interviewed and researched, in terms of successfully engaging the private sector to make policy changes.

How Have Environmental Groups Successfully Engaged the Private Sector?

Targeting

In determining which companies to target for engagement, many groups hone in on the companies that control the supply chains of the key commodities and sectors with the greatest environmental and social impacts. Rather than attempting to directly engage 7 bil-

lion consumers or 1-2 billion producers, organizations such as World Wildlife Fund (WWF) target the handful of large companies that control "choke points" within global supply chains, such as large traders, agribusinesses and the food, beverage and retail companies that buy from these aggregators (see **Figure 1**). Given that many of these large traders and agribusinesses do not have a significant public profile, including companies like Cargill, Wilmar, and the Archer Daniels Midland Company (ADM), NGOs tend to work most publicly with the major branded companies that buy from these companies, though some NGOs have begun to partner with the likes of Cargill and ADM in recent years as the sustainability movement has picked up steam. Ben Grossman of Oxfam's "Behind the Brands" campaign echoes this approach: "In picking targets, we looked at our strengths and our assets and where in the food system we can leverage those. We focused on brands because the traders are not as easily impacted by our brand." (Griswold 2016) The Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) also explicitly seeks to partner with some of the largest corporate brands to achieve large-scale change, as is evident through their long-standing partnership with Walmart (Davies 2014).

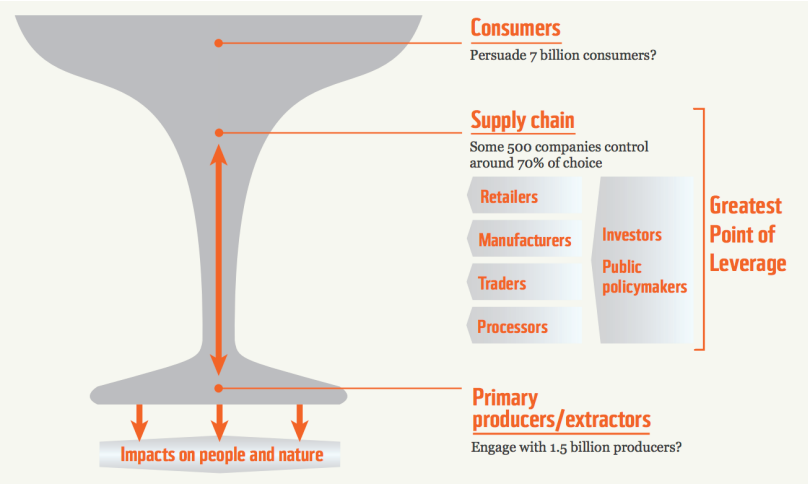
Standards and Certifications

An approach that is being increasingly adopted by many environmental groups and large conservation organizations, such as WWF, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), and Conservation International (CI), is convening and supporting multi-stakeholder groups and roundtables to develop standards for the production and harvesting of commodities that minimize harm to the environment and maintain good labor and human rights conditions for workers. The focus on commodity production and harvest is motivated by the fact that a large share of environmental and social impacts around the world, particularly in areas of high biodiversity, come from a small number of sectors, namely agriculture, forestry, fishing, and extractives. And within these sectors, there are a few commodities where impacts are felt most acutely, such as palm oil, timber, tuna, and diamonds, among others. The multi-stakeholder, roundtable approach, in which the private sector, civil society, and local communities collaboratively develop sustainability standards, provides greater credibility and collective buy-in for all the stakeholders associated with the production and supply chain of a given commodity than industry or NGO standards alone could. Standards and certifications provide a common benchmark for producers, processors and buyers of a commodity. By supporting the development of these standards and purchasing certified raw materials, companies can meet environmental and social commitments.

Public-Private Partnerships

Bi-lateral partnerships between environmental organizations and businesses have also become commonplace, though not all environmental groups are willing to enter into these types of arrangements. Companies increasingly view NGOs such as WWF, TNC, and EDF as trusted partners on sustainability initiatives (Davies 2014), and investing in a trusting relationship is highlighted as one of "the 10 commandments for sustainability collaborations" by Suzanne Apple, former SVP of Private Sector Engagement at WWF. "You've got to take the time to build a trusting relationship. There's got to be openness, candor, honesty, integrity, empathy, a willingness to listen and understand and not being too quick to judge, and not quick to find fault, on either side," said Suzanne in a recent Greenbiz article (Langert 2016). In these partnerships, NGOs perform a variety of functions depending on the nature of the partnership and the particular mission and

FIGURE 1: ILLUSTRATION OF THE "CHOKE POINTS" FOR LEVERS OF ENGAGEMENT WITHIN SUPPLY CHAINS (WORLD WILDLIFE FUND 2015)



approach of the organization. NGOs act as advisors on corporate best practices and policies, including helping companies develop concrete plans to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions, reduce waste, better manage water resources, and responsibly source raw materials, among other activities. Companies also view NGOs as trusted scientific resources and look to them for guidance on new innovations and opportunities to get involved in various projects and initiatives. Increasingly, many NGOs also conduct analyses and provide recommendations that are specific to the individual company, at times providing services traditionally performed by management consulting firms. In these cases, NGOs conduct due diligence to ensure that any corporate engagement activity aligns with its mission and organizational principles.

Examples of flagship partnerships between environmental organizations and major corporations include:

- **Starbucks and Conservation International** – a 15-year partnership on sustainable and ethical coffee sourcing, through which Starbucks' C.A.F.E. Standard was developed (See **Case Study 1**).
- **The Dow Chemical Company and The Nature Conservancy** – a partnership established on the principle that "building nature's value into business strategy could lead to better outcomes for companies and conservation." (Dow Chemical Company and The Nature Conservancy N.D.)
- **The Coca-Cola Company and World Wildlife Fund** – a multi-faceted partnership focused on ensuring healthy, resilient freshwater river basins around the world (World Wildlife Fund N.D.).

CASE STUDY 1

Starbucks and Conservation International

In 1999, Starbucks and Conservation International (CI) launched a partnership that not only helped to change the Starbucks business model for sourcing coffee but reverberated throughout the coffee industry. The partnership was an example of business and environmental interests coming together to have a major impact on policies and practices governing commodity production (in this case, of coffee) (Conservation International 2017). It also demonstrated the scale of impact that can be achieved through long-term investment and a deep, sustained working relationship between a company and an NGO.



Prior to the CI partnership, Starbucks had no experience in setting environmental standards. It had previously purchased Fair Trade coffee, but had not participated in the creation of the certification (Perez-Aleman et al. 2008). For Starbucks, Fair Trade was a type of coffee, not a business model. Fair Trade certification is meant to provide farmers and agricultural workers in developing countries better prices, stable market access, and resources for social and environmental projects, while giving consumers an option to support poor farmers by purchasing products that uphold defined social and environmental standards. But the Fair Trade system did not focus on ensuring the quality of coffee and therefore did not align closely with the Starbucks mission to be the "premier purveyor of the finest coffee" (Raynolds 2008).

The partnership with Conservation International in 1997 sought to develop ethical sourcing guidelines for Starbucks' coffee that promote environmentally and socially sound growing practices. A pair of small-scale initiatives with CI in Costa Rica and Mexico eventually led to the development of Starbucks' own tailor-made coffee standard – Coffee and Farmer Equity (C.A.F.E.) Practices – through which Starbucks now sources 99% of its coffee, benefiting over a million coffee farmers worldwide (https://news.starbucks.com/news/starbucks-ethical-sourcing-program) (Starbucks 2017).

To read the full case study go to http://evidenceproject.popcouncil.org/?p=3040

- **Walmart and Environmental Defense Fund** – a 10-year partnership to embed sustainability across Walmart's global supply chain (Environmental Defense Fund 2016).

Campaigns

Environmental organizations also engage in campaigns to bring attention to an issue and spur action on the part of consumers and companies. Sometimes these campaigns are directed at specific corporations and may advocate the boycott of certain products, while others are oriented towards marshalling support for a cause, such as action on climate change. Oxfam's "Behind the Brands" campaign took a multi-pronged approach, mobilizing its supporters via social media, while also directly engaging companies through a scorecard (see **Case Study 2**). Some NGOs also successfully utilize "name and shame"

CASE STUDY 2

Oxfam's "Behind the Brands" Campaign



Oxfam launched the "Behind the Brands" campaign in February 2013 to challenge 10 of the largest global food and beverage companies (referred to in the campaign as the "Big 10") to improve their social and environmental policies and practices, and to amplify the voices of key stakeholders such as farmers, communities, consumers and investors, calling on them to take action. These 10 companies were chosen as targets for the campaign because they constitute the most powerful branded actors among food and beverage producers, collectively generating revenues of over $1 billion per day and employing millions in their supply chains (Oxfam 2016). Oxfam looked at the largest overall revenues globally, as well as a company's position in the Forbes 2000 annual ranking, which measures companies based on composite sales, assets, profits and market value (Oxfam 2014).

"Behind the Brands" illustrates how NGOs balance "carrot" and "stick" approaches to advocating for corporate policy change, and how such a strategy can be effective in achieving change. The campaign had both "inside" and "outside" components, with efforts to engage consumers through awareness-raising activities, as well as direct communication and collaboration with companies to help them make commitments to improve their environmental and social performance.

A scorecard was a key component of the "Behind the Brands" campaign, used to initiate a "race to the top" among the 10 companies to improve their scores over the life of the campaign. Oxfam explicitly sought to avoid a "name and shame" style campaign with the scorecard, encouraging consumers and supporters to actively advocate change by companies rather than suggesting they boycott any products (Kramer 2013). In choosing which companies to target, Oxfam looked at its strengths and assets and where in the food system they could best leverage those. They focused on companies with visible brands, rather than traders and agribusinesses, since those have less brand recognition among consumers and would therefore not be as impacted by Oxfam's brand and supporter base as the more consumer-facing companies. This type of targeting is reflective of the strategy used nowadays by many major environmental organizations, including World Wildlife Foundation, Conservation International, and Greenpeace.

To read the full case study go to http://evidenceproject.popcouncil.org/?p=3041

campaigns against companies they identify as bad actors. Examples of these include the Greenpeace campaign against Nestle in 2010 over its sourcing of palm oil from suppliers responsible for deforestation in Indonesia, as well as the "Don't Flush the Tigers" campaign against Asia Pulp & Paper in 2012 by WWF, Greenpeace and other NGOs to protest the use of pulp from deforested lands to make toilet paper. Both campaigns resulted in changes to corporate sourcing policies related to the targeted products and suppliers. Campaigns can be highly successful at awakening companies to a particular issue and spurring them to take some immediate action to address the problem. "Name and shame" campaigns act as the "stick" of a "carrot and stick" approach, and can be effective in select circumstances. Their effectiveness is often enhanced, however, when coupled with the "carrot" of collaborative, multi-stakeholder approaches and partnerships (Griswold 2016).

Finance and Reporting Initiatives

Finance has become an increasingly common lever through which environmental organizations influence corporate behavior and policy changes. Several major NGOs have partnerships with large, global financial institutions (e.g. WWF and HSBC, TNC and Goldman Sachs) and many of these organizations also work on environmental issues through coalitions and alliances of financial institutions. These coalitions, dubbed "investor-driven governance networks" in a study by Macleod and Park (2011), have become highly influential in the world of socially responsible investment (SRI) and are driving collective shareholder activism on private global environmental governance. Examples of these leading groups and initiatives include:

- The Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility (ICCR)
- Ceres
- The Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP)
- The United Nations Principles for Responsible Investment (PRI)

The objective of investor-driven governance networks is to use the legally defined rights they have as shareholders in companies to steer the behavior of market actors and to shape and define the obligations of the business community at large. These efforts target pension funds and mutual funds to incorporate non-traditional social and environmental considerations into their investment decisions and thereby provide financial incentives to corporations and industries to adopt more sustainable, long-term practices and policies. These efforts are also seen as a way to transform the incentive structures of global capitalism. NGO presence and engagement in such efforts have often been essential to the functioning of collective investor actions (MacLeod and Park 2011).

How Has the Environmental Community Appealed to Corporate Interests?

The Business Case for Sustainability

There are a number of areas in which improving the environmental sustainability of business practices also makes business sense for companies. For example, companies can help address climate change by increasing their energy efficiency in operations and manufacturing processes, which also results in clear cost savings. Reducing water use and overall waste are other actions with both clear environmental and business benefits. Less tangible but no less significant, environmental sustainability can improve a company's brand and reputation. A company's brand is increasingly the most valuable thing it owns, accounting for more than 30 percent of its stock market value according to some estimates (The Economist 2014). Protecting and improving that brand thus represents a concrete business interest. In addition to the traditional need for companies to obtain a physical license to operate from various levels of government, the notion that companies also need to have a social license to operate has gained widespread recognition, particularly in the mining sector. A social license to operate can be said to exist when a project is seen as having the ongoing approval and broad acceptance of society to conduct its activities, and is seen as a way to avoid potentially costly conflict and exposure to social risks (Prno and Slocombe 2012). In part due to the recognition of the business threat of climate change, companies increasingly view sustainability as central to ensure long-term security of supply. As a result of increased temperatures, changes in rainfall patterns and increased severe weather intensity, areas suitable for growing certain crops are already changing and will continue to change into the future (Ovalle-Rivera et al. 2015). For any company looking at its medium- to long-term business strategy, it is

imperative that they take climate change and other environmental factors into account to ensure they can continue business operations.

> A company's "social license to operate" is also increasingly recognized as a part of the business case for sustainability.

Scorecards

Scorecards and reporting initiatives have become another popular approach to motivate companies to make changes to their policies and practices through competition. Some scorecards are produced by individual NGOs, while others have buy-in from multiple stakeholders. An example of a public-facing scorecard is the one developed by Oxfam's "Behind the Brands" campaign, which rates food companies on their performance on a number of social and environmental criteria and ranks them against their peers. The scorecard focuses on the "Big 10" (see **Case Study 2**) multinational food and beverage producing companies and was designed to challenge the social and environmental practices of these companies, while amplifying the voices of key stakeholders (Oxfam 2016). The "Behind the Brands" campaign has been deemed highly successful by both Oxfam and others, including companies ranked by the scorecard. Notably, all companies ranked on the scorecard improved their performance over the three-year span of the campaign.

Another scorecard example is the Palm Oil Buyers' Scorecard, first put out by WWF in 2009, which rates the performance of 130 major retailers, food service companies, and consumer goods and other manufacturers worldwide on their use of palm oil certified under the Roundtable for Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO). While the "Behind the Brands" scorecard takes a high-level perspective of company performance on a variety of issues, the Palm Oil Buyers' Scorecard takes a very detailed look at the uptake of RSPO among companies across the palm oil supply chain and has tracked the progress of certified sustainable palm oil purchases over time (World Wildlife Fund 2013). Greenpeace (Greenpeace International 2016) and Forest Trends (Supply Change 2015) have also put out scorecard ratings of companies in the palm oil supply chain, monitoring and tracking corporate commitments in order to hold companies accountable on their palm oil sourcing.

Storytelling

Storytelling has become an integral part of efforts by NGOs to appeal to corporate interest, and can have a significant impact on company decisions to support an NGO or cause. WWF, for example, profiled individual sugar farmers whose lands impact the Great Barrier Reef, telling stories of successful approaches to water and fertilizer reduction via the Bonsucro Standard for Sugarcane Production (Lewis 2013). Rainforest Alliance has highlighted a number of stories of farmers who have adopted the Rainforest Alliance Sustainable Agriculture Network standard and the economic and personal benefits realized as a result (Rainforest Alliance 2014). Storytelling is one of the most effective ways for NGOs to engage company leadership and employees on a personal level, as they can identify and empathize with lives of real human beings. While many NGO campaigns and initiatives emphasize the business reasons for companies to improve their environmental sustainability practices, Anna Swaithes, Director of Sustainable Development at SABMiller, stresses that qualitative insight into people is crucial for companies to properly account for and address their social impact. According to Swaithes, "If we wish to understand the needs and desires of the sections of society our company touches, it means going out and talking to those people. We do this with our consumers when we devise and launch new products, so it shouldn't be too much of a stretch to take the same approach when it comes to understanding and growing our social impact." (Rana and Majmudar 2016)

> While many NGO campaigns and initiatives emphasize the business reasons for companies to improve their environmental sustainability practices... qualitative insight into people is crucial for companies to properly account for and address their social impact.

It is important for NGOs to realize that when they engage corporations, they are also engaging people, including the employees of these corporations. While emphasizing the bottom-line benefits of sustainability is important, appealing to human interests is just as important. As Swaithes says, "As employees, most of us are naturally more committed to strategies that we believe can do good and deliver a social purpose, as well as helping the bottom line. No one wants to feel apologetic about what they do or where they work. Using social impact to drive responsible decision-making therefore plays well among a company's workforce. When the local communities do well, so does our business and so do the economies and environment around us." (Rana and Majmudar 2016)

Lessons Learned

The desk review and interviews highlighted a range of lessons from environmental groups' experience advocating for change by corporations that women's health advocates can also learn from.

1. **Collective action is required to tackle the hardest global challenges, since multiple stakeholders working together can galvanize positive change more effectively than any single actor.**

   Companies, NGOs, and governments increasingly recognize that a multi-stakeholder approach is the most effective way to address complex environmental and social problems that reflect systemic issues, which no one actor can solve alone. Many of the interviewees emphasized the critical role that multi-stakeholder initiatives play as a mechanism to convene diverse groups. These initiatives enable the private sector, civil society, and governments to determine collectively the best approach to reaching shared goals and ensuring that all relevant stakeholders are represented.

   Collective action is not without its challenges, as each stakeholder comes to the table with competing interests and viewpoints on any given issue. This type of approach also requires more time to make decisions, act, and see results than independent action by any single stakeholder. However, the benefits can be significant: credibility, effective dialogue, the emergence of shared goals, and much greater scale and impact (see **Case Study 3**).

2. **Voluntary standards and certification schemes, though imperfect, are effective for spurring dialogue among corporate and NGO stakeholders and decision-makers.**

   Despite varying views on the effectiveness of voluntary standards and certifications in improving social and environmental outcomes, it was generally agreed that, at a minimum, these standards have raised awareness among companies of their global impact and have changed the conversation on CSR and sustainability. The success of individual standards and certification schemes depends upon a wide range of factors, and there is no one-size-fits-all approach that can be applied to all products or sectors. But environmental NGOs have used such schemes to strategically engage corporations and put pressure on them to come to the table, if not take action. In addition, standards and certifications can serve as a tool for small companies and suppliers in developing countries to learn about sustainability and gain access to technical assistance and resources they might not have had previously.

3. **The business case for sustainability is essential but not itself sufficient to drive changes in corporate policies and practices – compelling stories are also needed.**

   Environmental NGOs and leading corporations have increasingly demonstrated the business case for more efficient use of natural resources, reduction of waste, and greater efforts to avoid environmental harms to communities. A sign of this is a shift away from the linear 'take, make, dispose' economic model to developing a "circular economy" in which production and design aim at removing all waste and inefficiencies (Ellen MacArthur Foundation 2015). Yet, both NGOs and corporations recognize the limitations of quantifying and monetizing social and environmental impacts. While it is important to capture these impacts in monetary terms for financial decision-making purposes, there is always going to be uncertainty and bias with the imperfect metrics used to measure environmental and social performance. So, it is important to recognize the social and philanthropic reasons for corporate action and investment. Companies don't make decisions in purely financial

CASE STUDY 3

The Amazon Soy Moratorium

Brazil's Soy Moratorium (SoyM) was the first voluntary zero-deforestation agreement implemented in the tropics, and set the stage for supply-chain governance initiatives for other commodity drivers of deforestation, such as beef and palm oil (Gibbs et al. 2015). From the late 1990s through 2004, Amazon deforestation became far more sensitive to global influences, as commodity market conditions and technological advances favored the first large-scale expansion of soy and other mechanized crops into the region (Nepstad 2014). Between 2001 and 2006, soybean fields expanded by one million hectares in the Amazon biome, and direct conversion of forests for soy production contributed to record deforestation rates (Gibbs et al. 2015). Until 2006, Brazil had been the world leader in tropical deforestation, clearing an average of 19,500 km^2 annually from 1996 to 2005. This forest conversion to pasture and farmland released 0.7 to 1.4 $GtCO_2e$ (billion tons of CO_2 equivalents) per year to the atmosphere (Neptstad 2014).

In 2006, Greenpeace released a report entitled "Eating up the Amazon," in which it laid out the problem of commodity-driven deforestation in the Amazon and specifically targeted major agribusiness traders, such as Cargill, ADM, and Bunge, but also McDonald's as a buyer of soy from these traders (Greenpeace International 2006). Greenpeace chose to focus on McDonald's in the report and campaign activities, which included activists protesting in chicken costumes at McDonald's restaurants in Europe and a blockade activists set up at the soybean port of Santarém, Pará on the Amazon River (Brown 2013), even though its supply chain represented less than 0.5 percent of soy purchasing from Brazil (Langert 2016). The goal was to get McDonald's, a major global corporation with powerful brand recognition, to pressure its suppliers (namely Cargill) to stop contributing to soy-related deforestation in the Amazon. Greenpeace's strategy was to move McDonald's on the deforestation issue, believing that others would then follow its example. To the surprise of Greenpeace, not only did McDonald's move on the issue, but they helped convene and recruit other actors, including Cargill, to meet and work together to solve the problem (ibid).



To read the full case study go to http://evidenceproject.popcouncil.org/?p=3042

terms – they also make decisions to manage risk and promote brand reputation based on subjective and qualitative reasoning. In some cases, a company may be the only significant actor in a community that lacks government and social services. It makes good business sense for a company to address social impacts, as the community could represent both the company's employee and customer base. Thus, companies can be motivated to act by strong qualitative evidence as well as by opportunities to deliver positive social impact through their business.

Storytelling can appeal to the human interests of corporate leaders and employees. Sharing personal stories adds the crucial human element to complex social and environmental problems that can be difficult to comprehend in the abstract, and enables companies to connect with people that are affected by their business.

4. **A carrot and stick approach can be useful – external pressure is critical but so is cooperation.**

   The "carrot and stick" approach has been highly effective for some environmental areas, with NGOs

like Greenpeace or Rainforest Action Network acting as the "stick" via hard-hitting campaigns and protests, coupled with NGOs like WWF, TNC, and EDF operating as the "carrot" through solutions-oriented projects. Rankings, ratings, public reporting, and scorecards can also be used as sticks to put external pressure on companies and organizations to change policies and take action. A growing area of external pressure is the adoption of environmental (and other social) indicators in the financial decisions of investment firms – not just "socially responsible" firms – that recognize that environmental and social risks need to be considered in their decision-making.

While a key role for NGOs is to hold corporations accountable for their actions (and inaction) based on high standards, it is also important to acknowledge companies that have made real progress on social and environmental performance. There is often a gap between what NGOs view as the best outcome and a company's capacity to achieve those outcomes. Companies often complain of NGOs "moving the goal posts" for sustainability targets, which can make recognizing progress difficult to measure. Thus, environmental NGOs suggest that it is important to find a balance between pushing for change and recognizing progress and legitimate achievements.

5. **Progress may be slow, as it takes time to gain momentum and see results.**

   Long-term engagement between NGOs and the private sector can yield major benefits, but requires perseverance to succeed, as the Starbucks and Conservation International case study demonstrates. This is also evident in the case of voluntary standards and certifications, with mature schemes such as FSC and MSC gaining greater traction after more than 20 years, while newer schemes such as RSPO are still experiencing growing pains as stakeholders navigate the peculiarities of sustainability in the palm oil sector. Tangible results on the ground take time, given the complexity of the global economic system and enormity of social and environmental challenges.

Recommended Actions

Corporate responsibility for the environment may seem categorically different from the responsibility for public health, but the arguments that environmentalists have made for protecting the environment are very relevant for making the case about health. Just as companies can impact the physical environment (from emissions and use of raw materials produced by factories and farms), they can also impact the health of workers and the surrounding community through their business practices, the quality of their health staff, their health policies, and their use and connections to external health services.

The global health community can learn from the experience of environmentalists on how to engage business on CSR standards and corporate practices around women's health. There are six recommendations for moving forward:

1. **Bring together multiple stakeholders for collective action on workplace health and women's empowerment in CSR standards and corporate codes and practices.**

   Environmental groups have shown the importance of collective action through multi-stakeholder platforms, not just public-private partnerships. A wide range of health and development organizations have been working on women's health, empowerment, and well-being in partnership with corporations and their global supply chains. Yet, there is no mechanism for these organizations to share information and evidence, coordinate activities, and develop strategies for advocating changes in corporate policies and practices. These efforts would be much more effective through a coordinated approach that identifies opportunities for collective action.

2. **Develop a multi-faceted strategy for addressing FP/RH/MNCH in CSR standards and corporate codes, policies and practices.**

   Such a strategy should build on the experience of environmental groups, including carrot and stick approaches and advocacy efforts highlighting the benefits of investing in women's health for workers, the environment, and businesses bottom line

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a natural entry point for addressing workplace health on a number of fronts, from gender equality to decent work, clean water and sanitation, climate action and partnerships. A comprehensive strategy should provide a framework for how to think systemically about the role of business in health and act collectively with government, business, NGOs, and industry groups on evidence-based approaches and models. This includes identifying connections between the SDGs and FP2020 commitments and emerging corporate initiatives that are addressing business and human rights, living wages for workers, and financial incentives.

3. **Set targets for workplace health policies and practices that can be used to benchmark progress.**

   Setting targets that are measurable and evidence-based is critical for moving a women's health agenda forward. Better data on health at the workplace, effective policies and practices, and related demographic information is necessary to develop workplace targets and indicators. These targets and indicators, in turn, can support engagement with other CSR and multi-stakeholder initiatives as well as be incorporated into corporate rankings, reporting frameworks, and socially responsible investment selection criteria.

4. **Engage existing stakeholder and industry groups and CSR reporting and ranking initiatives on corporate environmental and social performance.**

   Many multi-stakeholder platforms and industry groups already exist that shape corporate codes, policies and practices, but very little focus is paid to women's health. The global health community can start important new conversations and relationships through these platforms, and help shift the thinking of such initiatives on corporate policy to include women's health. It will be important at the start to target those initiatives where global health can have the most influence, which likely means industries with a significant proportion of women workers.

5. **Leverage existing relationships between organizations working on environmental and population health issues.**

   Several environmental organizations have incorporated reproductive health and family planning in their community-based conservation programs in the developing world. The leaders, which include the World Wildlife Fund, Conservation International, The Nature Conservancy, and the Jane Goodall Institute, often work with family planning groups. These programs, which often fall under the rubric of Population, Health, and Environment (PHE), aim to address unmet need for family planning as part of an integrated strategy for conservation and natural resource management. For example, the Sierra Club has a work stream promoting reproductive rights and has worked closely on PHE issues with PAI. The Nature Conservatory and Pathfinder International collaborate on Tuungane, a project that is creating solutions for natural environment issues and barriers to contraception through integrated approaches. These and other relationships between the environmental and global health community should be leveraged to explore new ways to act on CSR standards and corporate policies.

6. **Document the stories of real women – and men – whose health has been helped or harmed by workplace policies and practices.**

   Highlighting real experiences can be a powerful motivator both for companies and the public. These stories can be incorporated into larger advocacy efforts, such as campaigns and social media content, to shine a spotlight on women's health at the workplace and bring a human element to an abstract issue. It is important to highlight positive as well as negative stories, and document the companies and workplaces that are adopting better practices.

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