

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



*Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.*

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The Gender Equality Seal Certification Programme for Public and Private Enterprises: Putting Principles into Practice

(Summary)



Supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the **Gender Equality Seal Certification Programme for Public and Private Enterprises** is a collective effort involving national governments, private sector companies and civil society to establish and achieve standards that empower women. Companies that successfully complete the Certification Programme are awarded the Gender Equality Seal – a recognized symbol of gender equality in the workplace.

With the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Gender Equality Seal Certification Programme provides a concrete tool for the public and private sectors to come together to help achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by reducing gender gaps and promoting both equality in the workplace and women’s economic empowerment.

To develop a company strategy that incorporates gender equality as an integral part of “good business”, participating enterprises integrate comprehensive measures to change their organizational structure and culture, creating more just and decent conditions for all workers.

Engaging in the Gender Equality Seal Certification Programme is a commitment. Timelines vary, but the process generally takes up to two years, with the understanding that companies will renew their commitment and continue to make progress. The investment reaps multiple benefits for employees and companies.

“*Gender equality allows us to complete the vision of the future, a vision of a new global development agenda.*”

Luis Carlos Avila, CAFAM, Colombia.

The advantages of the Gender Equality Seal

Promoting the advantages of the Certification Programme is a critical part of securing support from governments and enterprises and laying the groundwork for implementation.

The advantages for participating companies:

- Greater staff performance and commitment, as well as reduced absenteeism;
- A more just work environment that maximizes the capacities of all personnel; and,
- An enhanced public image as a leader in fostering corporate responsibility.

“*Women are especially important to us ...because we saw that with parity we win in productivity, creativity, innovation and finally in financial returns.*”

Frank Dietrich, President for the Andean Countries, Bayer, Colombia

The advantages for governments:

- A powerful instrument to achieve tangible gender equality results, based upon which other public measures may be designed and promoted to leverage the established relationship between national gender equality mechanisms and employers;
- A concrete example of mainstreaming gender equality that national authorities can use to reduce gender gaps and develop national policies on gender equality in the work-place; and,
- A mechanism to develop and leverage public-private partnerships to advance gender equality in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals.

“*The Gender Equality Seal Certification Programme provides a perfect backdrop to translate policies into action. This model helps us, as a government, to achieve an egalitarian and fair labor market by reducing gender gaps.*”

Luciano Perfetti, Advisor to Colombia’s Ministry of Labour

The advantages for workers:

- Development of a work environment respectful of women’s human rights;
- Increased motivation and workplace satisfaction, stronger identification with the company and better communication; and,
- Greater opportunities for professional development for women, including access to decision-making positions.



Launching a Gender Equality Seal Certification Programme for Public and Private Enterprises

How to initiate a Gender Equality Seal Certification Programme

UNDP has identified an eight-step process that outlines the path for governments to follow when launching a Gender Equality Seal Certification Programme. As finalizing a national Certification Programme is time consuming, the process is flexible to allow governments to proceed with an initial pilot phase before finalization.

Once support for the Certification Programme is secured among the highest levels of government, the responsible authorities must conduct an assessment to understand the legal and social context in which the Gender Equality Seal Certification Programme will operate. The assessment helps governments develop the right national model, identifying the country's strengths and weaknesses to guide the creation of a national standard, or norm. The norm serves as the Magna Carta of the Certification Programme, providing a framework for participating companies to follow in pursuit of Gender Equality Seal certification.

UNDP provides tools and guidance to all stakeholders to ensure successful implementation, such as helping governments to select and train advisors and auditors who can accompany enterprises throughout the process and, ultimately, determine whether they have met the criteria to earn Gender Equality Seal certification.

The Certification Programme has many components, but there is no magic formula or fixed order to implement them. Governments, the private sector and other actors agree on a national model that fits their context and may implement some components in parallel and/or sequentially, depending on their needs, resources and defined priorities.



“UNDP plays a relevant role as convener by providing training on gender issues, organizing regional forums that are good opportunities for learning, and establishing networks for exchanging information with other companies in other countries.”

Francisco Mendez, Manager of Human Resources, Bago, Chile

Designing a communications strategy to promote the Gender Equality Seal Certification Programme is key to its success. While educating the public is important, the business community is the first and most critical target audience, as it needs time to understand the benefits of investing in gender equality. Discussions with business associations serve not only to inform the private sector about the Certification Programme and identify participants, but they are also an opportunity for national authorities to gather feedback from companies and information that can contribute to the programme's development. UNDP has identified guidelines that can help governments to decide which companies to target, and to aid them through the final selection process.

The Gender Equality Seal Certification Programme Toolbox

UNDP has developed several tools to aid governments and companies implementing the Certification Programme. Some of these include:

- **Gender Equality in the Workplace:** How to make progress with a Certification Programme for Gender Equality Management Systems (handbook);
- **Doing “Good Business”:** Promoting Gender Equality Management Systems in the Private Sector (handbook);
- **Shared Responsibilities in the Workplace:** A Guide on Labor Actions for Reconciliation with Social Co-Responsibility (handbook);
- Training tools for advisors and external auditors;
- Repository of inspiring experiences from Latin American countries; and,
- Communication tools.



How enterprises earn a Gender Equality Seal

Enterprises interested in participating in the Gender Equality Seal Certification Programme must follow ten steps, from commitment to completion. UNDP offers advice and guidelines for companies at each of these stages, which are:

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| Step 1 | Verify the commitment |
| Step 2 | Create a Gender Equality Committee representing all levels of employees |
| Step 3 | Train upper management to be familiar with the principles of the Certification Programme |
| Step 4 | Carry out the organizational diagnosis to detect existing strengths and gaps |
| Step 5 | Prepare a Gender Equality Policy, based on needs presented by the diagnosis |
| Step 6 | Apply an Action Plan to address concerns and close gender equality gaps |
| Step 7 | Carry out an internal audit to determine the impact of the Action Plan |
| Step 8 | Conduct an external audit to evaluate whether a Gender Equality Seal is merited |
| Step 9 | Award the Gender Equality Seal – Official Recognition |
| Step 10 | Carry out improvement actions and follow-up audits. Certification is a beginning, not an end. Companies must commit to ongoing improvements to reduce all gender barriers. |

The six critical areas of the Gender Equality Seal Certification Programme

- **Women in decision-making positions. Practical experiences and lessons learnt from companies on how to increase women in decision-making posts, strategies for career development and mentorships and establishing gender equality goals to correct imbalances in decision-making positions.**
- **Detecting and eliminating gender-based pay gaps. Review of practical examples in identifying and solving wage gaps between men and women.**
- **Policies to improve work-life balance. Experiences in promoting flexi-time, tele-commuting, paternity leave and other policies allowing men and women to more fairly and efficiently balance their work and family responsibilities.**
- **Women in all company sectors. Experiences regarding the insertion of women into occupational areas that are traditionally male-dominated.**
- **Inclusive and nonsexist communication inside and outside the company.**
- **Promoting zero tolerance to sexual harassment in the work-place.**

Looking Ahead: Building a Regional Network of Enterprises and organizations for Gender Equality

In Latin America, where the Gender Equality Seal Certification Programme has been operating since 2009, the programme has gained an added advantage – the promotion of South-South cooperation. This framework for South-South cooperation enables governments and private sector companies just launching the Certification Programme to gain from the skills, knowledge, and expertise of their more experienced regional counterparts. UNDP supports South-South cooperation through multiple mechanisms, such as peer support and exchange and regional gender equality forums convening governments, the private sector, trade unions, and civil society.

“*The Community of Practice of Gender Equality Seals provides an opportunity to learn from our peers’ success stories and difficulties. This South-South cooperation intensifies a country’s efficiency in in policy creation, institutional innovation and social growth.*”

Tatiana Comandini, SERNAM, Chile

The objectives of South-South cooperation are not only to support national efforts, but to contribute to the broader objectives of international development and gender equality. In this regard, the Certification Programme aims to:

- Foster peer-to-peer learning and the exchange of experiences among participants;
- Strengthen governmental institutions by enhancing their joint creative capacity;
- Promote the pooling of technical and other resources and complementary capacities;
- Build technological capacities to improve effectiveness; and,
- Increase and improve communications among involved actors, leading to greater awareness of common problems and access to available knowledge and experience.

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

Claudia Vargas, Codelco, (national copper corporation), Chile





*Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.*

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