TOWARDS EQUALITY IN BUSINESS

PUTTING GENDER EQUALITY AT THE HEART OF THE BUSINESS SECTOR IN AZERBAIJAN
ABOUT THE PUBLICATION

This publication aims to increase the private sector’s understanding of the gender dimension and strengthen its capacity to implement women’s empowerment in the workplace, marketplace and community. It presents a snapshot of the situation for women globally and in Azerbaijan. The brochure presents basic information on the Women’s Empowerment Principles (WEPs), explains the role of the private sector in advancing gender equality and provides guidance on joining and implementing the WEPs. It also contains examples of best practices to inspire companies to become WEPs signatories and actively participate in the WEPs global movement.

The publication was prepared within the framework of UN Women Georgia’s regional project “Women’s Economic Empowerment in the South Caucasus”, co-funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the Austrian Development Cooperation (ADC) and implemented in Azerbaijan by UNDP in partnership with the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The project is aimed at supporting poor and socially excluded women to increase the level of their economic activity through capacity development and network building; and to sensitize the private sector to the gender needs and interests of women by promoting the WEPs.

UN Women is the UN organization dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. It supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and it works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to implement these standards. UN Women stands behind women’s equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on five priority areas: increasing women’s leadership and participation; ending violence against the needs and interests of women; engaging women in all aspects of peace and security processes; enhancing women’s economic empowerment; and making gender equality central to national development planning and budgeting. It also coordinates and promotes the UN system’s work in advancing gender equality.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) partners with people at all levels of society to help build nations that can withstand crisis, and drive and sustain the kind of growth that improves the quality of life for everyone. On the ground in nearly 170 countries and territories, UNDP offers global perspective and local insight to help empower lives and build resilient nations. Globally the organization employs 17,000 people and manages a budget of USD 5 billion annually. The UNDP office in Baku employs a team of 55 professionals and currently manages a portfolio of projects in areas of inclusive growth, environmental protection and good governance.

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GLOBAL CONTEXT FOR WOMEN

In recent decades, empowering women and girls has become an aspirational goal for an increasing variety of organizations, ranging from grass-roots organizations to governments and corporations. It is common knowledge that women’s empowerment benefits not only women but also families, communities, companies and society at large. Closing gender gaps is the key to not only achieving Sustainable Development Goal 5 on gender equality but also the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as a whole.

Significant achievements in women’s empowerment have been made: More girls have access to education, and more women are working, getting elected and assuming leadership positions. Once regarded as a private matter, now preventing and redressing violence against women and girls is finally on the public policy agenda.

While hugely important, though, these changes have not yet resulted in equal outcomes for women and men. Women’s potential is still underutilized and undervalued. Gender gaps persist across many dimensions. Due to gender-specific barriers preventing women’s full participation in political, economic and social life, they are still gravely underrepresented in power and decision-making roles, receive unequal pay for equal work and continue to be targets of physical and sexual abuse. For most women, significant gains in education have not translated into better labour market outcomes. Additionally, women-owned enterprises are economically disadvantaged and lack equal opportunity to compete for business opportunities.

Only 67 women participate in the labour force for every 100 men globally. Persistent gender inequalities are linked to countries’ economic performance and development: Data show that female non-participation in the economy slows economic growth, and overall, gender gaps have been estimated to cost the economy some 15 per cent of GDP.

Conversely, when more women work, economies grow. Women’s economic empowerment has been seen to boost productivity and increase economic and income equality, in addition to other positive development outcomes.

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QUICK FACTS

GLOBALLY:

Women carry out **three times as much** of the care work as men⁶

Women are more likely to be unemployed than men: In 2017, global unemployment rates for men and women stood at **5.5 per cent** and **6.2 per cent**, respectively⁷

Women earn **only 77 per cent** of what men earn, as women continue to be denied equal pay for work of equal value⁸

Women are constrained from achieving the highest leadership positions: **Only 5 per cent** of Fortune **500** CEOs are women⁹

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WOMEN’S ECONOMIC ACTIVITY IN AZERBAIJAN

Azerbaijan has several key factors supporting the case for women’s equal participation in all spheres of life. The Constitution of Azerbaijan guarantees women equal rights with men. The legal framework provides a strong foundation for gender-equal access to economic resources. The Law on Gender Equality (2006) provides women equal rights to engage in all types of economic activities; to own, inherit and sell property; to receive bank loans; and to travel in and out of the country.

However, despite obvious advancements in women’s empowerment, women continue to have fewer opportunities to fully unleash their talents and abilities, and they do not benefit equally from development results. Women’s participation in the labour market is characterized by occupational gender segregation of both types: horizontal and vertical. Women are concentrated in low-wage sectors such as health care, social services and education, as well as in the informal sector, which offers substandard working conditions.

An assessment\(^\text{10}\) conducted by UNDP identified a range of gender-specific barriers that may prevent women from being successful entrepreneurs and rising to powerful positions in the private sector, including the following:

- Gender stereotypes are among the factors that generate a “glass ceiling” in the private sector: women can become marginalized and overlooked for promotions to decision-making positions
- Discrimination against newly married and pregnant women in private-sector hiring limits women’s access to private sector jobs
- Women entrepreneurs, compared to men, have limited access to financial credit, technology and professional networks

QUICK FACTS

IN AZERBAIJAN:

Women's employment rate is **59.4 per cent** in comparison with the **66.8 per cent** of that of men\(^{11}\)

Of all employed **women**, **62 per cent** are engaged in vulnerable employment in comparison with **48.5 per cent** that of **men**\(^{12}\)

The average nominal monthly salary for women is **360.8** Manat, compared to **670.2** Manat for men which constitutes to **53.8 per cent** Gender Wage Gap\(^{13}\)

Women entrepreneurs make up **21.5 per cent** of the total number of entrepreneurs\(^{14}\)

Women occupy **10.2 per cent** of senior and mid-level managerial positions in the civil service\(^{15}\)

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14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.
WOMEN’S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT – OPPORTUNITY FOR BUSINESS

Businesses can contribute to gender equality and women’s empowerment in multiple ways. Beyond the basic responsibilities of respecting human rights, companies can choose from a menu of options to advance women’s empowerment within their workplaces, marketplaces and communities. A growing number of businesses are adapting their policies, programmes and initiatives to create inclusive environments where women and girls can succeed. An increasing number of companies are focusing on non-discrimination in the workplace and are adopting policies and mechanisms against sexual harassment. In addition, companies can create inclusive business models and invest in women’s economic empowerment programmes; they can partner with other organizations to advance women’s rights and advocate for gender equality policies; and they can make an effort to include women in their supply chain.

The “Women’s Empowerment Principles - Equality Means Business” initiative offers a framework for companies to contribute to gender equality.

To empower women economically, businesses can:

Remove the barriers that limit women’s development in the workplace

Establish internal policies to accelerate gender equality

Recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid care work by providing paid parental leave (for mothers and fathers)

Promote women’s financial inclusion and their access to capital

Provide mentorship, internship and other support to women to succeed as employees and/or entrepreneurs

Publicly campaign for gender equality and women’s empowerment

Include women in their value chain and contribute to their sustainable development

These actions will have a positive impact on inclusive and sustainable economic growth in Azerbaijan and around the world.

AND THIS PHENOMENAL OPPORTUNITY IS IN YOUR HANDS!
THE WEPS IN BRIEF

- A set of seven principles for business, offering guidance on how to empower women in the workplace, marketplace and in the community
- Created jointly by UN Women and the UN Global Compact
- Launched on International Women's Day in 2010
- Provide a gender lens to help businesses analyse current initiatives, benchmarks and reporting practices
- Help companies mainstream gender equality throughout their business operations

SEVEN PRINCIPLES FOR BUSINESS TO ADVANCE WOMEN

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HOW TO MAKE THE WEPS REAL

Principle 1: Establish high-level corporate leadership for gender equality

Importance of the Principle
The first principle, which stresses the importance of leadership in achieving gender equality, provides a basis for the successful implementation of all seven principles. Within the context of this principle, the top executives of corporations are expected to agree on the importance of gender equality and offer consistent, spirited leadership at every level of the corporation.

Ways to Implement the Principle
• Affirm high-level support and direct top-level policies for gender equality and human rights
• Establish company-wide goals and targets for gender equality and include progress as a factor in managers’ performance reviews
• Engage internal and external stakeholders in the development of company policies, programmes and implementation plans that advance equality
• Ensure that all policies are gender-sensitive – identifying factors that impact women and men differently – and that corporate culture advances equality and inclusion

The Principle in Practice
The global CEO of Schneider Electric made a public statement pledging to increase the number of women at the entry level to 40 per cent and in upper management to 30 per cent by 2017, as well as to resolve any non-intentional salary differences between men and women and to create executive groups dedicated to advancing this matter.

Principle 2: Treat all women and men fairly at work – respect and support human rights and non-discrimination

Importance of the Principle
In order to promote a non-discriminatory environment in which men and women enjoy equal professional development opportunities, the first step for any organization is to understand that there are challenges that demand specific measures. So, while companies are developing non-discriminatory policies in terms of gender equality, such as equal pay for equal work, they also need to consider women’s specific needs. When implementing this principle,
companies should focus on adopting a gender-sensitive approach in working practices, disciplinary actions, ethical behavioural codes and human resources policies; clarify the responsibilities of managers and employees; and monitor the related indicators.

**Ways to Implement the Principle**

- Pay equal remuneration, including benefits, for work of equal value and strive to pay a living wage to all women and men
- Ensure that workplace policies and practices are free from gender-based discrimination
- Implement gender-sensitive recruitment and retention practices, and proactively recruit and appoint women to managerial and executive positions and to the corporate board of directors
- Assure sufficient participation of women – 30 per cent or greater – in decision-making and governance at all levels and across all business areas
- Offer flexible work options, leave and re-entry opportunities to positions of equal pay and status
- Support access to child and dependent care by providing services, resources and information to both women and men

**The Principle in Practice**

Ernst & Young launched a global programme on maternity coaching in 2011 in an attempt to reduce the number of talented female employees leaving the firm. The programme comprises four coaching sessions before, during and after maternity leave, designed to help new mothers prepare themselves in several practical ways. The firm also requires all managers overseeing someone who is taking maternity leave to attend two group coaching sessions.

**Principle 3: Ensure the health, safety and well-being of all women and men workers**

**Importance of the Principle**

People’s health and safety needs are influenced, among other factors, by their gender. It is important that companies recognize this when planning the scope of their health plans, team structures and working conditions in order to preserve the physical and emotional health and safety of all collaborators.

**Ways to Implement the Principle**

- Provide safe working conditions and protection from exposure to hazardous materials and disclose potential risks, including to reproductive health
- Establish a zero-tolerance policy towards all forms of violence at work, including verbal and/or physical abuse, and prevent sexual harassment
- Strive to offer health insurance or other needed services – including for survivors of domestic violence – and ensure equal access for all employees
- Respect women and men workers’ rights to time off for medical care and counselling for themselves and their dependants
- In consultation with employees, identify and address security issues, including the safety of women travelling to and from work and on company-related business
- Train security staff and managers to recognize signs of violence against women and understand laws and company policies on human trafficking, labour and sexual exploitation

**The Principle in Practice**

The branch of the State Oil Company of Azerbaijan Republic in Georgia (SOCAR) trained more than 35 department heads and managers on gender equality and diversity, including on the prevention of sexual harassment in the workplace.
Principle 4: Promote education, training and professional development for women

Importance of the Principle
Providing education, training and professional development opportunities is not only important for the personal development of employees but also critical in empowering companies. However, some inequalities may occur between women and men in terms of accessing and benefiting from these resources. Therefore, measures must be taken to guarantee women’s access to training or professional development opportunities.

Ways to Implement the Principle:
• Invest in workplace policies and programmes that open avenues for the advancement of women at all levels and across all business areas, and encourage women to enter non-traditional job fields
• Ensure equal access to all company-supported education and training programmes, including literacy classes and vocational and information technology training
• Provide equal opportunities for formal and informal networking and mentoring
• Articulate the company’s business case for women’s empowerment and the positive impact of inclusion for men as well as women

The Principle in Practice
Dio, a company producing aluminium doors, windows and blinds, and some other companies in Georgia have established workplace mentoring programmes for women as part of their WEPs implementation. The private sector Business and Technology University has established a coding school for women to support women’s engagement in the IT sector.

Principle 5: Implement enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practices that empower women

Importance of the Principle
Companies have a great opportunity to promote gender equality through their relationships with their suppliers, as well as through the values they promote in their marketing campaigns. Through their supply chain policies, companies can both directly support women entrepreneurs and encourage suppliers to develop internal gender equality practices. Companies in Azerbaijan are specifically well placed to integrate women into their supply chains and distributor networks and as service providers, thereby bringing women directly into value chains.

Ways to Implement the Principle:
• Implement enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practices that empower women
• Expand business relationships with women entrepreneurs and women-owned enterprises, including small businesses
• Support gender-sensitive solutions to credit and lending barriers
• Respect the dignity of women in all marketing and other company materials

The Principle in Practice
Symantec, a U.S.-based software company, conducted a benchmark audit to evaluate how gender is represented through a company’s branding. Materials were reviewed by looking at the representation of women and men in terms of numbers as well as their position of power in images. The hotel Mercure Tbilisi Old Town partnered with women entrepreneurs from the regions of Georgia to set up a special stand showcasing wine and honey produced exclusively by women farmers.
**Principle 6: Promote equality through community initiatives and advocacy**

**Importance of the Principle**
Companies have several opportunities to lead by example and contribute to women’s empowerment within the wider community. They can play a crucial role in achieving gender equality through corporate social responsibility projects in fields such as health, sports, the arts, culture and the environment, as well as through other initiatives such as grant programmes. Through these community initiatives, companies create opportunities to promote their activities for gender equality and women’s empowerment within their network of corporate representatives, suppliers and vendors, business partners, public officials and the broader public.

**Ways to Implement the Principle**
- Leverage influence, alone or in partnership, to advocate for gender equality and collaborate with business partners, suppliers and community leaders to promote inclusion
- Work with community stakeholders, officials and others to eliminate discrimination and exploitation and open opportunities for women and girls
- Use philanthropy and grants programmes to support company commitment to inclusion, equality and human rights

**The Principle in Practice**
Turkcell initiated a “Women Empowerment in Economy” programme aiming to promote the participation of women in the economy. The programme focuses on supporting women with limited economic means to start or expand their businesses. As part of this programme, more than 70,000 women entrepreneurs from 69 cities across Turkey were provided with microcredit to support their businesses, to better enable them to participate in the economy and promote financial independence.

**Principle 7: Measure and publicly report on progress to achieve gender equality**

**Importance of the Principle**
Measuring and reporting progress towards the goals and identifying the areas of improvement in existing policies and processes will provide opportunities to define road maps and popularize effective initiatives. By using standardized parameters to measure progress, companies can more clearly compare their performance to others and provide indications of progress to stakeholders. More importantly, this principle provides an opportunity for companies to show leadership in implementing all of the WEPs principles. Although reporting WEPs actions is not compulsory, this principle stresses the importance of accountability and transparency. Annual reports on a company’s gender equality policies, plans and activities, as well as the inclusion of gender equality in performance indicators, fall within the scope of this principle.

**Ways to Implement the Principle**
- Make public the company policies and implementation plan for promoting gender equality
- Establish benchmarks that quantify the inclusion of women at all levels
- Measure and report on progress, both internally and externally, using sex-disaggregated data
- Incorporate gender markers into ongoing reporting obligations

**The Principle in Practice**
In Turkey, Boyner Group measures and reports the development of gender equality in the workplace in accordance with the principles that they have agreed to implement. In 2015, 46 per cent of employees, 41 per cent of managers, 47 per cent of promoted employees and 42 per cent of employees participating in training and development programmes were women. Boyner Group shares its work with the public every year through its annual and sustainability reports, which include the progress made through the WEPs. In addition, they have seen their work evaluated by independent institutions and have been honoured with the United Nations WEPs Leadership Award.
CONSIDERING JOINING THE WEPS? SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE

From 2019 throughout 2021, UN Women Georgia, the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs and UNDP Azerbaijan, with the support of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, are supporting companies in Azerbaijan to:

• Conduct a gender gap analysis to assess the current status of gender equality
• Develop WEPS Action Plans
• Establish partnerships for the promotion of women’s empowerment
• Strengthen key staff skills to implement the WEPS
• Increase employees’ understanding of gender equality principles and sexual harassment
• Share WEPS implementation experiences among the business community
• Report on WEPS implementation
• Disseminate promising practices in WEPS implementation in Azerbaijan and abroad

WHAT NEXT? JOIN THE GLOBAL WEPS MOVEMENT

The formal commitment to implement the WEPS involves the following steps:
1. The company’s Chief Executive Officer (CEO) signs the CEO Statement of Support for the WEPS
2. The current status on gender equality and women’s empowerment at work is reviewed
3. An action plan for the WEPS is developed
4. The WEPS action plan is implemented
5. Results of the action plan are monitored and reported
6. Best practices are communicated and replicated

If your company would like to learn more information and join the WEPS movement in Azerbaijan, please contact the UNDP Azerbaijan Country Office:

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