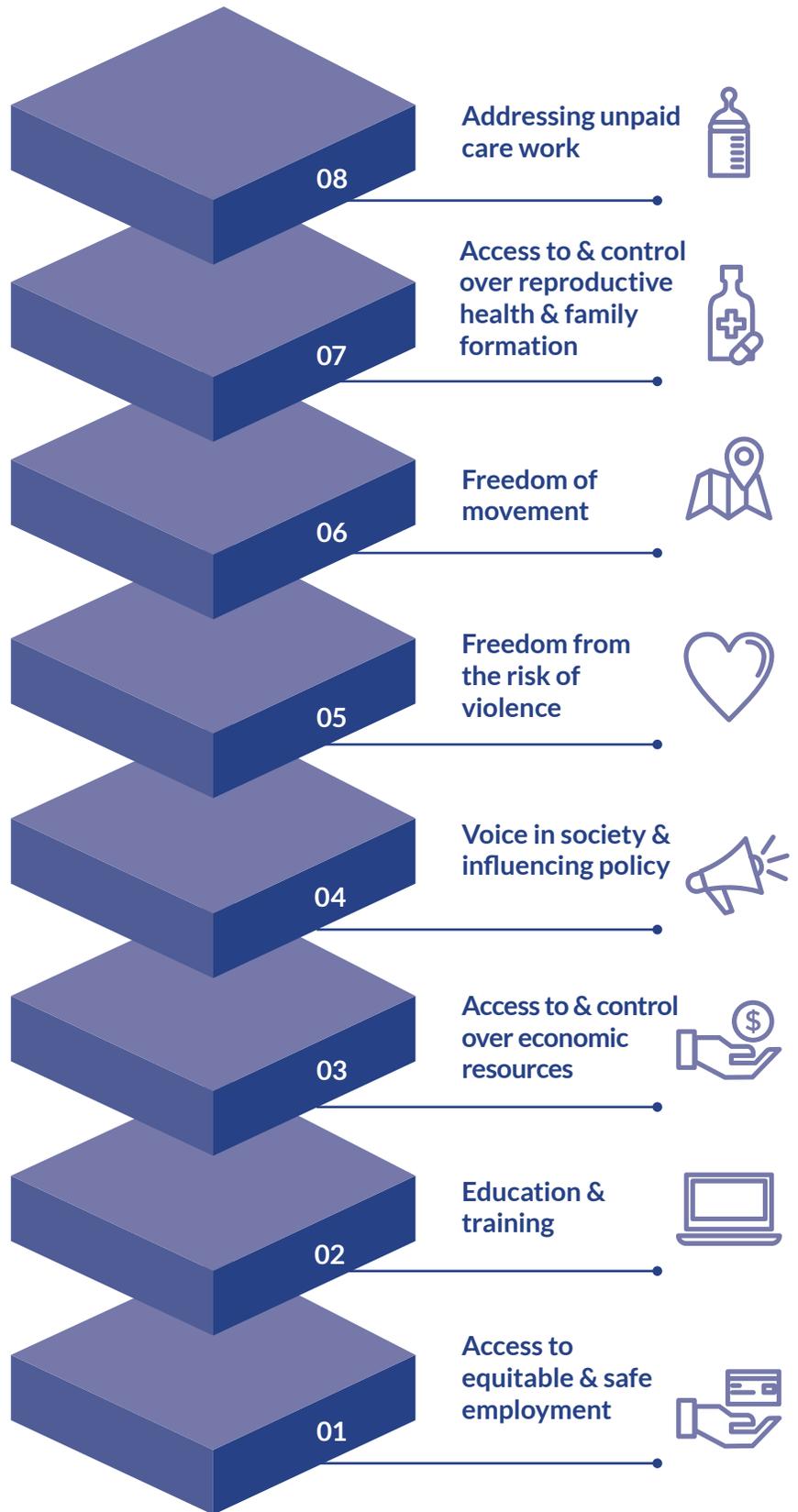


# Building Blocks Summary

Gender-specific supply chain risks can be overlooked when not actively considered. By conducting Gender-Responsive Due Diligence, companies actively identify, assess, and address gender-specific risks in addition to other human rights risks in supply chains. The eight Building Blocks for Women's Economic Empowerment<sup>1</sup> form a framework that supports companies to assess gender-specific supply chain risks. The Building Blocks highlight the multiple and inter-locking structural barriers women face when striving to ensure equal economic participation and opportunities within their communities. Each building block is therefore key to advancing women's economic empowerment. Business activities that might inhibit or worsen progress made towards women's economic empowerment and gender equality can be identified and addressed by scoping potential or actual risks based on the building blocks. The building blocks also support enterprises committed to going beyond the due diligence process to invest more broadly in gender equality.

Each building block is explained in more detail below, with a focus on the types of gender-specific risks that can occur in supply chains.

<sup>1</sup> ICRW, Oak Foundation, Dalberg and Witter Ventures. 2014. The Business Case for Women's Economic Empowerment: An integrated approach. \*The building blocks presented here are slightly adapted from the ones in the report.



## 1. Access to equitable and safe employment

Women are more likely than men to be unemployed, self-employed, or to work in informal employment, and are therefore less likely to have access to health care, pensions, or earn a regular wage. Within the formal economy, women are disadvantaged too, holding four of every ten jobs and earning an average of two-thirds the salary of their male colleagues. Furthermore, women are still largely underrepresented in leadership positions, across the entire supply chain.

## 2. Education and training

There is a major gender gap when it comes to workplace learning. Throughout the supply chain women are left behind when it comes to education. Making sure they have access to quality training and skill building opportunities is critical to expanding female participation in the economy and to closing the gender gap.

## 3. Access to and control over economic resources

In many countries, women do not have full access to and control over economic resources such as bank accounts, mobile phones, property and land, making them economically vulnerable. Control over resources and opportunities is important for women's financial security and economic development.

## 4. Voice in society and influencing policy

Trade unions play a crucial role by representing the interests of labourers, promoting safer working environments, and negotiating for employees' benefits. Women remain underrepresented in union leadership, collective bargaining committees and policy positions. Additionally, there is a need for increased representation for informal sector workers, unpaid family workers, domestic workers, and other women-dominant sectors. As long as women are underrepresented in trade unions, their interests will be underrepresented too.

## 5. Freedom from the risk of violence

Living free from violence is a basic human right. Sexual abuse and harassment, both in as well as outside of the workplace, is a serious problem. It has damaging effects on the physical and emotional health of women. Furthermore, cases of sexual abuse or harassment are often minimised or go unreported due to women's fear of retaliation, job loss and/or social norms that condone the behaviour.

## 6. Freedom of movement

Women's mobility can be restricted by legislation, social or cultural norms, or insufficient and unsafe infrastructure. In many countries, women travel significant distances between home and work and face safety concerns on their commute. Additionally, these limitations can restrict access to domestic and international travel, affect employment and education, and exacerbate existing inequalities.

## 7. Access to and control over reproductive health and family formation

Limited access to reproductive health robs women of the opportunity to lead long, healthy and productive lives. Other challenges in accessing care include logistical constraints and lack of time, due to busy work schedules combined with unpaid care duties. These challenges are particularly difficult for pregnant women and women from poor, rural households.

## 8. Addressing unpaid care work

Access to affordable, high-quality childcare, eldercare and other family care programmes, and important social benefits such as maternity leave, health insurance and other social protection programmes, are crucial to women's economic empowerment. Social protection programmes can help reduce women's vulnerabilities in the face of economic risks and provide much-needed assistance in caring for children and relatives. For women who are formally employed, insufficient maternity leave can put them at risk of losing their jobs, and can affect their health and that of their newborns. Social protection programmes such as unemployment benefits, social pension schemes, cash transfers, and subsidies are a particular concern for women, who tend to be more vulnerable to economic shocks or extreme life events as a result of their lower incomes and greater reliance on informal employment. Paternity leave for men is also an important way to support mothers and families.