

**The Gender Equality Seal: A Certification Programme
for Public and Private Enterprises supported by UNDP**



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**UNDP's Gender Equality Seal
Certification Programme for Public
and Private Enterprises: Latin American
Companies Pioneering Gender Equality**



With 1,4700 public and private companies in twelve countries engaged in the Gender Equality Seal (GES) — and many more expected to participate — this innovative programme has taken off in Latin America. Designed as a means for the private sector to embrace gender equality and enhance women’s economic and social empowerment, the Seal offers help to a growing number of corporations to make their human resources management systems more equitable and gender sensitive.

Launched by national governments that then partner with public and private companies, the Gender Equality Seal works towards eliminating gender inequalities in the workplace, while at the same time improving the lives of all employees and their families. Increasingly, the Seal represents a company strategy that equates striving for gender equality with good business. Ending discriminatory practices in the workplace not only has multiple benefits for the companies, but it is essential to building stronger economies. According to the International Monetary Fund, achieving gender equity can lead to a rise in national GDP of up to 34 per cent.

The Seal’s implementation has strengthened organizational structures and human resource processes, mitigating subjective elements that generate discrimination. It has established formal protocols for preventing and addressing labour and sexual harassment in the workplace; promoted work-life balance actions; and improved the quality of the work environment, which has enhanced productivity and employee satisfaction. The model’s success has made the region a pioneer in the design and implementation of public gender policies, and an architect of innovative tools and methodologies tailored for companies.

Since 2007/2009, the UNDP has supported governments and companies participating in the Gender Equality Seal programme. Beginning with Costa Rica, Uruguay, Brazil and Chile, the Community of Practice of the Gender Equality Seal is now composed of 12 countries from Latin America and the Caribbean; they have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) formalizing their will to build south-south cooperation scenarios to close the gender gap in the labour market.



International Human Rights Instruments and Standards

The **Gender Equality Seal** is founded on internationally accepted principals, ideals, and agreements regarding human rights and gender equality, including the principles enshrined in the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions and:

The UN Global Compact Ten Principles: Launched in 2000, the Ten Principles convenes businesses, UN agencies, labour unions, civil society, and governments to promote universal principles reflecting human rights, fair labour and anti-corruption practices, and environmental sustainability. With over 4,100 participating companies from more than 100 countries, the UN Global Compact asks companies to uphold internationally proclaimed principles and standards, such as the elimination of discrimination regarding employment and occupation (<https://www.unglobalcompact.org>).

The Women's Empowerment Principles (WEP): A product of a partnership between UN Women and the UN Global Compact, the WEP helps the private sector promote gender equality in the workplace, marketplace, and community. Included among the WEP's recommendations are:

1. Establish high-level corporate leaderships for gender equality.
2. Treat all women and men fairly at work, and respect and support human rights and non-discrimination.
3. Ensure the health, safety, and well-being of all workers, regardless of gender.
4. Promote education, training, and professional development for women.
5. Implement enterprise development, supply chain engineering, and marketing practices that empower women.
6. Promote equality through community initiatives and advocacy.
7. Measure and publicly report on progress to achieve gender equality.

Why Companies are Supporting the Gender Equality Seal

While participation in the programme is voluntary, companies are attracted by its benefits, which include higher productivity and a positive corporate image. According to the Chilean pharmaceutical company Bago, participating in the Gender Equality Seal has led to many measurable corporate improvements, including a better work environment, lower employee turnover and absenteeism, increased productivity, and a significant rise in sales.

Throughout Latin America, corporations, government institutions, and the UNDP are joining forces to promote the Gender Equality Seal. This partnership convenes the necessary political will, resources, and capacities of all stakeholders to create an independent process for companies to implement, and be recognized for, improving gender equality in the work-place. After meeting clear and transparent standards for compliance, companies are awarded the Gender Equality Seal, a reflection of its commitment to and concrete actions towards equitable employment and more decent working conditions for all staff. The Seal is awarded by the governmental bodies responsible for ensuring gender equality and women's empowerment.

Achieving recognition under the GES requires a serious commitment on the part of the business, one that takes time to achieve the necessary changes in the company's organizational structure and culture. The Seal is granted when, according to an external assessment, a company reaches a certain level of compliance with the programme's principles and standards. To gain this recognition, a participating enterprise must go through a series of ten steps, outlined below .

“*We at Codelco are convinced that gender diversity adds value to the business. It promotes innovation and generates better working environments.*”

Claudia Vargas, corporate director of recruitment and selection at Codelco, the national copper corporation in Chile

How the Gender Equality Seal Boosts Business and Adds Value

Increasingly, companies in Latin America recognize that promoting gender equality makes good business sense. At the same time, a rising number of companies view the Gender Equality Seal as having added social value. They are witnessing a broad range of benefits, including a better work environment, greater productivity and efficiency, and improved relationships among staff members. Furthermore, companies report that adopting measures related to the Gender Equality Seal has resulted in an increase in employee commitment, a reduction in absenteeism, attracting a greater diversity of talent, and the promotion of organizational learning. Furthermore, earning the Seal represents a valuable opportunity to be recognized for good labour practices, boosting a company's public image and contributing to its competitive edge.

The Colombian company CAFAM, a national family compensation fund, established a corporate policy of equal pay for equal work, regardless of the employee's position. Reported benefits for the company include attracting and retaining a greater diversity of talent, which has contributed to increased competitiveness. And from the employees' perspective, staff members are reporting greater job satisfaction.

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“At first, some colleagues resisted the change; over the 40 years working at the port, they had never worked with a woman. Working with nine men all alone was a challenge for me, but now we complement each other very well.”

Fernanda Rodo, National Port Authority (ANP), Uruguay

Equipares Program, Argos - Colombia



Ten Steps to Earn the Gender Equality Seal



Why Governments Embrace the Gender Equality Seal

Why are governments eager to participate in the Gender Equality Seal? It presents a comprehensive platform to reduce inequalities in the workplace and engage in a constructive dialogue with the private sector on good labour practices. Public institutions promoting gender equality can benefit from the GES, which ensures government leadership in defining the necessary steps required to earn the Seal .

The partnerships with private companies developed through the programme are also beneficial to public institutions. Using the data on gender gaps gathered by the participating companies, governments are able to better analyze and understand the underlying causes of inequality, and assess how they affect both men and women. This helps to identify policies and strategies that are necessary to protect the rights of workers.

How UNDP Assists Governments Implementing the Gender Equality Seal

UNDP plays several important roles in support of Gender Equality Seal programmes at the national and regional level. At the national level, UNDP is an advocate for equality, convening key stakeholders from the government, the private sector, and civil society to work towards equality.

In addition, UNDP provides technical assistance to public and private companies that wish to develop and put into practice their own Gender Equality Management Systems (GEMS). Participating enterprises also benefit from UNDP support when conducting internal assessments and analyses, or developing external communication strategies that are gender sensitive. The UNDP is frequently called upon to provide gender training for government representatives and private sector senior management and staff.



The Gender Equality Seal for Public and Private Enterprises Promotes Peer-to-Peer Learning and South-South Cooperation

A number of governments in the region committed to promoting gender equality have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to strengthen collaboration and South-South Cooperation to promote the programme. The MoU is a formal commitment demonstrating strong political will from high levels of government to implement the Gender Equality Seal. It also indicates their intention to institutionalize these policies and programmes and establish a solid partnership among the parties. The signatories to the MOU form part of the regional Gender Equality Seal Community of Practice. All country members exchange information, knowledge, and experience, as well as the tools and methodologies to implement the Gender Equality Seal for Public and Private Enterprises. Biannual regional forums have been organized as part of this cooperation among governments to facilitate the exchange of good practices, establish common goals among members and strengthen their networks. Some examples include:

- UNDP convened experts from Uruguay, Chile and Mexico to evaluate the national technical capacities and train government teams in Colombia to strengthen government capacity building.
- The second Forum of Private Enterprises with the Gender Equality Seal, which convened representatives from public and private companies from over 20 countries. Unilever, Manpower, Nutresa, Telefonica, Codelco, Coopertec and Bayer, among others, shared their expertise and concrete actions taken to achieve gender equality.
- Colombia's Equipares Certification was inspired by experiences in Mexico, Chile and Uruguay to adopt a multilevel compliance model and develop more specific tools to analyze sexual harassment in the workplace.
- UNDP coordinated bilateral meetings in Colombia to share experiences among companies from the same sector, during which Novartis Mexico showed Bayer Colombia how incorporating gender equality had reduced staff rotation, improved the working environment and increased their business.



Gender Equality Seal Models in Latin America and the Caribbean



What needs to change in Latin America and the Caribbean?

Pay Gap



Compared with men, women face a pay gap of 17%. In some countries, the difference is as high as 30%.

Masculinization of Work



| In Latin America, 81% of men participate in the work force, while the rate for women is only 52.6%. The presence of women in the LAC Region's labor sectors with better wages and working conditions such as the industrial sector is very low (37%), while their presence in those with worse working conditions such as the service sector is disproportionately higher (73%).

Informal Work



Women are overrepresented in the informal sector. For example: in cities, women represent 50.7% of the informal sector, while their representation in the formal sector is much lower. Further, women are fifteen times as likely to be unable to find work in the formal sector as men, and often have to resort to accepting unprotected work such as domestic servant positions.

More Education Does Not Translate into Higher Employment



Within economically active population, 53% of women, compared with 40.4% of men, have completed 10 or more years of formal education. However, women's unemployment (9.1%) is 45% higher than that of men (6.3%).

Fuentes: PNUD, OIT, ONU Mujeres, la CEPAL, 2013

The Gender Equality Seal sets out to close this gap by digging into the “DNA” of an enterprise and reviewing recruitment and selection processes and professional development – areas which present persistent obstacles to women's equality.

BRAZIL**Pro-Equidad de Género y Raza (Pro-Gender Equality and Race)**

In Brazil, women of certain ethnic or racial groups face double discrimination in the workforce. Women of African descent, for example, are least represented in the labor market, where racial discrimination is common; those who do work suffer from poor working conditions. Against this background, the Pró-Equidade de Gênero e Raça Program was adopted as a fundamental component of their Gender Equality Seal certification model. The Brazilian government structured a management system that considers gender-based discrimination as well as disparities caused by ethnicity and race, taking into account the existence of Brazilian anti-discrimination and equality laws.

To bridge this gender and racial divide, the Pró-Equidade de Gênero e Raça Programme has taken several actions, including:

- Updating personnel records, considering percentages of men, women, race and ethnicity for recruitment, selection, training and career advancement processes;
- Changing internal recruitment, relocation and upgrading policies to consider gender, ethnicity and race;
- Analyzing absenteeism and workplace accidents through a gender/racial lens;
- Raising awareness among employees, interns, trainees, young apprentices and external consultants about sexual harassment, gender discrimination and racial and gender-based violence;
- Educating staff about procedures to follow if they wish to issue a complaint in cases of gender, ethnic and racial discrimination.

To date, over 235 companies and organizations have been certified – the majority of which belong to the public sector.

CHILE**Programa de Buenas Prácticas Laborales con Equidad de Género.****Sello Iguala (Model of Certification of Good Labour Practices with Gender Equality, Iguala Seal)**

Codelco is a Chilean state owned copper mining company – the largest one globally, producing 11 per cent of the world's copper. Together with the government, which initiated the Programa de Buenas Prácticas Laborales con Equidad de Género in 2009, Chile has been a pioneer in hiring women within the mining industry – a traditionally masculine sector.

A few decades ago, women were legally banned from working in underground mining, as the national labour code deemed it “beyond their strength or harmful to the physical or moral conditions of their sex tasks.” Although this article was repealed in 1993, the presence of women in mining was scarce, limited almost exclusively to office work. Through the GES, Codelco has earned the highest feminine presence in the national industry: 8.5 per cent of its personnel are women (2014).

At the same time, the company is also integrating women into positions of greater responsibility.

The incorporation of women into Codelco has not been easy, requiring physical changes in facilities and safety equipment as well as behavioural changes within the culture of the workplace. Yet given Chile's increasing investment in mining and accompanying demand for labour, gaining access to a previously overlooked workforce is a bonus to the industry. “The incorporation of women is essential, not only because we cannot leave out 50 per cent of the population, but because it is proven that mixed teams have a better work environment, improved efficiency and higher productivity,” said Thomas Keller, former CEO of Codelco. “Equal opportunity for men and women is indeed an ethical imperative, but it is also a good business decision. The massive entry of women into business adds innovation, talent, and a different perspective, leading to more discipline at work, and more effective work teams.”

By 2013, 16 per cent of new jobs were occupied by women. To reach its goal of 20 per cent by 2020, the company has created a series of programmes that attract young students and recent graduates to the industry. In 2015, Chile hosted a Regional Seminar of Trade Unions Promoting Gender Equality, highlighting the important role trade unions play in the gender equality mainstreaming agenda.

COLOMBIA**EQUIPARES, (Seal for Gender Equality in the Work Environment)**

This model was initiated in 2012 when the Ministry of Labour undertook a thorough assessment of Colombia's work environment, identifying salary gaps, horizontal and vertical segregation, among other gender gaps. One persistent problem women in Colombia face entering the workforce is sexual harassment.

According to a study conducted by the national Labour Ministry, it is common for female employees to be subjected to requests for sex, attempts at intercourse, or groping. Jokes with sexual content and suggestive glances, texts and emails are also common. Yet the percentage of women who seek help to address these rights violations is low. The survey reported that 89 per cent of victims did not report incidents of sexual harassment, 13 per cent of whom worried that they would lose their jobs, or feared other consequences, if they did.

Colombia's Ministry of Labour used this information to guide the creation of the country's Gender Equality Seal EQUIPARES framework, which was launched in 2013. The model addresses different dimensions of human resource policies and pays special attention to the establishment of protocols to prevent and address sexual harassment in the workplace. In addition to instigating setting off trainings among Colombian companies to prevent and address sexual harassment at work, the Labour Ministry – together with the Attorney General's Office – introduced formal guidelines on sexual harassment to eradicate the problem and fight impunity.

COSTA RICA



Sistema de Gestión en Igualdad y Equidad de Género (Gender Equality and Equity Management System)

In 2002, Costa Rica's governmental body responsible for promoting gender equality (INAMU) formulated the country's first national policy for gender equality management systems. Essential tools to assess gender gaps were subsequently produced, including a manual to develop capacity and a methodology for auditing companies. By 2006 they launched a pilot programme, the experiences from which were used to inform a new national policy for gender equality management systems, which was adopted in 2013.

The nation's GES programme has gotten strong support from the banking sector, including two of the major banks in the country – Banco Popular y de Desarrollo Comunal and Scotiabank. Recognizing the low representation of women in top level jobs in the financial sector, the “Banco Nacional” implemented a leadership programme to increase women's representation in decision-making positions.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC



Sello de Igualdad de Género Igualando (Gender Equality Seal Igualando RD)

The Dominican Republic is one of five countries in the region that has accomplished the creation of a certification model supported by an official national normalization process. In 2014 the Women's Ministry, the Labour Ministry, the National Competitiveness Council and UNDP launched the gender equality seal “Igualando RD.” Following a sequential step-by-step process, they first created a national norm/standard before launching the pilot phase. Today, three national enterprises have taken part in this model: Industrias Nigua, BPENSA and BHD Bank.

Having a country standard gives the model a robust institutional context, allowing all private and public institutions wishing to take part to apply through the official certification body (INDOCAL). This model recognizes large companies, small and medium enterprises and other participating organizations according to their level of compliance with the established requirements. The four levels of recognition are Silver, Bronze, Gold and Platinum.

MEXICO



Norma Mexicana NMX-R-025-SCFI.2015 en Igualdad Laboral y No Discriminación (Mexican Norm NMX-R-025-SCFI.2015 on Gender Equality and non-Discrimination)

Since 2003, Mexico has been a champion of integrating equality in the workplace. In 2006 the government enacted public policy guaranteeing equality between women and men, and by 2012, over 1,600 companies had received Gender Equality Seal certification. The Mexican model continued to evolve, learning from experience and reevaluating criteria and instruments to better suit the legal framework and national goals. In 2015, the Mexican Norm on Gender Equality and Non-Discrimination was passed, broadening the concept of non-discrimination based not only on gender, but on sexual orientation, disability, and ethnicity.

This new national GES norm strengthens the original model, acting as a stepping stone to incorporate broader, anti-discriminatory principles. The main areas covered by the norm are: gender mainstreaming and non-discrimination in recruitment, selection, training and mobility; equal pay; addressing violence in the workplace; and ensuring a work-life balance. By serving as a pioneer in this field, Mexico has blazed a trail for other Latin-American Countries to create their own GES certification programme. Several UNDP-led south-south cooperation engagements have benefited from the Mexican experience and the tools they have created.

URUGUAY



Modelo de Gestión de Calidad con Equidad de Género (Model for Quality Management with Gender Equality)

After launching a pilot programme in 2008, Uruguay introduced its GES programme, “Quality with Gender Equity,” in the three major national utility companies that provide electricity (UTE), water (OSE), and telecommunications (ANTEL), as well as in the Port Authority (ANP).

In a traditionally masculine energy sector, UTE's push for gender equality is groundbreaking. Glass ceilings are a reality for women, who have to double their effort in order to obtain proper recognition of their work. But the national electricity provider is one of the pioneer companies promoting the incorporation of gender equality within the energy sector throughout the region.

“Working at a company with a corporate culture based on equality forces you to see things from another perspective... and now I proudly tell my children the things we're doing in the company.” Rosario Miraballes, Employee at OSE, Uruguay



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