

NONPROFITS

## Prada Group, UNFPA embark on gender equity effort

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*This latest empowerment push extends a tradition of supporting nonprofits and change-makers on the part of the conglomerate. Image credit: Prada Group*

By EMILY IRIS DEGN

Italy's Prada Group is exploring the good that fashion can do.

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Working with UNFPA, the United Nations sexual and reproductive health agency, the conglomerate is backing gender equality efforts in the African countries of Kenya and Ghana. "Fashion Expressions: The Stories She Wears," a jointly-developed 12-month project, recently concluded, benefitting the 43 women who completed the professional training course.

"This innovative partnership uses fashion as a vehicle to promote women's economic inclusion by giving the participants valuable experience in different sectors within the industry," said Tara Jayaram, media consultant at [UNFPA](#), New York.

"It also simultaneously aims to educate young women about their sexual and reproductive health through educational sessions about issues ranging from menstrual health management to the prevention of teenage pregnancies."

In conscious company

With a stated goal of equipping women with the skills to make a positive impact on their own lives, the pilot program grants participants with practical skills that can be applied within the fashion industry.

Young people from what are deemed vulnerable communities were picked to participate, 30 women hailing from Ghana and 13 from Kenya, ranging from prior teen mothers to those who could not attain financial aid for university training to rural farmers.

43 young women of Ghana and Kenya, participating in "Fashion Expressions: The Stories She Wears", the 12-months project of [#PradaGroup](#) and [@unfpa](#), share their professional successes and the skills acquired in the field of [#fashion](#).

Discover more: <https://t.co/5Q2kzS0k7h>. [pic.twitter.com/3uQMA0Be8z](https://pic.twitter.com/3uQMA0Be8z)

PRADA (@Prada) July 7, 2023

This kick-start to their careers in the sector integrates topics such as localized style, upcycling, financial literacy and traditional textile design, all of which not only benefit those wanting to work at fashion companies, but those wanting to run their own business or become designers themselves.

In Accra, 15 more young women are being granted support and sewing training at the city's Ussher Hospital and Adolescent Centre.

The move strengthens Prada Group's commitment to upholding equity, diversity and inclusion, befitting of current luxury trends at large.

With the rise of younger consumers and the democratization of knowledge, the public is increasingly pushing for products that complement their own values ([see story](#)) and companies joining them in their own convictions ([see story](#)). As a result, ethical campaigns and ESG-related efforts are especially in demand within the luxury sector.

Prada Group is seemingly on board with this shift.



*Participants are given access to fashion and industry experts, tools and insights as they build toward future career goals. Image credit: Prada Group*

In Ghana And Kenya, the Fashion Expressions: The Stories She Wears program was created not only alongside UNFPA but in collaboration with Ghana nonprofit International Needs, Kenya's Kitui County Government and the Kitui County Textile Center.

Involving local communities, the training course brought together fashion-centric career goals and empowerment of other kinds altogether.

Women's rights were a central point of focus throughout the year.

Participants took deep dives with leaders into the possible reductions for gender inequalities and learning sessions on sexual and reproductive health puberty, teenage pregnancy prevention and menstrual health management were included in the education provided.

Additionally, gender-based violence prevention and response techniques were offered as part of the training, addressing child marriages and female genital mutilation as well.



*The 43 women gained practical fashion skills, which included dives into local style, upcycling, traditional textile design and financial literacy.  
Image credit: Prada Group*

Upon the program's conclusion, trainees engaged in a fashion show where their works were displayed, getting to pick between presenting in Ghana or Kenya. The opportunity served to connect the 43 women with local networking options, internships and long-term job opportunities.

"UNFPA is working with creative industries to find innovative ways to support young women from left behind' communities to access their rights and choices in order to unlock their full potential," said Mariarosa Cutillo, chief of strategic partnerships at UNFPA, in a statement.

"Fashion is a powerful platform to provide long-term, sustainable education and development opportunities across the world," Ms. Cutillo said. "We are proud to launch our partnership with Prada Group and its people through this impactful program that focuses on women's economic inclusion, pushes boundaries for sustainable development solutions, and acts as a springboard for further collaboration in the years to come."

#### Fashion for good

First working on the project with UNFPA in 2021 ([see story](#)), intersectional environmental and social equity efforts continue to be approached by the group.

The company has been partnered with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for a few years now, promoting ocean literacy through the Sea Beyond project ([see story](#)). Backed by re-nylon sales, the push supports children's learning and connection to the natural world via land-based syllabi.

#### *Prada's Kindergarten of the Lagoon is part of Sea Beyond*

Prada Group has also worked with local entities in educational initiatives. With support from the Municipality of Milan, the Milan Community Foundation and Milan-based organization ForestaMi, it launched a three-year urban forestation training program in March 2023 ([see story](#)).

This latest empowerment scheme extends this tradition of backing equity, supporting nonprofits and changemakers, contributing resources toward community learning and uplifting vulnerable populations.

"This training program reflects Prada Group's belief in fashion as a force for good," said Lorenzo Bertelli, marketing director and head of corporate social responsibility at Prada Group, in a statement.

"We are honored to partner with UNFPA on this unique project to leverage the social and economic power of our industry to create more inclusive and equal societies."

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