Empowering Women in the Workplace, Marketplace, and Community:
The Women’s Empowerment Principles in Latin America and the Middle East

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Executive Summary

The UN Global Compact is a United Nations platform to involve private sector companies in the advancement of human rights, fair labor conditions, and sustainable practices. In 2010, the UN Global Compact and UN Women introduced a specific focus on gender equality through the Women’s Empowerment Principles - Equality Means Business (WEPs), with an aim to better engage the private sector in empowering women to participate fully in economic life across all sectors and throughout all levels of economic activity.

A team of graduate students from Columbia University’s School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA) partnered with the United Nation’s Global Compact (UN Global Compact) and the WEPs Secretariat to carry out a study on the adoption and implementation of the WEPs across four countries - Colombia, Chile, Turkey, and Egypt. The objectives of the research include understanding how Global Compact Local Networks (LNs) in the countries of interest promote the WEPs as well as how businesses are putting the principles into practice, identifying transformative practices and challenges, and developing recommendations for increased adoption and deeper implementation of the WEPs.

The methodology consisted of desk research and in-country field research, including a review of existing documentation and literature, interviews, both formal and informal with relevant stakeholders, and participatory observations in the countries of interest. Key stakeholders included the UN Global Compact, UN Women, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA), Global Compact Local Network staff, signatory and non-signatory companies of the WEPs, local gender experts and advocacy organizations, and relevant government officials.

Across Colombia, Chile, Turkey, and Egypt, there were several findings that were consistent throughout the research. These consistent findings include company motivations for signing on to the WEPs, the strategic framing, policies, and practices that businesses use and implement, as well as the obstacles to success that businesses and Local Networks face. Recommendations for the increased adoption and implementation of the principles were developed, taking into consideration the local political, cultural, and business contexts of these countries. Case studies were also included to share transformative practices in different local contexts. In addition to supporting the WEPs Secretariat to guide further adoption and implementation of the WEPs, the lessons learned from this study will support Global Compact Local Networks in the four countries to advance their existing efforts. Additionally they provide insight for other countries and regions in which the UN Global Compact and the WEPs conduct their work.
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Introduction

Since its launch in 2010, the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs) have successfully engaged businesses on gender equality and women’s empowerment in the workplace, marketplace, and community. In order to implement the WEPs, the UN Global Compact provides its Local Networks (LNs) with a variety of tools, resources, and guidance to effectively support companies in their gender equality efforts. The LNs are important partners, as they root the Global Compact within diverse national, cultural, and language contexts while also playing a key role in managing the rapid expansion of the UN Global Compact. Recognizing the critical role of the LNs, as well as the broader experience of all stakeholders, it is important to document their views and analyze them to further accelerate the outreach and impact of the WEPs.

The objective of this study was to support the UN Global Compact in better understanding the role of local context in the successful promotion and implementation of the Women’s Empowerment Principles (WEPs). The findings, analyses, and recommendations provided in this report are based on a comparative study of Colombia, Chile, Turkey, and Egypt, where over 80 stakeholders shared their experiences related to the WEPs and general efforts to improve women’s empowerment in the corporate context. Since the LNs are crucial in promoting the WEPs, this study may help the WEPs Secretariat increase the number of signatories and better engage the businesses towards women’s empowerment in the workplace, marketplace and community. This guidance also serves to support other LNs, which are not directly a part of this study, through sharing insights, transformative practices, and lessons learned.

Through interviews with the WEPs signatory and non-signatory businesses, the team gained insight into how companies frame gender equality, which transformative practices are being implemented, and what kind of support is needed. Furthermore, combining business experiences and views with the expertise and insights of Global Compact Local Networks, UN representatives, government officials, and gender experts illustrate the extent to which national gender issues and context influence these outcomes. The analysis of the field work data led to a set of global findings, as well as deeper findings for each of the four countries. Out of these global and country findings, clear strategies and recommendations have emerged to improve the promotion and implementation of the WEPs, not only in these four countries, but across all Global Compact Local Networks.
Background & Context

Overview of the UN Global Compact and the WEPs

The UN Global Compact

The United Nations Global Compact is a strategic policy initiative aimed at encouraging businesses across the globe to adopt sustainable and socially responsible policies, and to report on their implementation. By signing on to the Global Compact, a company commits to aligning its practices with ten universally accepted principles in the areas of human rights, labor, environment, and anti-corruption.

The UN Global Compact was established in 2000 and has grown ever since, with over 12,000 current participants across 145 countries. Besides human rights, labor, environment, and anti-corruption, the UN Global Compact covers issues of supply chain sustainability, financial markets, development, the UN-business partnerships and the role of businesses in contributing to peace with a range of initiatives in each area. Among the UN Global Compact initiatives are the Children’s Rights and Business Principles, Indigenous People’s Rights, Human Rights and Labour Working Group, Business for Peace, the CEO Water Mandate, Food and Agriculture Business Principles, and the focus of this report - the Women’s Empowerment Principles. Companies can voluntarily adopt any of these independent issue platforms depending on their interest and focus. Most of these initiatives are conducted in collaboration with various partners, such as the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), or UN Women.

The Ten Principles of the Global Compact

**Human Rights**

- **Principle 1:** Businesses should support and respect the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights; and
- **Principle 2:** Make sure that they are not complicit in human rights abuses.

**Labour**

- **Principle 3:** Businesses should uphold the freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining;  
- **Principle 4:** The elimination of all forms of forced and compulsory labour;  
- **Principle 5:** The effective abolition of child labour; and  
- **Principle 6:** The elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.

**Environment**

- **Principle 7:** Businesses should support a precautionary approach to environmental challenges;  
- **Principle 8:** Undertake initiatives to promote greater environmental responsibility; and  
- **Principle 9:** Encourage the development and diffusion of environmentally friendly technologies.

**Anti-Corruption**

- **Principle 10:** Businesses should work against corruption in all its forms, including extortion and bribery.

*Source: (UN Global Compact, n.d.)*
Local Networks of the Global Compact

Global Compact Local Networks (LNs) are utilized to support local implementation of the Global Compact principles as well as other UN Global Compact initiatives such as the Women’s Empowerment Principles. LNs are self-governing entities, who can participate in the UN Global Compact Board, provide recommendations on activities undertaken by the UN Global Compact, and provide input in other forums. There are currently more than 100 LNs around the world, whether they are formal, established, or emerging. Each local network plays an important role in translating the principles and initiatives into different national, cultural, and language contexts. They facilitate the progress of companies, and create opportunities for multi-stakeholder collaboration and learning.

The Women’s Empowerment Principles

The WEPs are a set of seven principles offering guidance to businesses around the world on how to promote gender equality and women’s empowerment in the workplace, marketplace, and community. The Women’s Empowerment Principles - Equality Means Business (WEPs) initiative is a collaborative effort of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) and the UN Global Compact seeking to address the UN Global Compact’s goals through a gender lens. The WEPs are based on the Calvert Women’s Principles which were created in cooperation between UNIFEM (now UN Women) and Calvert Investments in 2004 as the first global code of corporate conduct focused exclusively on empowering, advancing and investing in women worldwide (Calvert Investments, n.d.).

Companies become signatories to the WEPs by signing the CEO Statement of Support, expressing their commitment to advancing equality between women and men and encouraging other business leaders to follow their example. Since the launch of the WEPs in 2010, 964 CEOs have signed on to them on behalf of their companies. In relevance to this project, 48 businesses have signed on in Turkey, 7 in Egypt, 4 in Colombia, and 3 in Chile. The WEPs do not have formal reporting requirements but signatories are encouraged to collect data on gender equality and women’s empowerment and report on it through pre-existing mechanisms, such as their annual report, corporate responsibility report, or sustainability report. In an effort to help companies report on gender, WEPs signatories that are also UN Global Compact business participants have the opportunity to share their progress by answering several gender-specific questions as a part of a self-assessment when submitting their annual Communication on Progress (COP). These questions are aligned with the WEPs and encourage participants to use sex-
disaggregated data when reporting policies, practices and initiatives aimed at empowering women in the workplace, marketplace and community.

Overview of Current Research

Corporate Social Responsibility in the Global Context

Definitions of corporate social responsibility (CSR) are diverse and changing. Furthermore, companies vary in their usage of language such as corporate responsibility, sustainability, or additional terms to describe their related internal and external activities and policies. CSR is framed from multiple dimensions, predominantly from the environmental, social, economic, or internal stakeholder dimensions (Dahlsrud, 2009). These incorporate ideas that companies should support to establish sustainable business practices, generate positive social impact, increase employee satisfaction, and in general, to uphold ethical standards. Further, companies vary in how they structure their CSR-related work. Some have specific departments or maintain it under marketing and communications or human resources, while others integrate CSR throughout. It is important to understand that CSR does not merely mean philanthropy, and, when fully integrated into a company’s growth strategy, has the potential to increase the bottom-line by reducing cost and risk, increasing company’s goodwill, as well as gaining competitive advantage (Carroll & Shabana, 2011).

Interestingly, gender is not usually specified in the definitions of CSR. For example, gender equality was not mentioned in 37 definitions analyzed by Dahlsrud (Dahlsrud, 2009). Nonetheless, companies do mention the importance of employee engagement as well as internal policies that support healthy work-life balance and growth for employees, including women (Tai, 2014). In the general CSR literature that was reviewed, only occasionally mentioned female employees specifically. The inclusion of equal employment opportunity policies, although not the same as gender equity policies, is more common in CSR strategies. A lack of diversity is linked to higher employee turnover and research has shown that having these policies explicitly stated has reduced employee turnover by improving morale (Carroll & Shabana, 2011). While gender may not be a prominent theme in general literature related to corporate responsibility and sustainability, there is a vast amount of literature dedicated to the business case for gender equality.

The Business Case for Gender Equality

While gender parity in the corporate context is an end in and of itself, it is clear that there are significant benefits to companies, society, and individuals when women are able to succeed in the workplace. Companies become stronger, more innovative in their approach, and can better serve employees, clients, and customers if they have diverse perspectives and people represented, not only in decision-making roles, but in all levels throughout the company.
Significant research has been done on the connection between more women on boards and in leadership and higher financial performance for companies. Companies with at least three women represented on their board of directors in at least four out of five years outperform companies with zero women represented in the same time period. These companies yield a higher percentage of returns on sales, invested capital, and equity (Catalyst, 2011). In accordance with this research, the Women’s Empowerment Principles call on companies to have 30 percent or more women in decision-making roles and company governance across all areas. Company management should reflect the diversity of its stakeholders, and “higher participation by women at senior levels has downstream gender equality impacts” (UN Global Compact, n.d.b). Studies from McKinsey go further than just women in leadership, and find that employee engagement, consumer satisfaction, and operating profit are all positively correlated with having gender balanced teams at work (Landel, 2015).

Nonetheless, there is still far to go to reach global gender parity in terms of salary, positions, leadership, and economic participation. The World Economic Forum’s 2014 “Global Gender Gap Report” emphasized that since 2006, the gender gap for economic participation and opportunity has decreased by four percent; however only 60 percent of the gap is closed (Hausmann, Tyson, Bekhouche and Zahidi, 2014). In addition, less than five percent of the world’s largest corporations have female CEOs (International Labour Organization, 2015). Every country and every context is different, with varying challenges and gender-specific issues, however, one thing is sure: with women accounting for at least half of each country’s population and potential talent pool, a country’s long-term economic viability and competitiveness in the age of globalization will depend heavily on the level of women’s contribution to the economy.

A workforce that fosters gender equality is more likely to:

- Attract high-performing employees
- Increase staff retention and lower costs
- Enhance performance
- Improve access to markets
- Reduce legal risk and enhance reputation
- Engage men as agents of change

*Source: Workplace Gender Equality Agency, 2013*
Methodology

The objective of this research project was to support the UN Global Compact in understanding the role of local context in the promotion and implementation of the Women’s Empowerment Principles (WEPs). To more concretely frame the focus of the project, four research questions were crafted on the challenges and opportunities for the WEPs; the role of the Local Networks; companies’ interpretation and implementation of the principles; and the influence of local context on gender and business. These four guiding questions were:

❖ What challenges and opportunities are there for promoting, adopting, and implementing the WEPs?
❖ What roles do Global Compact Local Networks play in the process, and what challenges and opportunities do they face?
❖ How do businesses interpret and implement the WEPs? What support do they need and what challenges do they face?
❖ How does local context influence the landscape of gender equality in business?

The research took place over the course of seven months and was divided into six phases: background research, two fieldwork phases with corresponding data analysis, and the preparation and writing of findings and recommendations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literature Review</th>
<th>January Fieldwork</th>
<th>March Fieldwork</th>
<th>Preparation of Findings &amp; Recommendations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Turkey &amp; Colombia</td>
<td>Egypt &amp; Chile</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>45 Interviews</td>
<td>37 Interviews</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Background Research

*Literature Review:* A thorough literature review was conducted to analyze literature and data on gender equality specifically as it relates to corporate social responsibility, the labor market, and how it is manifested in the local context in each of the focus countries. We reviewed materials from academic sources as well as from think tanks and organizations working in this field. Furthermore, case studies showcasing successful incorporation of women’s empowerment in the workplace were examined. This
Methodology

A close look at the current state of gender equality, national legislation, and relevant policies affecting the private sector in each country of interest was a vital component of the literature review.

Informational Interviews: Prior to the field work we conducted informational interviews with staff members of the UN Global Compact to gain a better understanding of the scope of the organization’s work, including priorities and challenges. Specific attention was paid to how gender equality is incorporated into the UN Global Compact and the background and impact of the Women’s Empowerment Principles. As this was preparation for field research, there was specific regional focus on Latin America and the Middle East.

Stakeholder Analysis: The team conducted a preliminary stakeholder analysis to identify relevant actors that are impacted, directly or indirectly, by the WEPs, or that might provide useful information. The results of the analysis were shared with the Global Compact Local Networks in preparation for each field trip and served as a basis for identifying key stakeholders to interview.

Fieldwork

Fieldwork was conducted in two phases in January and March 2015. Four countries were visited, and the team spent two weeks in each location. In January, one team-member traveled to Turkey and two to Colombia, and in March, two traveled to Chile and two to Egypt.

Interviews were conducted according to the interview guides (Appendix C) that were developed by the team in preparation for the field research, and covered five main groups of stakeholders:

- Representatives of WEPs signatory companies
- Representatives of non-signatory companies
- Representatives of the Global Compact Local Network
- Representatives of women’s rights and gender equality organizations, or academia
- Representatives of relevant government agencies

While serving as templates for each interview, these interview guides were adjusted prior to or during each interview for the purpose of collecting the most relevant information possible. In total, 82 interviews were conducted during the fieldwork. A closer look at the stakeholders interviewed in the table below.
Number of interviews categorized by stakeholders and countries:

### Key Stakeholders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>UNGC &amp; LN Reps</th>
<th>WEPs Signatories</th>
<th>Non-Signatories</th>
<th>NGOs &amp; Gender Experts</th>
<th>Other UN agencies</th>
<th>Government Officials</th>
<th>Informal Contacts</th>
<th>Total</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Limitations of the Research: The overwhelming majority of interviewees were women which may in general be more positive in their attitudes towards gender equality. It would have been interesting to have more men among our interviewees to get their views on the challenges and opportunities the WEPs pose to their companies. The team did not have an opportunity to interview employees in non-managerial positions, which would have provided a wider range of opinions on how companies address gender inequality and the role of the WEPs in this process. In addition, though planned, no focus groups were conducted. The distribution of the interviewed stakeholders slightly varies for each country; for example, in Turkey, more interviews were conducted with the WEPs signatories, and no interviews were conducted with non-signatories or government officials. Also, in some cases the LN representatives accompanied researchers to the interviews, which was helpful in order to navigate local context, but might have influenced interviewees’ responses.

**Qualitative Research Methods and Data Analysis Process**

During field trips, each team wrote extensive notes on their experiences, observations, and ideas. Upon return, the team transcribed all interviews and wrote initial field reports, followed by in-depth group discussions and brainstorming of preliminary findings. After the January trip, transcriptions of all interviews were qualitatively coded and analyzed according to the various themes that appeared in the interviews, and were organized into categories through group sessions. The main purpose of coding was
to map out trends and themes, identify gaps, and provide a deeper insight into the perspectives found in each country.

The January analysis served as guidance for the March teams to continue their literature review and adjust interview guides to gain better insights into questions that remained to be answered. For the March fieldwork, more emphasis was put on comparing our new findings to our previous ones to find similarities, differences, deviations, common themes, and context specific issues, solutions, or problems. Upon return, March teams transcribed and coded interviews using previous as well as updated categories of codes. Once coding was completed for each of the four countries, the teams matched data analysis with the findings of our literature review to provide firm theoretical grounding for our work and to shed a light on interesting and surprising observations.

**Preparation of Findings and Recommendations**

The Analysis section of the report consists of two major parts:

- Global findings on all four countries featuring common themes and trends
- Country-specific findings that cover each country in more detail

The findings are based on the views and the information that informants shared with the researchers. While the “National Gender Context” sections include some outside research, the “Business Environment” and “WEPs” sections are based solely on the information collected through the interviews, unless researchers needed to refer to the outside sources to verify statistics or other claims. References to specific interviews have been made anonymous; however, the full list of interviewees can be found in Appendix B. The findings were translated into recommendations that are relevant for the UN Global Compact headquarters as well as each Local Network in their work to promote the adoption and implementation of the WEPs.
Analysis

Global Findings

Across Colombia, Chile, Turkey, and Egypt, there were several recurring themes and findings throughout the research. These findings and their implications likely apply to other regions in which the UN Global Compact, and more specifically the Women’s Empowerment Principles (WEPs), are being promoted.

Motivation

*What drives businesses to adopt the Women’s Empowerment Principles (WEPs)?*

In most cases, companies sign the WEPs *CEO Statement of Support* because their visions are already aligned with the goals of the WEPs, which are to advance women’s empowerment and gender equality within the workplace, marketplace, and community. Companies that join are at various stages of integrating gender equity and women’s empowerment into their policies. A number of companies are just starting to advance women's empowerment and many others already have policies and practices on gender in place, in addition to those policies supporting corporate social responsibility. WEPs signatories seem to have, on average, higher female representation in leadership roles, and a vision for gender equality and diversity within their companies. In addition, many of the WEPs signatories are multi-national corporations and leaders in their industries; thus, they may through their global operations have more experience and been more exposed to these kind of issues, and may be simultaneously adhering to other global standards and initiatives on sustainability, diversity, and gender.

Nonetheless, the team came across some companies who had a similar vision and whose goals aligned with the WEPs, yet had not signed on. The findings indicate that this occurred either due to the overall low level of awareness of the WEPs or the fact that these companies had already signed onto other, similar initiatives.

Strategic Framing

*How do companies talk about the WEPs and about gender equality more broadly?*

The dominant frame that businesses use when discussing gender equality is that of the business case, as explored in the Background section of this report. Representatives of the companies in all four countries also used other frames when talking about the goals of the WEPs. Some companies incorporated gender issues into diversity initiatives, while others, particularly in Turkey and Colombia, included gender equality in their overarching goals to advance human rights. In other cases, women’s empowerment was seen as a component of broader efforts towards sustainable business practices.

Ultimately, the WEPs can assist businesses to think strategically about how they convey their goals and policies to create more and better opportunities for women in the workplace, marketplace and community. Strategic framing, after all, informs the policies and practices of individual companies related to gender equality and women’s empowerment.
Gender Issues, Policies, and Practice

What gender issues do signatories of the WEPs prioritize, and how do they implement policies or practices to address them?

The team found that companies across the four countries were relatively broad in describing their policies on gender as they relate to the WEPs. Much of the time, companies shared their vision and ideas of how to implement the WEPs, yet did not provide details on the concrete steps they were taking to achieve these goals. This could be due to the general nature of the materials provided about WEPs implementation and might indicate a need for practical guidance on steps to implement the principles.

Overall, the policies companies spoke of tend to facilitate work-life balance so that women can succeed at work while also fulfilling family-related responsibilities. It is important to recognize that this notion may serve to reinforce traditional gender norms rather than redefine the role of women in the workplace. Nonetheless, these efforts do give women the opportunity to be more self-reliant, and companies tout specific internal advancements as a result of these policies, ranging from higher employee satisfaction and engagement, to a decrease in hiring discrimination and the gender pay gap. In addition, companies often spoke of the necessary groundwork to be done internally to ensure that the WEPs are understood within the company, before trying to implement them. This includes gaining a better understanding of needs through internal consultations, or mitigating possible resistance through training on gender issues and addressing unconscious bias.

When asked about specific implementation of the WEPs, most companies spoke predominantly of their human resources policies related to hiring, selection, promotion and training, as well as policies on flexibility and broader benefits for female employees. Some companies spoke specifically of certain WEPs, and described relevant initiatives or challenges. For example, some companies described challenges they faced in implementing supply chain reform in accordance with Principle 5, while others discussed Principle 6 and shared details of their community programs and initiatives.

Obstacles to Success

What challenges do companies and Global Compact Local Networks face in implementing the WEPs?

Impact and Evaluation: The WEPs are non-binding; there are no mandatory policies or programmes companies have to incorporate in their business structure before or after signing the CEO Statement of Support. The Statement is meant to be an aspirational statement and by signing, CEOs demonstrate leadership on gender equality and support for advancing women and men and commit to encouraging their fellow business leaders to take the same step. Thus, it may be difficult for the UN Global Compact and Global Compact Local Networks to clearly or consistently monitor progress of signatory companies. While some companies are collecting sex disaggregated data, others are not sure what language to use in designing indicators. Others still did not feel compelled to collect data and monitor impact, in part because they seemed satisfied with their progress. Thus, it is imperative that companies recognize the need to systematically monitor change, as successful policies to advance gender equality require
consistent growth, development, and transparency. Although the WEPs provide resources on these issues, companies are not always aware of them, nor are they always translated into local languages.

**Industry Challenges:** In some cases, particularly in Latin America, WEPs signatories tend to be companies within traditionally male-dominated sectors like mining, energy, oil and gas, construction, or others. Many of them experience a pipeline problem where the trained workforce is disproportionately male, and may be expected to preserve traditional notions of masculinity. In some cases, there are specific national policies that hinder a transformation of the sector. For example, in Chile, company board members are required to have experience as CEOs, essentially creating a small pool of male candidates who can sit on boards. In addition, in Turkey as well as other countries, there are laws prohibiting women from certain jobs in specific sectors, as some duties in these sectors are deemed too dangerous for women. While there may be concrete impediments to getting women into these sectors, women who do enter them also face discrimination and have access to fewer opportunities. In Egypt, our interviewees suggested that women engineers felt unwelcome on oil rinks, and in Colombia, companies experienced employee resistance to female engineers who were supervisors. Thus, the resistance that women face within these sectors indicates that this challenge could be as much internal as it is external.

**LN Structure, Resource, and Capacity Constraints:** In some cases, LNs have limited resources and capacity for addressing and implementing various issues and initiatives such as the WEPs in addition to the ten UN Global Compact principles. Furthermore, there is often an overlap of responsibilities or unclear roles among key stakeholders, including various UN agencies, such as UN Women and UNDP, local and regional stakeholders, and LN sponsor organizations. Without clearly defined roles and responsibilities, different stakeholders involved might potentially envision different strategies for the promotion and implementation of the WEPs.

**Context Matters**

*How does context affect the landscape for gender equality in business?*

Throughout our in-country research, it was apparent that national history and the local gender context played a role in determining company culture and success with the WEPs. In some countries, for example, gender equality in the workplace was not as high of a priority as other high-profile national issues like the ongoing peace process in Colombia, or the post-revolution economic revitalization in Egypt. In addition, in all countries there were other initiatives that, like the WEPs, seek to promote women’s empowerment in the private sector, such as: Equipares in Colombia, Norma Chilena 3262 in Chile, The Gender Equality Certification Program by Kagider in Turkey, and the Gender Equity Seal in Egypt. Rather than an impediment, these initiatives could be an asset to the work of the WEPs, driving broader change through a multi-stakeholder and cooperative approach.
Latin America and the Middle East: In-Depth Country Analyses

Colombia

Summary

Over two weeks in January 2015, the team conducted 24 interviews and meetings with various stakeholders in Bogotá to better understand Colombia’s history and society, gender norms and context, and business experience related to gender equality and the WEPs. Five interview responses were collected through digital means. Stakeholder groups included signatories of the WEPs, non-WEPs signatories, who are part of the UN Global Compact, companies unaffiliated with the UN Global Compact or the WEPs, United Nations agencies, government officials, Global Compact Local Network representatives, and women’s rights advocates and scholars.

The UN Global Compact and the WEPs in Colombia

The Global Compact Local Network of Colombia (“Corporación Red Local del Pacto Global Colombia”) was established in 2009 as a legal entity and a non-profit organization. The Local Network (LN) was initially created in 2004 with the help of UNDP and a contribution from the Canadian government, as well as the support of ANDESCO (Asociación Nacional de Empresas de Servicios Públicos y Comunicaciones). The number of participants as of May 2015 is 473, making it the seventh largest LN in the world, and the third largest in Latin America. The LN has a well established office with eight full-time staff, and prominently features the issue of women’s empowerment among their priorities. Currently, there are four signatory companies of the WEPs in Colombia, and these companies represent industries such as construction, energy, natural gas, and telecommunications.

National Gender Context: Culture, Stereotypes, and Norms

The following section gives an overview of Colombia’s national gender policy, as well as background on the dominant issues, debates, and challenges related to the efforts towards gender equality. This discussion provides critical background on how businesses talk about and understand gender equality and the WEPs, and deeply informs how current business practices and policies are created, and whether they are successful.

National-Level Gender Context

Colombia has experienced rapid, positive changes in the last decades pertaining to gender equality. For instance, the average fertility rate dropped from 3.2 to 2.4 in just twenty years. Furthermore, women reversed the education gap, and presently have higher completion rates than men in primary,
secondary, and tertiary levels. Moreover, Colombia had the steepest increase in women’s labor force participation in Latin America, with one of the highest participation rates in the region. Women are also well represented in managerial positions and in the finance sector (World Bank, 2012). According to the World Bank's “Gender at Work” Report, Colombia is one of only five countries in the world in which women have reached or surpassed gender parity with men in management, senior, and legislative occupations (World Bank, 2014).

However, despite important improvements, Colombia is still far from achieving equality for women in the labor market. There remain significant disparities between men and women, including gaps in labor participation, unemployment, salaries, representation in leadership positions, and female underrepresentation in certain male-dominated industries. For instance, there is a 22.2 percent gap in the labor force participation rate; women face unemployment rates 6.9 percent higher than men, earn 20 percent less than men in the same positions and work ten hours more than men per week; in addition, 58 percent of women are employed in the informal sector, as opposed to 52 percent of men (United Nations Development Programme, 2012; Hausmann, Tyson, Bekhouche, and Zahidi, 2014; International Labour Organization, 2013).

An overwhelming majority of interviewees acknowledged the presence of these disparities at the country level, particularly in salaries, leadership positions, and representation in male-dominated industries. At the firm level, no interviewee acknowledged any pay gap within their company, while some acknowledged an underrepresentation of women in leadership and management positions, particularly in traditionally male-dominated industries.

The Role of Government and Civil Society in Promoting Gender Equality

Despite considerable economic growth and positive changes over the last years, Colombia’s weak performance on gender equality, as indicated above, reflects the tension between a comprehensive legal framework protecting women’s rights and its implementation.

Colombia has adopted extensive legislation and policies that constitute the basis for the gender context in the country. The 2013-2016 National Policy for Gender Equality, a section of the National Development Plan, identifies and prioritizes aspects that contribute to gender inequality in the country, and seeks to establish an intersectional approach to address these inequalities (Presidencia de la República de Colombia, n.d.). The National Program for Employment Equity, established by the Ministry of Labor, seeks to promote women’s participation in the labor force, and prevent and eradicate all forms of discrimination and violence against women in the workplace (Ministerio del Trabajo, n.d.). Law 1257 of 2007, also known as the Gender Equality Law, establishes regulations to prevent and sanction abuse and discrimination against women. Law 825 of 2003, or the Equal Opportunity for Women Law, establishes standards to ensure equal opportunities for women in the public and private spheres. Law 581 of 2000, or the Quota Law, establishes that 30 percent of candidates for upper public administration positions must be from each gender. Furthermore, Law 1468 of 2011 mandates paid maternity leave (World Bank Group, 2013).
The High Office of the Presidential Adviser on Equality for Women is in part responsible for implementing Colombia’s national strategy on gender equality. Civil society is also heavily involved on gender issues and many NGOs and local associations have been vocal in the public sphere, especially on the issue of gender-based violence (United Nations Development Program, 2012; ABColombia, 2013). Women’s voices have also been important in increasing public spending in social and economic programs (World Bank, 2012).

A Culture of Machismo

Over the course of the team’s research and stakeholder meetings, it became clear that machismo and related perceptions of gender roles have hindered efforts to empower women and promote equality in the labor market. Representatives from businesses, government agencies, and civil society organizations identified machismo as a key feature of Colombian culture, and one of the most significant barriers to achieving gender equality in the workplace. Though there are multiple, and even contradictory, definitions of machismo, the interviewees defined Colombian machismo as one that stresses a strong or exaggerated sense of masculinity, as is defined in the *American Heritage Dictionary* (Schaefer, 2008). A female senior staff member of the Ministry of Labor associated Colombia’s machista culture with conservative gender roles for women in terms of maternal care and responsibility at home, and expressed that women face greater barriers to entry in certain industries. Traditional perceptions of masculinity are powerful, and in many cases, control whether or not women work. Often, traits that are viewed as feminine are thought to be weaknesses, rather than strengths. A women’s rights organization characterized Colombia’s traditional mindset as one in which “… a woman is the queen of the home, a man is the king of the world.”

A male senior staff member of the Global Compact Local Network in Colombia also described the country as a conservative society with roots of machismo and argued that religion and patriarchy play a large role in society, which is reflected in the participation of women in the labor force. This culture of machismo also translates into discriminatory hiring practices, perhaps as a way to preserve particular forms of masculinity and an overall system of patriarchy. He noted that there have been improvements, however; for example, more women now participate in the labor force, and Colombia has surpassed some of its Latin American neighbors in improving conditions for women. He also argued that tackling machismo involves generational changes, as it is a long-term development process.

During the field research, the team experienced first-hand certain aspects of this machismo culture in daily observations as well as in interviews. One interviewee, for example, made claims about the inherent maternal nature of women and used cosmetic companies and make-up as examples that we as women could relate to.

Gender Roles and Work-Life Balance

In large part facilitated by the culture of machismo, gender roles and their effect on work-life balance are key gender issues in Colombia. Stakeholders from NGOs, government, and businesses all mentioned...
the tension between work and family, which a representative from a women’s rights NGO termed “double roles” for women. Because of these challenges, women lack access to economic autonomy. Furthermore, a male representative from UN Women added that women in the workforce cannot grow as fast or as much as their male counterparts without sacrificing family-related responsibilities, often leading to guilt. A multinational pharmaceutical company added that companies need to understand the different perspectives and experiences of women, taking into consideration that there are women who want to stay at home and care for their children, while there are others who are not in the labor market because they lack opportunities and access.

Colombia’s Armed Conflict: Implications on Gender

Aside from culture and tradition, the gender context in Colombia is in large part influenced by the armed conflict with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), which has been ongoing since 1964. This conflict and its effects on women were frequently addressed by our interviewees. Women’s rights organizations and the Local Network underscored the importance of recognizing the conflict as a major part of Colombia’s history when thinking about gender equality in the workplace.

There have been numerous consequences for women as a result of the conflict, including the high incidence of women who have become heads of households, displaced, or who have been victims of violence. Women continue to suffer from further consequences, including lower access to social services, an unequal distribution of wealth, as well as the ongoing effects of physical and psychological trauma. Further, 30 to 40 percent of FARC members are female. Reintegrating FARC members is a challenge in and of itself, and harder so for women who already face fewer economic opportunities and more stigma than men (O’Neill, 2015).

Furthermore, because the current peace process and the end of the conflict is the country’s topmost priority, resources for women’s economic empowerment are sparse. Nonetheless, women’s rights organizations argued that the context of the conflict provides opportunities for women’s empowerment; for example, while many female victims lost their husbands and were displaced, they have also become attained greater autonomy through this process, gaining leadership skills and work experience after becoming heads of households.

Business Environment: Policies, Cultures, and Attitudes

Both WEPs signatories and non-signatories alike outlined their company’s policies as they relate to gender in our interviews. While some companies sought to clearly address inequities by specifically targeting women as ultimate beneficiaries of certain policies, others targeted the entire employee workforce, as well as their families. In many cases, gender equality is not only driven by concrete policies related to employees, but by overarching company culture and attitudes. A company’s framing of gender, and its approach to decision-making, data collection and analysis, and employee engagement can determine how women are viewed within the company, and how gender fits into specific policies. The following section provides some examples of how companies envision their policies to support gender equality:
❖ **Utilizing a Gender Lens**: A company in the construction industry specifically takes gender into account when thinking about company policies, particularly related to employee benefits and flexibility in work. They think about how company practices and policies affect women at all levels of the company, from directors to entry-level employees. Utilizing a gender lens in crafting new initiatives, policies, or language is crucial to building buy-in from diverse employees and stakeholders of the company.

❖ **Understanding Diverse Needs**: A multinational pharmaceutical company pointed out that across their company, women have very different experiences. There are some women who have mobility, growth opportunities, and access to information, while others may lack opportunities and access, and have greater responsibilities in terms of caring for children. Companies must understand the different lives, perspectives, experiences, and needs of women; this is part of understanding diversity.

❖ **Acknowledging National Context**: An oil distribution company shapes their policies to tackle what they call the greatest issue when it comes to gender: supporting equal opportunities for women and men. In large part due to Colombia’s recent history of armed conflict, women are often heads of households. Thus, it is important for employers to provide flexibility for these women both while working at the office and at home.

❖ **Eliminating Bias in Hiring and Selection**: Through our meetings with businesses and other organizations, we were made aware that throughout Colombia, women often face discriminatory hiring practices when seeking jobs. Pregnant women and young mothers in particular face strong biases that deter employers from hiring them. Several companies emphasized their efforts to change HR processes to eliminate these types of biases. For example, a telecommunications company conducts an annual evaluation of their wage scale for this purpose. While there are many barriers to achieving long-term goals such as transforming and improving the cultural climate of the company, concrete HR policies that eliminate bias are significant advancements.

❖ **Providing Professional Development and Mentorship**: When conducting performance evaluations, a pharmaceutical company looks specifically for high-performing women in their talent pool. They try to identify mentors within the company who they can connect them with. Additionally, they help women transition careers within the company, if they would like to do so. While they support this effort for all employees, they find it is especially important for women, who otherwise may face resistance or barriers to transfer jobs. Thus, the company makes a clear effort to support women throughout the process.

❖ **Improving Benefits, Flexibility, and Family Life**: Like many of the companies, one non-signatory company shared with us their “tele-trabajo” policy that allows women to work from home. As with their other policies, this policy also applies to men; however, it is particularly important to provide this flexibility for women who may have other family-related responsibilities. In addition, they are currently developing a program to provide daycare for employees, and already provide subsidies for
pre-school to employees who make less than a certain amount of income. This company gives serious incentives so that women and all employees are able to succeed in their careers, and for them, this includes working benefits such as flexibility measures, but also economic benefits. Some companies focus on the well-being of an employee’s entire family as a way to advance women’s empowerment and gender equality. One company’s philosophy is that “if the family [of the employee] is well, the employee does well” -- following the idea of todos ganamos, that everyone should benefit from their policies.

In accordance with the relevant literature, we found that in general, company policies reinforce gender norms, focusing on the role of women as mothers and caretakers of the home. While it is important that companies support working mothers and fathers through their policies, ultimately, companies should envision innovative policies that redefine gender norms, contributing to a transformation of women’s and men’s roles and positions in the labor force and beyond.

Case Study: Codensa-Emgesa’s Holistic Benefits

In 2011, Codensa started a pilot where employees could work from home. The company monitored the impact of this on employees’ quality of life, their development, and their work performance. Codensa found that their employees do not necessarily need greater economic or monetary benefits; rather, what they need is more time and flexibility. They have a “benefits packet” – a small book of vouchers with different pages of benefits that employees can tear out and give to their supervisors when they want to “redeem” the benefit. Thus, the company is able to track and measure participation for both women and men. Every year, they find that participation numbers are growing, and that more employees are taking advantage of these benefits and it is paying off for employee well-being and their overall satisfaction with the company.

Sample Benefits:

- Work from home
- Volunteer for a day
- Free parking during pregnancy
- Assist an ill family member
- One week off for new fathers
- Time off to take child to first day of school
- Financial support to prepay school fees

“If the family [of the employee] is well, the employee does well”
- A female representative of a construction company
Female Leadership and Representation

While each company varied in their levels of female leadership and representation at different levels of their companies, all acknowledged their importance. Two of the companies we spoke to have female CEOs, and two also have an equal number of men and women on their board of directors. Regardless of their track record when it comes to women in leadership positions, all companies touted “leadership” and “vision” as key characteristics of their success with internal gender policies and women’s empowerment.

At some companies, a more equal representation of genders exists at the higher, executive levels, whereas in others, it is the opposite, and better representation exists at lower levels of the company. For example, in a telecommunications company, there are some women in the executive leadership, yet most of the company’s women work at medium levels of the company. According to the company’s representatives, there is a balance of men and women when looking at the total employee numbers, but men still dominate the executive leadership. On the other hand, a Colombian petroleum company, finds that their employee gender distribution is more equal at the higher employee levels compared to the lower levels. Out of 2234 employees, 47 percent are men and 53 percent are women. Even so, gender divisions according to work exists, with fewer female managers and senior level employees, and more women in secretarial, administrative, or maintenance roles.

Our observations and research aligned with these contradictory findings. For example, an International Labour Organization report recently announced Colombia as one of the top countries where a manager will be female. While they have extensive statistics for high management and leadership roles, there is a lack of information on female representation at lower and medium levels of management (International Labour Organization, 2015). While this research shows that women in Colombia have approached gender parity with men in certain management positions, through our conversations with Colombians, it seems that this holds true for smaller companies, with women representing management of select departments. In fact, the vast majority of people we met with were women, and almost all of them worked in the departments related to human resources, corporate social responsibility, or communications.

Finally, several companies emphasized the importance of maintaining the business tradition of meritocracy in searching to advance female representation and leadership within the company. A representative from a pharmaceutical company, for example, expressed concern for a “positive female bias” or quotas that some government institutions or companies are employing in order to increase female representation. They believe that women should be equally represented within the company; however, through her own skills, leadership, and merit, and not because of her sex or gender.

Pavimentos: A History of Female Leadership

- Pavimentos began with a family. Two male engineers and their wives started the company 46 years ago.
- Now, the President and CEO is a woman, alongside many other women at the executive level.
- Half of Pavimentos’ Board of Directors is comprised of women.
Discrimination within Male-Dominated Industries

The four WEPs signatory companies represent industries that are traditionally male-dominated, not only in Colombia but across the globe: construction, energy, natural gas, and telecommunications. All four mentioned the nature of these industries as a challenge for advancing women’s empowerment and gender equality in their companies. Most went further and mentioned some of the causes behind this trend, such as Colombia’s traditionally “machista” and patriarchal society, as well as the disproportionate number of men pursuing these fields of study in higher education. A female representative from a non-signatory company in the oil and gas industry also acknowledged the institutionalized masculinity in many sectors similar to theirs. She claimed that with fewer women taking up science, engineering, and other similar fields of study, companies in these industries hire from workforce pipelines that severely lack female representation. One of these companies, for example, expressed frustration that few women showed up at career fairs and informational sessions that they participated in.

Further, women who do enter these fields face significant discrimination and barriers. Several of the companies discussed what this meant at company and employee levels. For example, an energy company acknowledges the uphill battle they are facing in trying to shift norms within the company and society: “women are not on the same playing field or level in this industry.” Indeed, these societal norms permeate into cultural issues and biases among employees and external partners; for example, assumptions by employees that supervisors in engineering and other technical departments will be men. They also posed the important question, “how do you change paradigms and mindsets that this work isn’t only for men?” This company is working against these biases by trying to encourage men to enter roles that are traditionally seen as women’s roles, and vice versa. For a natural gas company, the majority of their employees are engineers or technical workers, and the majority of employees in these roles are men. They are interested in encouraging more women to enter these areas, and the foundation the company runs focuses specifically on technical training and education for women in the communities that they work in.

Involving Men in the Conversation

Representatives from different companies and agencies also highlighted the importance of involving men in conversations and initiatives about gender. For instance, UN Women Colombia argued that one of the challenges to bring about gender equality is to break with the idea that gender only concerns women, and stressed that there is a need to work with men inside the businesses to bring about change. A natural gas company provided examples of situations of gender inequality and discrimination of which men are not aware – they mentioned that in some communities that they wanted to expand their operations to, there were no bathrooms for women, and men did not realize that this was a problem. There were also issues with sexist language, in which women were referred to in derogatory terms. They framed these experiences as opportunities to educate both men and women about values and gender.

“Business culture doesn’t change very easily. It’s more about mentality – whether they are open to teaching and learning”
- A female representative of a construction company
They claimed that men are often defensive when discussing gender because they see it as an aggression and do not necessarily understand the concept, and the company acknowledged that they need to work with men to improve this.

**The WEPs: Motivation, Implementation, Challenges, and Recommendations**

The team interviewed representatives from all four WEPs signatory companies in Colombia, and also representatives from five non-WEPs signatory companies and business organizations. Non-WEPs signatories were selected by the Local Network staff to be interviewed because of their active participation in the LN’s initiatives outside of the WEPs. Some of these companies are also part of other national or international gender initiatives, such as the gender equity seal *Equipares*.

**Motivations: The WEPs’ Alignment with Company Vision and Values**

Companies seem to join the WEPs because their visions are aligned with the goals of the WEPs, and because they are already making efforts to advance diversity, gender equality, and corporate responsibility within their companies. All four of the signatory companies that were interviewed mentioned initiatives and policies related to diversity, gender, and equity that they had prior to joining the WEPs. Most companies proudly proclaimed their commitment to these values as their primary reason for signing the WEPs. The leadership of these companies also supported building a vision and a company philosophy that promotes such efforts.

Our interviewees, which were overwhelmingly female with only four exceptions, were mainly executive leadership, heads of human resources departments, heads of corporate social responsibility, or heads of specialized gender departments within the companies or agencies. In some cases, their gender, by their own admission, influenced their interest in gender equality in the workplace. A female top executive expressed that the interest in promoting gender equality in their company came from the high leadership, including herself and others, most of whom are women. The Local Network staff also suggested that the gender of company leadership might influence their views on gender equality in the workplace, as they asserted that the Local Network’s WEPs-promotion strategy included targeting female-headed companies, who may be more likely to push for gender equality policies in their companies.

While one company specifically joined the WEPs to increase their company’s visibility on these issues, most stated that they simply aligned with the company’s vision and values. The WEPs have helped companies to formalize their efforts, and also to navigate themes of gender that are relatively new in an industries that have been traditionally dominated by men.

**Framing and Promoting the WEPs**

Throughout the conversations, interviewees often referred to gender as a component of fields such as human rights or sustainability. For instance, a natural gas company mentioned that they have a larger model of sustainability, which includes different initiatives including the UN Global Compact and *Equipares*, another gender equity seal sponsored by UNDP and Colombia’s Ministry of Labor. Other
companies similarly included issues of equity under their overarching strategy and business plan, rather than treating gender as a separate issue. The Ministry of Labor has a similar line of thought, suggesting that establishing a Ministry of Women or isolating gender as its own goal would not be the best mechanism to achieve gender equality. Rather, according to them, a gender lens must be integrated into all sectors. In other cases, interest in the WEPs is framed under policies related to human rights.

In addition, it is clear that language and tone matters when discussing gender equality in the workplace. Most interviewees stressed the business case for gender equality as the most effective type of language to shape and promote the WEPs. One company thinks about gender equality as tied to efficiency and competence, rather than simply for the sake of empowering women. Another claimed that language around feminism does not work in business; it may be effective for political or social advocacy, but business requires discourse framed around statistics, data, and impact. UNDP and LN staff added that gender is still a new concept for many companies, and they may only associate gender with negative stereotypes of feminism. They believe that in Colombia, people are generally not aware of dialogues around gender, and that it is a concept that is predominantly used in academic discussions, and less so in professional settings. Furthermore, many companies fall into stereotyping feminism and gender issues; thus, the WEPs provide an important platform where businesses can engage in a dialogue on what gender equality means and further explore these concepts.

Employee Engagement

Corporate responsibility is as much about internal facing objectives as it is about external or community-facing objectives. From the literature and our interviews with nine companies, we found that CSR and specifically gender-related issues fall predominantly under internal departments such as human resources and communications, or, if one exists, corporate social responsibility and sustainability. While all interviewees spoke at length of their policies that benefit women and families and their community-related activities, it was unclear whether employees in the core business areas of the company were aware of efforts such as the WEPs. For example, employees at the heart of a construction company, such as engineers or other technical workers, are likely unaware of their employer’s participation in the Women’s Empowerment Principles, or activities and policies related to gender and CSR altogether. Companies acknowledged that improvements in employee engagement on these issues are needed and considered them to be long-term goals.

Measuring Impact: Using Data to Evaluate Progress

Companies vary in their ability to collect and analyze data, and finally measure their impact against the WEPs. Most companies that we met with were just beginning to develop indicators and other evaluation mechanisms for their policies related to gender. In many cases, the most important initiative undertaken by the company was to push for gender-disaggregated data on a range of company-related targets. For example, a petroleum company we met with utilizes gendered data to analyze divisions in type of work
or departments, as well as recruitment and promotion practices that may illuminate their progress on gender equality.

Other companies focused on specific aspects of the WEPs that they could monitor and evaluate. For example, one company focused explicitly on the sixth principle of the WEPs: promoting equality through community initiatives and advocacy. This company’s foundation works to promote equity through several community initiatives all over Colombia, particularly around technical training and education of women. Further, they explained that while adhering to and implementing the WEPs has been a challenge, it is not because of the content or ideas, but because of the difficulties in embedding the principles within the company’s vast and complicated processes.

Stakeholder Challenges & Recommendations

❖ Developing Platforms for Information and Knowledge Sharing: All companies agreed that they would benefit from stronger information and communications platforms, where they could commit to share knowledge, challenges, mistakes, and successes. Companies would like to learn from the experience of their peers who may be more advanced on these issues, or who may be in countries that are more advanced on these issues.

One energy company encouraged companies to test their policies, find mistakes, and learn from them. They would like to understand what trends other businesses and countries find and face, particularly within Latin America. Others emphasized that companies need to build a culture of sharing and learning, and this would be mutually beneficial for the whole WEPs community, as it would then be easier to identify relevant stakeholders in the region who are working on this issue. They suggested the development of an online platform, where universities, government, companies, and NGOs could engage in a dialogue on these issues and share practices.

Furthermore, several companies highlighted the importance of language in developing these platforms. They pointed out that stakeholders are often unable to take full advantage of existing resources put forth by the UN Global Compact and the WEPs due to a language barrier, as many of these are not translated into Spanish. For example, an interviewee argued that translations of the WEPs resources are often unavailable, inaccurate or not made appropriate to the context of the country. Other interviewees suggested that it is important to take advantage of the fact that there is a common language in Latin America, and that resources and platforms for information and knowledge sharing should be available in this language.

❖ Communicating Policies and Progress to Employees and Communities: A company in the energy sector recognized that communicating their policies and philosophy on gender equality within the company is challenging, yet extremely important. They seek support in spreading this information to medium and lower levels of their company: “Every level of the business needs to understand why

“The exchange of knowledge is of utmost importance when it comes to subjects like gender equality and women’s empowerment”

- A female representative of a telecommunications company
we have these initiatives.” The head of CSR for an energy company gave an example of how the problem of engaging employees should be approached. If there are incidents of assault against women in Bogota’s public bus system, the solution is not to divide the city in half for women and men, but rather, to educate the entire population and build respect and other important values. Similarly, when it comes to gender equality initiatives in companies, the solution is not to delineate along gender lines, but rather to improve the overarching company culture through education, values, and other practices. While some companies sought support in communicating their efforts internally, others, on the other hand, sought ideas on how to communicate these better with communities they work in and impact. While these companies have strategies for collaborating and working with stakeholders, they have found that many people do not understand concepts of gender.

❖ **The Need for A Multi-Sector Approach:** Several stakeholder groups in addition to the companies stressed the need for collaborative, multi-sector partnerships to achieve advancement of gender equality in the workforce and in the context of Colombia. Because national history and context, societal and company culture, and norms and perceptions greatly affect the overall climate for the success of the WEPs, this effort requires multiple actors – government, legislators, nonprofits, academics, businesses, and others.

One energy company emphasized that the participation of formal institutions was particularly critical and that businesses cannot do this kind of work alone or hold all responsibility for progress. They stressed the need to include legislative bodies to enforce and encourage gender equality related initiatives and policies. They would like to be a part of a national strategy that incorporates businesses. Much of what happens within business is in small or large part related to the culture and context of the region; thus, it’s a collaborative process to make long-term changes.

❖ **Indicators and Tracking Progress:** Though there are resources and guidance available for companies through the WEPs to develop indicators and reporting guidelines, many companies had not utilized these. One company mentioned their lack of specific indicators when it comes to the WEPs, and added that they require accompaniment and support at all levels of each of the principles. It suggested having examples related to indicators and targets to help them reach and

“We have to show that change is positive, that openness is positive for businesses. Business culture is influenced by the country’s culture”
- A male representative of an energy company

“What having definitions of indicators and targets would really support businesses in achieving and defining impact. It is hard to monetize or economically value what we’re achieving, and this is why we need indicators. Quantification is so crucial.”
- A male representative of an energy company
define impact: “how can we translate these principles to companies and into impact?” Another company echoed these suggestions, employing other gender equity initiatives such as Equipares as an example.

Concrete targeted percentages would make things tangible for businesses. Although the WEPs serve diverse businesses and industries, perhaps target ranges could be developed for categories of companies based on size, local context, and industry. In addition, companies would benefit from more data on what works and what the reality of current practices is, as well as guidance on transformative practices and how to generate impact.

❖ **Identifying Strategic Partners:** Several of the entities we interviewed in Colombia were not typical corporations, yet they show great potential to achieve the goals of the WEPs. For example, entities like the Chamber of Commerce, or the National Federation of Coffee Growers, work extensively on issues related to gender and the labor market, yet cannot be officially recognized as the WEPs signatories in some cases due to the nature of their organizations. It would be strategic for the WEPs to create partnerships with these organizations and advance women’s empowerment through their activities and extensive networks of affiliates.

**Other Gender Equality Initiatives**

Throughout our interviews, we came across companies and stakeholders who mentioned other initiatives or certification programs related to gender and women’s empowerment. The most prevalent initiative that was mentioned was Equipares, a gender equity seal that is part of a regional program and administered in Colombia by UNDP and the Ministry of Labor. While the WEPs and Equipares are structured differently, and each have their own advantages, it is useful to understand initiatives like Equipares, and work in unison to advance gender equity in countries like Colombia.
Lessons from Equipares

Equipares is a labor equality seal, established in 2013 by UNDP and Colombia’s Ministry of Labor to improve work conditions for women. It is based on a regional strategy, the Community of the Seal, which has existed for over 10 years in countries like Mexico, Chile, Uruguay, Brazil, and Costa Rica, resulting in the certification of over 2,000 companies. With the support and model of the Community of the Seal, Equipares has been localized to Colombia’s context. According to the UNDP, 48 companies in Colombia are seeking certification, but none are yet certified. This selection includes large companies from industries such as minerals and concrete, as well as MNCs such as Telefónica and Ecopetrol. UNDP estimates that this initiative is impacting 9,000-10,000 people.

Eight areas of focus
1. Recruiting and hiring practices
2. Promotion and growth
3. Salaries
4. Quality of life
5. Work-life balance
6. Co-responsibility
7. Prevention of sexual harassment
8. Inclusive communication and language

Five Steps to Certification:
1. Relationship building with the company, including signing an agreement with leadership
2. Performing a diagnostic test
3. Developing a plan of action
4. Evaluation
5. Certification

Key Takeaways:
- Companies see the WEPs and Equipares as complementary. While the WEPs present an overarching, conceptual commitment to gender equality, Equipares provides structured support at specific levels of policies.
- The Ministry of Labor is a draw for companies who have joined Equipares. Government partnerships are widely celebrated by businesses in Colombia.
- The diagnostic and action plan portions of Equipares provide companies with a detailed internal assessment, which they can use to address specific needs and establish realistic targets.
Chile

Summary

The team of two researchers spent two weeks in Chile in March 2015, conducting 19 interviews and meetings with various stakeholders in Santiago to better understand Chile’s history and society, gender norms and context, and business experience related to gender equality and the WEPs. Stakeholder groups included a signatory of the WEPs, a non-WEPs signatory and UN Global Compact participant, United Nations agencies, government officials, Global Compact Local Network representatives, and women’s rights advocates and scholars. These findings are based on the views and information that stakeholders shared with us.

The UN Global Compact and the WEPs in Chile

The Global Compact Local Network in Chile was launched in 2004 with the support of UNDP, making Chile the first country in Latin America to launch the Global Compact. Since 2007, it has been hosted at Universidad Andrés Bello, the largest private university in Chile. The structure of the LN represents an interesting case as it was built on the initiative of the current director. Supported by the university, it is striving towards financial autonomy in large part based on annual membership fee charged to the local UN Global Compact signatory companies. While the network is a multi-stakeholder association, the majority of the partners are multinational and large local companies. As of May 2015, the Chilean Local Network had 78 participants in the Global Compact, and three companies in Chile had committed to the WEPs in the industries of metals and mining, gas, water and utilities, and electricity. Two of these, however, belong to the same group.

National Gender Context: Culture, Stereotypes, and Norms

The following section gives an overview of Chile’s national gender policy, as well as background on the dominant issues, debates, and challenges related to the efforts towards gender equality. This discussion provides critical background on how businesses talk about and understand gender equality and the WEPs, and deeply informs how current business practices and policies are created, and whether they are successful.
National-Level Gender Context

“Chile is a contradictory country. On the outside it seems to have adopted a modern vision on some issues but remains really conservative on others like gender”

- A representative of an international organization

Since transitioning from the Pinochet regime towards democracy in 1990, Chile has made an impressive progress towards improving the quality of life of its citizens. According to the World Bank, Chile has been one of the fastest growing economies in Latin America in the last decade. Its performance on gender is also acknowledged by global rankings as Chile stands at the 61st place out of 151 countries in the Gender Inequality Index, 61st out of 148 countries in the Gender Related Development Index, and 66th out of 142 countries in the World Economic Forum Gender Gap Index. These are prominent rankings in relation to other Latin American countries. In terms of education, 88 percent of the 25-34 year-olds have earned the equivalent of a high-school degree, a percentage higher than the OECD average of 82 percent. There is also close to no difference between the educational achievement of men and women, with 73 percent of men having completed high-school against 72 percent for women.

While Chile reached the status of middle to upper income country as defined by the World Bank, the benefits of the growth have been unequally shared by its population. According to data provided by the OECD, the average net adjusted disposable income of the top 20 percent of the population is an estimated 38,697 USD a year, while the bottom 20 percent live on an estimated 2,983 USD a year. Inequality to reap the fruits of the economic expansion is reflected as well in the situation of Chilean women, as shown by the average income gap of 16 percent (OECD, n.d.b). Despite steady progress over the last decade, the labor force participation rate of women was 49 percent in 2013, far below the participation rate of men, at 75 percent. This is significantly lower than the OECD average, but is also one of the lowest participation rates in Latin America. The long-term effects of the low female participation rate are visible on the pensioners’ salary replacement rate, which is about 52 percent for men and only 42 percent on average for women (OECD, n.d.c).

While Chile has had a woman elected as its president twice, this remarkable achievement does not reflect the broader picture of Chilean society. Access to power and decision-making positions remains limited for women in all sectors: in politics where they only stand for 15 percent of Congress, in companies where they account for only five percent of management positions, and also within unions and cooperatives. The ambivalence toward gender equality in Chile was clearly expressed in the UNDP survey of 2009 which found that 62 percent of Chileans, both male and female, are opposed to full equality between the sexes (United Nations Development Programme, 2010). Efforts pushing for real equality between men and women are also met with strong resistance. Recent legislation on quotas in politics and businesses - as a part of an overall strategy of affirmative action in favor of women - has been under attack by the conservative opposition as anti-constitutional. It should be underlined that
Chile’s current constitution has been inherited from Pinochet’s regime, and one of the most emblematic aspect of this legacy for women’s rights is the total ban on abortion.

Finally, another major aspect of Chile’s society, which was talked about repeatedly in our interviews, was the importance of a strong influential elite. This cohesive socio-economic circle graduated from the same schools and remains strongly homogenous as its members are represented in all leading economic positions in the Chilean private sector. This limited pool of candidates leads to a strong reproduction of the elite within the boardrooms and the senior management. Gaining access to those positions is difficult, even for women of the elite, who are still restricted to the family sphere. However, several of our interviewees were optimistic about diversifying boardrooms and senior management, linking it to the generational change: “Newer generations have more aspirations and ambitions, and they want to work.”

The Role of Government and Civil Society in Promoting Gender Equality

Over the last decade, a string of new legislations related to gender equality was approved in Chile, ranging from reducing the wage gap and extending maternity leave to improving child care facilities. The latest bills proposed by the Bachelet government focuses on raising women’s representation in the economic sphere through boards, unions and cooperatives. From our interviews with a wide array of stakeholders in Chile, it clearly emerged that the existing legislative framework in Chile is considered good and rather extensive, however, the gap between the law and practice remains wide. The implementation of existing laws is a key.

Past Legislation

In 2009, the first Bachelet administration passed a legislation introducing the principle of equal pay for men and women in the labor code. However, a large gap between the law and practice remains. One of the main flaws underlined by our interviewee, who is a gender specialist, is that the design of the law puts the burden of the proof on the victim of an unfair treatment. Women, who believe they are discriminated against, have to obtain through their own means information regarding how much their male colleagues are making, a type of information companies are rarely transparent about. Women will then have to complain to their employers, and if the company fails to address her claims, the employee can take the company to court. Employees seeking to redress an unfair treatment are thus putting themselves at risk of losing their jobs.

Another major change in the labor context of women was the extension of the paid maternity leave in 2011. Prenatal and postnatal leave not only increased from three to six months but was also made compulsory. Some flexibility exists for the last three months, which can allow women to return to their job on a part-time basis. While this law offers an increased level of protection for the female workers in low-skilled jobs, who have little negotiating power, it has been severely criticized for jeopardizing the careers of women in professional positions. Many of our interviewees from NGOs and international
organizations highlighted a negative impact on women’s careers when they stay away from work for six months. A local NGO mentioned that the law affects women who are at the age of having children, and they often face discrimination in hiring. Their staff plans on monitoring and evaluating its impact with a study. Several interviewees clearly denounced the gist of the law passed by the conservative government of Sebastian Pinera, as its intent was not in the interest of women but of the children. They stressed that the existing laws remain within traditional framework where maternity and childcare responsibilities only focus on women. They advocated for a paradigm change emphasizing co-responsibility between men and women regarding childcare.

This issue relates directly to another important change in the maternity legislation. In addition to its extension, a new provision gave the possibility to transfer a share of the maternity leave to the father. While the paid paternity leave exists in Chile, it is currently limited to five days and is provided at the employer’s expense (maternity leave is paid through the national insurance scheme, a point that will be delved into more specifically in the part “Disparity in Insurance Costs”). In addition to those five days, fathers can benefit from the mother’s paid leave during the last six weeks. Knowing that Chilean women’s wages are on average lower than men’s, this scheme does not provide any economic incentive for men to take advantage of the leave transfer because of the financial impact of the lost income on the household. Another approach could be to strengthen the status of the paternity leave itself, by extending it and by maintaining a direct link between the salary replacement rate and the father’s wage. It would also more clearly establish the legitimacy of the paternity leave as a right of its own, and not a by-product of the mother’s right.

Article 203 of the Labor Code (Código de Trabajo, 2015) mandates that all firms with 20 or more female employees must provide child care assistance to their employees. The firm either has to provide a separate and independent place that is close to the workplace, where the mothers can leave their children under two years old during the day, or provide additional subsidy to the female employee to cover the child care expense. Again, the framing of the law pertains to a traditional vision of women as main caregivers and fails to include all employees, male and female. Male employees are not perceived as in need of child care assistance based on assumption that this assistance is already provided by the mother of his children.

As Michelle Bachelet was elected a President in 2014 for the second time after leading UN Women from 2010 to 2013, legislation has been passed to promote the Servicio Nacional de la Mujer (SERNAM) to the rank of a full-fledged Ministry. SERNAM is the main executive agency responsible for promoting equality of opportunities for men and women. This change - with a transition period of about a year - will not impact the continuity of current programs but will, however, lead to an expansion of their activities, especially, regarding issues of labor practices. In addition to a ministry dedicated to gender issues and a presidential advisor on the topic, which the team had the chance to interview, the Bachelet government took another approach mainstreaming the issue throughout the Chilean administration with gender specialists assigned to each ministry.

While a law has already been passed on quotas reserving seats for women in unions and cooperatives, whose board should have the same proportion of women as among the baseline employees, the
government is now working on a quota of women on boards of state-owned companies with a target of 40 percent by 2018. Other draft bills on mandatory female representation on boards, as well as on anti-discrimination and protection of personal data on CVs and resumes to ensure fairness are currently being discussed. As of today, it is not illegal to ask about marital status during a job interview.

**Political Participation**

“We need to energetically push for the presence of women in all decision-making and leadership spaces, not only as the final goal, but as a real lever that will allow us to change the inertia of all gender inequalities. Only by distributing the power equitably, by executing this power democratically, and by incorporating the two hemispheres of humanity, will we achieve a more legitimate political system and institutional order for all societies”

President Bachelet, at high a level event on “Women in power and decision making: Building a different world,” held in Santiago, Chile on February 27-28, 2015 (UN Women, 2015)

According to The Global Gender Gap Report produced by the World Economic Forum, Chile has twice the number of women in ministerial positions in 2014 compared to 2013 (from 18 percent to 39 percent). The report also noted that with Michelle Bachelet back in office, the country is likely to improve women’s political empowerment over the coming years (Hausmann, Tyson, Bekhouche, & Zahidi, 2014).

However, many interviewees expressed concerns on the low female participation rate in politics in Chile. Despite the fact that Chile has a female president, a female head of senate, and an increased number of female senators and deputies in the past year, female political representation is still far from parity. According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, female representation in the lower house is less than 16 percent and is 18 percent in the senate, ranking 93rd worldwide (De la Jara & O’Brien, 2015).

**Challenges with Work-Life Balance**

As mentioned, the government requires all firms with more than 20 female employees to provide childcare assistance up to two years old of the newborn. However, since the primary school in Chile starts at the age of five, there exists a gap of three years when a mother has to take care of the child or has to find alternative ways to cover the gap, such as hiring nannies or

"Being able to be successful in work and family is an extraordinary effort. When we look for role models in the older generations to inspire the younger ones, you see that these successful women often benefited from very good partners who enabled them. But these women are exceptional stories, not the common case."

- A representative of a women’s rights activist group
sending her child to daycare facilities. The lack of quality daycare in the country is a barrier for women to enter the workforce or return to their previous jobs. An interviewee commented on the pressure she receives from the society and from her family, and that she would be regarded as an “irresponsible mother,” if she hires a nanny to take care of her child.

Working in Chile entails long hours, compounded with the long commuting time, it’s especially hard for women to find a job that allows them to reconcile between their work responsibilities and family duties. Moreover, it becomes even more complicated for women to justify why they should re-enter the workforce when their salaries cannot cover the expenses associated with hiring nannies, sending children to child care facilities, hiring caretakers for elderly and recruiting housekeeping staff.

**“The real difficulty is that reconciling work-life balance is extremely difficult. The internal dynamics within couples are not allowing women to work. Women are still considered to be the main caretakers of children. And the discussion is not only about taking care of the children, it is rather a negotiation within the couple about what kind of daily life they will have”**

- A representative of an international organization

## Disparity in Insurance Costs

Chile’s health care system is a two-tier system. One tier is composed of public health insurance FONASA, covering about 69 percent of the population; the other is the private insurance plan ISAPRE, covering about 17 percent of the population. The remaining population is either affiliated with other public agencies like the Military Health Services or is without coverage (Vargas and Poblete, 2008).

Women of reproductive age are required to pay higher premiums under the ISAPRES plan (at least two or three times greater than those paid by men of similar age) and would lose any entitlement to services associated with labor or maternity, if these higher premiums were not paid. The rationale behind the difference in premiums is that the salary of women during their maternity leave will be covered by the insurance company. Thus, the higher premiums charged to women are provisions of the insurance companies for the higher anticipated expenses. Many of our interviewees have raised the issue of the discrepancy between the premiums paid between men and women for the same level of coverage and services. One interviewee confirmed that she has to pay three times the costs as her brother does for the same insurance policy. However, women have the option of paying a lesser amount for their premiums on the premise that they sign and consent to not having children. If later they do have children, then it would be seen as a violation of the contract and they would have to pay for the difference in the premiums. These differences in standards and treatments between men and women are clear evidence of discriminatory policies.
Discrimination against Women as Mothers

The traditional gender role of women as mothers creates unfair treatment at the workplace and contributes to the income disparity between men and women. Stereotypes prevail in the evaluation of female employees at work; their supervisors or superiors often have the predisposition that women will have short careers and will ultimately leave work after they get married or have children. Thus, multiple interviewees have noted that companies are highly unlikely to send their female employees to travel, or give them more responsibilities because they do not see the “short career span of women” worthy of their investments. As a result, women face much less career advancement opportunities across functions and sectors.

As mentioned in the earlier section, the law regulates that all firms with 20 or more female employees provide child care assistance either in the form of renting a separate facility close to the workplace or providing monetary subsidy. This law aims at supporting the transition of mothers back to work while promoting the close mother-child relationship for the healthy development of the child. However, aside from the positive impacts the policy has on women’s decisions to re-enter the workforce, it also creates an immediate backlash, as there are now higher costs associated with hiring and employing women (Prada, Rucci, & Urzúa, 2015). A study conducted by three researchers from the National Bureau of Economic Research in the United States examined the effect this law has on the wage for females of reproductive years. The study used longitudinal data from 2002 to 2013 and the results indicated that “the policy has sizable effects on starting wages of women working in large firms created after 2005. Specifically, women hired in a firm with 20 or more female workers make CLP $24,000 to CLP $53,000 (approximately US $39-US $87) less per month than women hired when no requirement of providing child care was imposed (i.e., when firm has less than 20 female workers)” (Prada, Rucci, & Urzúa, 2015). To put the impact more in perspective, the average annual household income in Chile is US $13,762, or US $1,147 per month (OECD, n.d.a). Thus, women in reproductive years may have lost up to 7.5% of household income after the law went into effect.

It is unfortunate to see laws initially designed to help women result in perverse effects. A representative from the Ministry of Economy said in an interview that they do recognize that between the ages of 25 to 30, men are more favorable on the job market than women. Questions such as “are you married?”, “how long have you been married?”, and “how many children do you have?” are frequently asked at job interviews by human resources personnel. The answers to these questions often become a deciding factor in the hiring decision made by the firms. The Ministry hopes that the bill on anti-discrimination and protection of personal information will in the future prevent companies from requesting such information from interviewees. Therefore, women would benefit from a fair recruiting process where only qualifications and credentials are considered.

Business Environment: Policies, Cultures, and Attitudes

❖ Leadership in Business: According to The Global Gender Gap Report from 2014, only about five percent of firms in Chile have women as top managers, and the share of women on executive boards of all listed companies is about five percent as well (Hausmann, Tyson, Bekhouche, & Zahidi, 2014). However, during our interviews, we learned that even the five percent figure of
female representation on boards is considered to be an inflated number. Many qualified women often sit on multiple boards for different companies and are thus double–counted in this calculation.

An interviewee who works at an international organization expressed her frustration on this matter, claiming that “access to power and decision making is still very difficult, in all sectors. It is all more problematic because there is no gap between men and women in education.” Echoing this point, the statistics from the Global Gender Gap Report show that Chile ranks 30th in terms of education attainment for women, however, it ranks 119th for economic participation and opportunity for women. Therefore, while Chile may have made key investments in women’s education, due to the various barriers women encounter trying to enter the labor market, these investments are not transferring into the returns that would be expected (Hausmann, Tyson, Bekhouche, & Zahidi, 2014).

As one interviewee who works at an NGO explained, one of the requirements to becoming a member of an executive board is that the candidate has prior experience as a CEO of a company. However, since only an infinitesimal number of companies have female leaders, this requirement intrinsically reduces the potential pool of female candidates to be considered for a board position. A proposed solution is that instead of the stringent requirement of prior experience as a CEO, loosening it to prior experience in senior management may embrace a much larger talent pool, for both men and women. It is apparent that Chile has an untapped pool of highly educated and qualified female candidates and the country would benefit greatly if they could better empower and engage more women in the workforce (Hausmann, Tyson, Bekhouche, & Zahidi, 2014).

❖ **Family Obligations:** In Chile, while the government has formulated policies to reduce gender disparities in the labor market and to promote work–life balance, traditional gender roles still pose a significant obstacle in preventing women from participating in the labor force. A “traditional” image of women as solely caretakers of children, the elderly and the household is deeply rooted in Chilean culture. This is illustrated by an example shared by an interviewee: a woman, who is the head of an organization with over a thousand employees, was only allowed to work by her family on the condition that she would return home at 6pm every day. However, due to the long business hours required of her position, it is unrealistic to finish all the work and meetings strictly by 6pm. As a result, she essentially loses a great portion of her power and authority to her deputy, who is a man capable of deciding his own schedule.

❖ **Violence against Women:** In January 2005, after a thirteen-year-long process, the Chamber of Deputies approved a law that reforms the country’s labor code and classifies sexual harassment as a misdemeanor. However, it remains weaker than laws in force in other Latin American countries where sexual harassment is given the status of a crime and is not restricted to the workplace (Baker, 2005). The newly–formed Organization Against Street Harassment (OCAC) found in its first study that almost 40 percent of Chilean women are harassed on a daily basis,
while 90 percent of women reported having been harassed at least once in their lives (Segall, 2014). As for the business sector, statistics show that sexual harassment is most likely to happen in commercial or service-oriented businesses (Stepanov, 2006).

The issue of sexual harassment was not raised very frequently during our interviews. However, we did hear from a number of interviewees that sexual harassment is a situation that female employees experience and tolerate at the workplace. Many corporations employ a mentor-mentee system where a more senior employee in the company would help to guide and foster the learning and development of a junior employee. One interviewee told us that she has heard of cases where female mentees had to offer sexual favors to male mentors in exchange for more opportunities at work and career advancement. Given this prevailing phenomenon, we believe that the WEPs would be a useful tool to companies to address this issue, since Principle 3 is concerned with “ensuring the health, safety and well-being of all women and men workers.”

❖ Mixed Impact of Maternity Law: The extension of mandated maternity leave from three to six months have mainly benefited female workers in low-paying jobs, enabling them to take care of their children while receiving income to help support their families. For women who do not have much leverage and negotiating position against their employers, mandatory maternity leave provides enhanced job security and income. However, according to some interviewees, it may work to the disadvantage of other women who have professional or senior management roles in companies. Being forced to take the mandatory maternity leave may result in adverse impact on their careers. Even though they have the option of switching to a more flexible schedule for the last three months of the maternity leave, staying at home for months may be detrimental to their careers. An interviewee shared the story of a female mayor who experienced great difficulties fulfilling her job duties and responsibilities due to the compulsory maternity leave she had to take. Many of our interviewees spoke about the increasingly popular phenomenon of females in professional roles delaying childbearing.

The WEPs: Motivation, Promotion, Implementation, and Recommendations

While there are 78 UN Global Compact signatories in Chile, only three are also signatories of the WEPs. Out of this limited sample, the team was only able to interview one of them, a company in industrial metals and mining, in addition to representatives from two non-WEPs signatory companies. These are all large companies or conglomerates. The non-WEPs signatories were selected by the Local Network staff due to their active participation in their initiatives. In addition to the WEPs, some of these companies are also part of other national or international gender initiatives, such as the Norma Chilena 3262, a program of certification in good labor practices for gender equality, which provides a seal “Equality and Conciliation” ("Sello IGUALA – CONCILIACIÓN Vida laboral, familiar y personal") to companies that adhere to their principles.
Motivation: Acknowledging the limits of drawing conclusions from the interview of only one signatory company, we formed the following analysis with our interviews of non-signatories and the reasons behind their non-membership of the WEPS.

Alignment with the Company’s Vision: From the limited sample, it seems that companies join the WEPS because their visions are already aligned with the principles. They are also global companies whose international strategies expose them to the global discourse of the United Nations agencies. Although their awareness is not yet or very partially translated into their internal policies, there is an overall attention given to gender issues.

Changes in Senior Management: From our interview with the WEP signatory, we obtained confirmation of the importance of the management’s leadership for the adoption of the WEPS. A change of CEO or other senior executive positions is a decisive window of opportunity for the principles, potentially, in both directions. In the case of our interviewee, the new management strongly supported the initiative and still is a driving force for its planned implementation today. The pivotal role of management changes was raised as well by the Global Compact Local Network staff in our interviews, pointing out that they represent both opportunities and threats: a new CEO can decide to either sign on or leave the initiative. This observation highlights the highly personal aspect of the signing of the WEPS at the leadership level.

Knowledge Networks: From an interview with the head of Diversity and Quality of Life and the Vice-President of Sustainability and Personnel, the team learned that their personal awareness of the WEPS and gender issues in general was crucial. They carry this knowledge with them throughout their careers and enable “awareness and knowledge transfers” among different companies that they work for. Personal networks with NGOs and the National Women’s Service (SERNAM) were also key in the adoption and future implementation of the WEPS.

Challenges in the Promotion of the WEPS

The promotion of the WEPS has been increasingly prioritized within the Local Network but is still at an early stage. Until now the LN has mainly focused on promoting the 10 UN Global Compact principles and engaging more companies as signatories to the Global Compact. Priorities of the LN regarding the 10 general principles are deeply related to the Chilean context as it is a country rich in mineral resources and boasts a prospering mining sector, which is related to UN Global Compact Principles 7, 8 and 9 on environment. It also has a large indigenous populations, to which Principle 1 and 2 on human rights are especially relevant, while Principle 10 on anti-corruption is related to the country’s challenges as a young democracy. Gender issues and women’s rights have been channeled so far within the Principle 6 on labor and the promotion strategy of the WEPS relies on this approach. Member companies that are part of the steering committee of the Local Network agreed that their efforts regarding the UN Global Compact pillar “Labour” should focus on women’s empowerment this year. The effort to bring the WEPS at the forefront has benefited from the strategic support of one of the WEP signatory company, whose vice-president will chair the related committee this year. This specific focus on gender will be of
significant importance for the coming year as the promotion of the WEPs in Chile is still facing the following challenges:

❖ **Low Levels of Awareness**: Although the LN has been communicating about the WEPs to its members, from our interviews with two non-signatory companies, this awareness work - realized mainly through invitations and documents sent by email - has not had the intended impact as our interviewees seem to have little knowledge of the WEPs. Unfortunately, even some of the staff in international organizations we met in Santiago were not particularly familiar with the WEPs as a concept. During our meetings, one interviewee unknowingly quoted the principles as a proof of their awareness and attention to gender issues without knowing that the principles listed are actually the WEPs.

❖ **Tensions between Local and Global Levels**: One of the surprising and often frustrating element for the Local Network that came out of our interviews was that companies that are already aligned with the WEPs were still reluctant to sign on. One of the reasons given by a UN Global Compact signatory - an international company - was the lack of decision-making power at the local level, arguing that the authority to sign on such commitments is based at the global level. Whether this is the case or not, the overlapping global and local structure of the WEPs and the UN Global Compact may lead to coverage and communication gaps. The adherence of a multinational company at the global level does not guarantee that its local branches would also sign on to the principles. The tension between the local and global level became more prominent in the Chilean context. On one hand the LN requires an annual membership fee, allowing the signatories to enjoy conferences, trainings and networking opportunities, provided by the local staff. On the other hand the signature to the UN Global Compact at the international level is an easy online process, free of charge. The argument of the financial obstacle is however hard to maintain as its costs are relatively low (about 3000 USD per year), especially in the case of large companies. Signing on the WEPs does not require any additional cost for the companies that are already UN Global Compact members.

❖ **Limited Understanding of Gender Issues**: The difficulty to expand membership to companies whose discourse seems already aligned with the WEPs could be explained by a deeper misunderstanding over the rationale of the principles. Gender analysis requires a paradigm change and a shift in mentality, and therefore challenges existing traditional structures in a rather radical way. When asked about their existing policies for a more gender equal environment, non-signatories regularly mentioned allowing their female employees to take days off, if a child is sick, or to leave early to pick children up at day-care. These policies, while helpful, perpetuate the role of women as main care-takers of family responsibilities and do not attempt to include men in the equality process. Instead of being challenged, traditional gender roles are reinforced.

❖ **Difficulty in Making the Business Case for Gender Equality**: While our corporate interviewees recognized the benefits of gender equality and were often well informed on consulting firms’
studies on the topic (Catalyst, 2004; McKinsey 2013), the business case was still a challenging argument to channel locally. Its acknowledgment at an international and theoretical level does not guarantee its acceptance at the local level, and most particularly for the expected changes it requires in the companies’ activities. The Ministry of Economy highlighted its intention to impose quotas as the first necessary step in order for the companies to realize the benefits of increased gender equity. Among our corporate interviewees, the reactions to proposed quotas were very reserved. Local NGOs also underlined the reluctance to accept the application of international research on the business case because of the perceived foreignness of those “studies made by gringos”. As of today, no local studies have done as the data to inform such a study is not sufficient.

Strategies and Recommendations

The Local Network said that this year will be a strategic opportunity to raise awareness for the WEPs. The high-level event on “Women in power and decision-making: building a different world” in February 2015 attended by the current UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka and its former Director and now President of Chile Michelle Bachelet provides a momentum to build on. The government’s initiatives also provide strong incentives for corporations to join the WEPs, as it gives them an adequate framework to better understand gender issues and to mainstream gender equality within their operations. In that regard, the LN is strongly encouraged to continue their awareness efforts amongst the UN Global Compact signatories, via newsletters, dedicated seminars, workshops and conferences.

Further cooperation with other local key stakeholders, such as UN Women, UNDP, SERNAM, and NGOs, is recommended to capitalize on the available expertise and resources. Organizing joint events would enable more coverage and increased attention to the WEPs. Building on the existing work of the SERNAM on the equity seal, Norma Chilena, should also prioritized, as it is a government agency that provides both practical training and contacts opportunities.

Many interviewees also mentioned the necessity for horizontal levels of networking, among the companies themselves. The initiative taken by an executive of a WEPs signatory company, to personally launch networking events with other CEOs to spread awareness of the WEPs, are remarkable and should be supported by the LN by providing follow-up information, seminars or training. At a less senior level, employees could be engaged directly by the LN, for example through the existing resources of UN Women, such as the website EmpowerWomen.org, which provides a platform for knowledge-sharing. It might help to develop a strong sense of community and shared values.

At the regional level, the Chilean LN would also benefit from increased synergies with other Latin American countries like Colombia to pool resources. This would be particularly appropriate for the localization of the WEPs, for instance regarding the translation of guidance documents.
Implementation

In the case of Chile, as the WEPs are still at a very early stage, their implementation by the single company that was interviewed is limited to the preliminary work of preparing the strategy to raise awareness and acceptance within the organization. In order to assist the signatory companies in their implementation the Local Network could both build on the existing resources of other stakeholders Chile for training or certification programs, as well as communicating more strategically with other local networks in Latin America, such as the Colombian LN.
Turkey

Summary
The team spent two weeks in Istanbul, Turkey, in January 2015. 21 interviews were conducted in addition to two working lunches and one networking event with various stakeholders. The objective was to better understand the country’s history and society, gender norms and context, and business experience related to gender and the WEPs. Stakeholders interviewed included nine WEPs signatory companies, Global Compact Local Network staff, representatives of UN agencies, women’s organizations, and academia. These findings are mostly based on the views and information that stakeholders shared with us.

The UN Global Compact and the WEPs in Turkey
The Global Compact Local Network in Turkey was formally launched in October 2002 by UNDP and the Turkish Confederation of Employers Association (TISK). In 2012, the network attained formal status, and a Secretariat was jointly established by The Turkish Business and Industry Association (TUSIAD) and TISK. The network is currently Turkey’s largest and most inclusive sustainability platform with 303 participating companies. The Turkish LN’s governance structure consists of a multi-stakeholder board of 16 members, which include representatives of academia, business, civil society, and labor. It provides ongoing strategic and policy guidance on advancing the ten principles of the Global Compact, in consultation with key observers such as NGOs, cities, public organizations, and the United Nations (UN Global Compact, n.d.a). The funding for the LN comes from voluntary contribution of the signatories to the UN Global Compact and the network currently has four staff members. The Women’s Empowerment Principles were formally launched in Turkey in 2011. Currently, there are 48 WEPs signatories, making Turkey the top 5th country among 56 countries that have launched the WEPs in terms of the number of signatories. Out of the 48 signatories, 12 are small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs).

National Gender Context: Culture, Stereotypes, and Norms
The following section gives an overview of Turkey’s national gender policy and context, and the dominant issues and challenges that the country faces related to achieving gender equality. This discussion provides critical background on how businesses talk about and understand gender equality and the WEPs, and informs how current business practices and policies are created as well as whether they are successful.

National-Level Gender Context
Turkey is a secular upper middle income country, where women achieved equal education opportunities in 1924 and political rights in 1934, ahead of many other countries (General Directorate on the Status of Women, 2008). The government has adopted comprehensive national legislation and joined
international conventions enshrining the principles of equality of rights and opportunities between men and women. It has also made significant progress in tracking gender equity across various domains of public policy and, in part inspired by the ongoing EU accession process, additional policy initiatives are under way.

Recent national measures to promote gender equality in terms of economic opportunities and participation in political life include:

- The National Action Plan on Gender Equality 2008-2013
- The Law on the Equal Opportunities Commission for Women and Men (2009) and the Equal Opportunities Commission in the Turkish Grand National Assembly (2009)
- The National Employment Strategy 2014-2023

However, despite its progress, Turkey's gender equality performance lags behind many developing countries worldwide. This is reflected in some basic development indicators for women. According to the UN data on Human Development Indicators, Turkey’s Gender Inequality Index only ranks 69th out of 151 countries in 2013. For the World Economic Forum’s Gender Gap index, which measures the gap between men and women in terms of economic opportunities, educational attainment, health and political empowerment, it ranked 125th among 142 countries in 2014. The lives of women have not changed much despite these developments and continue to be ruled by patriarchal norms. As one of the interviewees said: “The core of the patriarchal system was never really challenged properly, and the change didn’t really spread beyond the elite class.”

**Gender Inequality at Work and in Politics**

Gender inequalities persist, particularly in terms of economic opportunities and participation in political life and representation (World Bank, 2012). Even though Turkey is the second (11.1 percent) after Norway (13.3 percent) with the number of female executives, the majority of women still have a hard time not only getting well-paid positions but also getting into the labor force (International Labour Organization, 2015; Hausmann, Tyson, Bekhouche, and Zahidi, 2014). There is a “glass door,” as one of the male interviewees called it. Women’s labor force participation rate in Turkey is the lowest among OECD countries, 28.1 percent (United Nations Development Programme, 2014). The share of women legislators, senior officials and managers in the workforce is 10 percent, reflecting a serious gender gap in decision making (United Nations Development Programme, 2014). In addition, there are prejudgments about the kinds of occupations that are considered suitable for women and men, expecting women to take jobs in the service or banking sector, or to become teachers, nurses, and babysitters. “You cannot be a space engineer if you are a female in Turkey,” a female interviewee commented. In addition, the gender pay gap is wide, even in the sectors that employ relatively more women, for instances universities, and this is especially apparent in rural areas. Many factors contribute to low female labor force participation but the rising urbanization and falling agricultural employment are among these as well as women’s is low education level which condemns women to harsh working conditions in the informal sector. Also low wages that are not adequate to pay for childcare and domestic help are contributing to women not entering the work force (World Bank, 2012).
Turkey

Patriarchal Society and Gender Roles

Despite significant progress, Turkey remains a patriarchal society with gender norms that create many obstacles for women in terms of participation in the labor market. Traditional perceptions of women as mothers and caretakers are prevalent throughout society and many interviewees recognized that taking care of children and elderly are mainly women’s work. “The majority of society thinks that a woman is valued as a mother, otherwise – she is not valued that much,” said one of the interviewees. Women in rural areas are expected to get married early, thus, their families put less importance on education. Earning an income is often considered to be solely a man’s responsibility and women often need to get permission from their husbands to work.

The Role of the Turkish Government in Promoting Gender Equality

While the Turkish government is interested in increasing women’s participation in the labor market to grow Turkish economy, it contradictorily promotes traditional roles of women as mothers and the main caretakers at the same time. A number of interviewees referred to the remarks of the current President Recep Erdoğan about his disbelief in gender equality and the responsibility of women to have at least or more than three children. Other officials followed the lead, for instance the Health Minister remarked publicly that women’s only career should be motherhood (Daily News, 2015). Awareness and concerns about this discourse came up in many interviews. Companies admitted their struggles to improve working conditions for women while the government is promoting women’s traditional roles in the society.

Challenges to Work-Life Balance

There is not enough social support from the state to help women manage their work and family lives. Lack of affordable or subsidized child care for young children, inadequate maternity leave, and unequal pay came up in the interviews as some of the main barriers for women to enter and re-enter the workforce. Many women quit working after having a second child under the societal pressure to fulfill their responsibilities as mothers in addition to being unable to cover childcare costs with low salaries. Besides efforts of some large companies to raise awareness among their male employees about their responsibilities as parents, there is little discussion about sharing childcare and household responsibilities. In addition, because women are expected to fulfill their family responsibilities first, some employers might not prefer women due to the perceived difficulties women might experience balancing their caregiving roles with work. The situation is more acute in rural areas, which is reflected in the lower numbers of labor participation among women outside of the urban centers. While the government is currently working on a law to give rights to working women to have six months of paid maternity leave and a shorter working week with a full pay following the leave, the enforcement will remain a challenge, as one of the female interviewees said.

Violence against Women

The patriarchal mindset and norms lead to financial dependency of women on men and leave women unprotected against discrimination and domestic violence. Sabanci University conducted a survey with 90 companies and found that 75 percent of working women are subject to violence, but they are not
always aware of it or define it as such. Crimes like honor killings exist even today. It is also considered unsafe for a woman to travel alone because she might be harassed or attacked, according to one of the interviewees. Many companies and organizations recognize that violence against women is an issue that affects women’s performance at work and try to find the solutions to address domestic violence.

**Business Environment: Policies, Culture, and Attitudes**

The business environment for gender equality varies significantly from large multinational companies to SMEs, and from large cities like Istanbul to rural areas. While large companies, especially multinational corporations, are generally more aware of gender issues there seems to be less inclusion of these aspects among smaller companies. In all of the companies interviewed, certain policies are in place to promote gender equality within and beyond the corporation. Internal efforts are related to hiring, training, promotion, compensation and other human resources policies, but efforts to influence women’s lives in the community and society often take the form of philanthropy projects. While some policies target women specifically, benefits generally apply to all employees. Generally human resources departments or corporate social responsibility (CSR) departments were in charge of gender related issues and in rare cases, they fall under the responsibility of the corporate communications department. Interestingly, our interviewees in these positions were predominantly women. Below is a sample of issues that business policies seek to address.

❖ **Child Care:** In Turkey, providing child care services is considered primarily to be the responsibility of the government, but businesses, especially large corporations, are trying to contribute in this regard. Most of the companies interviewed acknowledged the lack of public or affordable child care as the main hindrance for women to remain in the workforce. There are different policies in place to address the problem and facilitate employees’ work-life balance. Most of the policies take the form of flexible working hours, take vaccination days off during school year, or providing female employees the opportunity to work from home until their child reaches a certain age. However, interviewees also acknowledge that child care policies are often limited to white-collar workers due to the limited capacity to extend such benefits to the large number of blue-collar workers. Only a very few companies addressed the problem by directly providing child care services. A leading company in the pipe and steel industry, for instance, opened child care facilities in ten industrial zones in which their factories are located. These child care facilities are for children between birth and six years of age and are free of charge. Mothers working at the factories can send their children to the facilities, visit them during the lunch break and pick them up after work. For employees, both men and women, working outside of the industrial zones, the company provides subsidies for childcare.
Female Leadership and Representation: Turkey is one of the top countries in the world in terms of the number of women in boardrooms (The ILO 2014; Hausmann, Tyson, Bekhouche, and Zahidi, 2014), but female representation decreases significantly in mid- to low-level positions and from the white-collar to blue-collar line of work. In general, female representation is higher in companies that are in sectors that traditionally employ women, for instance the finance sector, textile sector, and academia. Although not all the interviewed companies have detailed gender-segregated data, all stressed the importance of having more women at the different levels of the companies. For service industries and light manufacturing industries, the management seems to be more interested in increasing female representation in mid to high-level positions, but for male-dominated industries, the focus is on low-level positions and blue-collar workers. Companies in the traditionally male-dominated industries such as energy, manufacturing and distribution stressed the need to attract more female candidates in the hiring process in particular. While most of the companies describe their policies as “gender neutral” or “gender equal” and avoid giving an impression of favoring female job candidates or employees, some companies openly announce that they prefer women over men, if everything else is equal, and initiated proactive measures to increase the proportion of female job applicants.

Mentoring Women Entrepreneurs: The interviews suggest that Turkish businesses are also taking measures to encourage female entrepreneurs. These companies stressed the role of women in a country’s economy and the need to better engage women in the economic life. A leading bank provides tailored financial services for women-owned or women-managed SMEs. It also partners with NGOs, universities and other financial institutions to organize seminars in an effort to provide information and know-how that female entrepreneurs need in addition to financial services. However, it seems that such policies are relatively limited to companies in the service sector, especially the finance industry.

Violence against Women: Although domestic violence and violence against women were mentioned frequently in the interviews, only a few companies talked about policies addressing this issue. This is probably due to the overall environment of a patriarchal society and the complexity of domestic violence. One company that is widely considered as a leader in terms of gender equality specifically mentioned that it did not know how to better help its employees if they encounter domestic violence. For the companies that have policies related to this issue, the interventions often take the form of training and awareness raising. A major telecommunication company, recognizing the large number of domestic violence cases where women are killed is partnering with the Turkish government on a project to raise awareness with the objective of stopping violence against women.

“We will prefer a woman to a man, if everything else is equal”
- Head of Communications at a cargo company
**Changing the Traditional Perception of Gender Roles:** Some businesses are making efforts to change the traditional perception of gender roles through training programs provided to the employees and their family members. These companies believe that by influencing people associated with the company, they can slowly but gradually generate effects in the society. A leading cargo company collaborated with 25 universities to provide female family members of the employees with trainings on personal happiness, financial literacy, etc. The education programs often last for a day, with pickup and nursery services provided. Interviewees also stressed the need to involve men in the conversation and tried to encourage their male employees to take up more family responsibilities with flexible working hour policies. However, in general, there were no educational programs targeting male employees specifically, which could be an area for future efforts to focus on. While most of the companies try to educate their employees about gender equality through voluntary attendance of training programs, one company went a step further by requiring all of its employees to accept the company’s equality code before starting to work for the company. “You need to accept the code even if you do not believe in it,” noted the CSR director of the group. Although the policy may seem stiff, it shows the group’s commitment and could raise awareness about the importance of gender equality at least among some of its employees.

**WEPs: Motivations, Implementation, Challenges, and Recommendations**

As of now, three quarters of the WEPs signatories in Turkey are large companies or companies with multinational businesses and a quarter are SMEs. The signatories are already well aware of corporate social responsibility and have been implementing HR policies or initiating philanthropy projects related to gender equality prior to joining the WEPs. In addition to the WEPs, a number of companies are also a part of other national or international gender initiatives, for instance the “Gender Parity Task Force” led by the Ministry of Family and Social Policies or the “Gender Equality Model” certificate program by KAGIDER.

“*We support everything in terms of women’s empowerment*”

- Senior Specialist in CSR at a pipe and steel company

**Motivations**

The motivations to sign onto the WEPs differ across the interviewed companies but in general they fall into four categories.

- **Leadership’s belief in gender equality:** Almost all interviewees identified their leadership’s belief in gender equality as the big driver for joining the WEPs. “It is a top down issue. It depends on the way the leader perceives the world,” noted one company representative. Many
of the interviewed WEPs signatories have a female top leader, for instance, at the time of the field research there was only one SME among the WEPs signatories; the founder and CEO of this company is a woman who has been active on gender issues for nearly two decades. Interviewees also pointed out that support from the top leader greatly facilitates the implementation of gender equality initiatives, as it helps department responsible for gender issues to secure cooperation and support from other departments within the company to get things done.

- **Formalizing existing efforts:** As mentioned, the WEPs signatories in Turkey are, in general, already making efforts to advance gender equality before signing on. These companies value the WEPs as an opportunity to formalize existing efforts and check what they are lacking. They appreciate the fact that the principles are comprehensive and cover almost all aspects of gender equality that a business could work on. “WEPs helped us categorize our work, connect with other companies and served as the benchmark,” noted a representative of a leading retail group.

- **Showcasing commitment:** Another common motivation for choosing to join the WEPs is that they are a UN initiative that is respected and recognized internationally. These signatories believe that the WEPs offer them a label and a brand name that could demonstrate their commitment to gender equality. “To explain to people in your company, you need a label. WEPs is a label for us,” remarked one company. “We need an internationally approved direction, which is the UN approved agenda. It shows that we have the sense of responsibility to be a role model for Turkish businesses,” noted another company.

- **Visibility opportunities:** Many signatories also value the visibility opportunity that the WEPs bring and the opportunity to participate in local and international conferences, either as attendees or as speakers. “One of the biggest achievements of the UN Global Compact in Turkey was to organize a signing ceremony witnessed by Kofi Annan. “It was the time when the UN Global Compact started to work in Turkey and gained all this pool of people,” remarked one interviewee. This March, the Local Network initiated the “Borsa Istanbul Ring the Bell for Equality” outreach campaign which included an event where signatory companies were given the opportunity to stand side by side with the high level officials from the UN. The company names were announced and the representatives rang the bell for the Borsa Istanbul Stock Exchange together. The visibility opportunity the event offered raised companies’ awareness and motivation to become a signatory.

### Strategic Framing

The interviewees use the business case and human rights as two predominant ways to frame the WEPs. When asked about the need to promote the WEPs in Turkey, they made reference to the low female labor force participation rate and talked about the implications on the Turkish economy with half the
Turkey

population not participating actively in the labor force. Interviewees also described women as responsible and productive workers and decision makers who could add value and bring long term prosperity for the company. “We believe that increasing the share of women at the decision-making level in the company will increase the sustainability of our business,” one company representative noted. A number of interviewees stressed that empowering women is not only a gender issue but also a human rights issue, and that governments and businesses should strive to promote gender equality as it reflects the government or company’s commitment to basic human rights. “I always say before woman’s right, it is human rights. If a country’s picture is not good in gender equality, then there must be some problems with human equality too,” noted the founder and CEO of a textile company. Interviewees pointed out that feminism is still considered a bad thing by the larger population in Turkey and is widely misunderstood as aggressive. So when promoting the WEPs, terminology that may evoke people’s association of feminism should be avoided.

Implementation

The implementation of the WEPs varies a lot across companies. For the most active signatories, policies are in place to address all seven principles but for those less active or less experienced, efforts are made to address just two or three principles. The Local Network believes that most of the Turkish signatories are focusing on the first four principles.

When asked which of the principles companies find the hardest to implement, most interviewees identified Principal 5 - Implementing enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practices that empower women, and the supply chain - as the hardest to implement. “Principle 5 is hard because it is more externally affected. It is closely related to the industry’s ecosystem. For instance, for our subsidiaries in the energy sector, it is very hard to find a female owned supplier of relevant machinery,” said a HR specialist and reflected the opinion of many interviewees. Only one interviewed company had concrete plans to engage other companies in the supply chain to address CSR issues including gender equality. One of Turkey’s largest retail groups initiated a social compliance program for its suppliers on anti-discrimination, equality, working conditions, and gender-separated data. It also has a specific program for women suppliers in cooperation with the International Finance Corporation, in addition to being very active in the LN’s Women’s Empowerment Working Group. It is working closely with other signatories to create a gender equality handbook that details how to engage suppliers and once completed, the handbook will serve as a guide for the companies to better empower women through the supply chain.

Principle 7 - Measure and publicly report on progress to achieve gender equality - is another principle that interviewees found hard to implement. “It is difficult to get all this data in terms of gender. It is just technically infeasible for us as we have so many employees in so many subsidiary companies,” noted one interviewee. Overall, the level of monitoring and evaluation varies significantly across companies. A few companies have detailed gender segregated data on new recruits, promotion, training and employee composition at different levels of positions and lines of work and release this data through annual sustainability report. Other companies, however, do not yet have a system in place to gather data needed for the monitoring and evaluation principle of the WEPs.
Employee Engagement

Employee engagement also differs across companies. Some companies notify their employees about the signing of the WEPs through open letters or internal CSR circulations. A few others established working groups that include different departments within the company to keep them informed about the steps the company is taking to promote gender equality. Many companies engage their employees through gender training or education, as discussed in the previous sections. A few companies went a step further to involve employees directly in the promotion of gender equality for instance by volunteering in the community. At a leading pipe and steel company employees are encouraged to choose voluntary work that interest them and once approved, they can have three business days off each year to work for their cause. The company also has a project that involves all its subsidiary companies, where employees volunteer to become mentors of female graduates from disadvantaged groups to help them find jobs and adjust to the labor market. In general companies seem to be trying to engage their employees on gender issues and the employees also know about their company’s commitment to gender equality but not necessarily the WEPs in specific.

What the WEPs Bring

Besides the opportunity to integrate existing efforts, showcase commitment and attend international or local conferences, the biggest benefit that the WEPs bring, according to many interviewees, is the opportunity to network. In 2014, the Local Network launched the Women’s Empowerment Working Group and invited businesses, academia, women’s rights organizations and UN agencies to join. Members of the Working Group meet periodically, share experiences and work together to foster the national promotion of the WEPs. Most of the interviewees, who are members of the working group, spoke highly of the networking opportunities and believe that by learning from each other, they could better implement the principles in their own companies. (Detailed information on the working group can be found in the case study at the end of this section).

Challenges and Recommendations

Interviewees pointed out some challenges in their efforts to promote gender equality within the companies and their concerns on gender equality in Turkey in general. They also gave recommendations to the UN Global Compact and the LN to better encourage the adoption and implementation of the WEPs.

❖ Male-Dominated Industries: Interviewees identified industrial differences as a big challenge, saying for example that increasing female representation is a lot more difficult for companies in male-dominated industries. Some companies explained that even though they would like to employ more women, there are simply not enough female candidates applying for such line of work. Legal restriction is another obstacle and companies are prohibited to hire women for jobs that are categorized as arduous and dangerous, such as in the mining and construction fields. While acknowledging that the external constraints are real and hard to change, interviewees do feel that more proactive measures in hiring could partly improve the situation. A leading cargo company in Turkey achieved a rapid increase in the proportion of female employees through
Turkey

what it described as “positive gender discrimination” human resource policies. If there is a male and a female candidate for a specific job and they are equally qualified, the company would hire the woman. Additionally, in order to attract more female candidates and increase the number of female employees in jobs that involve heavy labor, the company initiated the Mandatory Female Recruitment Quota, which includes giving out cash bonus to employees who referred a female candidate that got hired. To encourage managers to do this vigorously the mandatory quota is a part of the managers’ performance targets that they are evaluated by at the end of the year.

❖ **Small and Medium Sized Enterprises:** Another challenge is related to the composition of the Turkish economy. Many interviewees expressed the concern that a very few SMEs are interested in promoting gender equality in Turkey. Although many large companies are aware of women’s issues and support women, the majority of the Turkish economy is composed of SMEs. According to the “2014 Small Business Act for Europe Fact Sheet” compiled by the European Commission, Turkish SMEs account for 99.9 percent of all businesses, provide most jobs 76 percent, and produce 53 percent of the value added in the whole economy (European Commission, 2014). Interviewees expressed that for the SMEs, survival is a concern more imminent than gender equality or other corporate social responsibility issues. In addition, a lot of the SMEs in Turkey are family owned business that do not have HR policies or HR mentality. The problem of engaging SMEs not only faces the WEPs but other initiatives such as the *Gender Equality Model* by KAGIDER.

Interviewees emphasized the need to make the business case specifically for the SMEs. For instance, if WEPs signatories in the finance sector could, beside other criteria, include gender equality when assessing whether to providing loans to SMEs or the terms and conditions of the loans, it will be an incentive for the SMEs to be more sensitive about gender issues. It will also be useful for the the UN Global Compact and the LNs to collect examples from the global SMEs signatories that showcase how they benefited from being more gender equal in order to approach SMEs with these real world examples. Another solution is to create role models and use media to promote their image and efforts. Interviewees pointed out that many SMEs look up to famous companies and are more likely to follow the lead if the big companies commit to gender equality. “People believe what they see. Give examples! Put a lot of resources on a few companies and make them the spokespersons. Speakers should have lived through their experiences to be convincing,” noted the representative of the Global Compact Local Network in Turkey. Seeing the publicity opportunities these role models get, SMEs will also be more motivated to take on the WEPs.

❖ **Terminology and Localization of the Principles:** Interviewees pointed out that feminism is still considered a bad thing by the larger population in Turkey and there is a general lack of understanding of gender issues. One of the problems that the Local Network in Turkey and the Women’s Empowerment Working Group encountered, when promoting the WEPs, is how to properly convey the right message. As a female CSR manager of a major automobile company, said, “[the problem] is the terminology. Feminist terminology is vague, it is closed in itself. You
have to be a part of the group to understand that.” Interviewees pointed out that while raising the awareness and reducing the bias within the society is important, the translation of the WEPs materials that takes into consideration the specifics of local context is also vital both for appealing to more companies and for promoting better understanding and implementation among the signatories. When translating the WEPs booklet, the LN encountered a problem with translation because some concepts and terminologies used in the WEPs do not exist in Turkey. Interviewees also pointed out the need to localize the principles as the country context, business environment, and people’s understanding of certain issues, for instance, career development, is different. The Women’s Empowerment Working Group is working on the booklet and localizing the WEPs using local examples to provide guidance for companies to take next steps in terms of implementation.

❖ **Limited Resources to the LN:** Many interviewees pointed out that the LN lacks personnel and resources. In order to step up the uptake and implementation of WEPs, the LN needs more staff to talk to companies and more resources to assist the signatories. “If the local network is strong and has materials, kits, learning packages, and help to match companies with companies, it will make a difference,” noted one company representative. The interviewees also called for more guidance to new signatories from the UN Global Compact in terms of next steps, possibly in the form of transformative practices and detailed examples from other signatories in countries with similar context. The examples should include not only what other companies do but also how they do it, as well as conditions, challenges, statistics, and detailed steps. The interviewees believe that more resources to the LN from the UN Global Compact and more examples of the global transformative practices will facilitate both the adoption and implementation of the WEPs.
# Global Compact Turkey Women’s Empowerment Working Group

The Women’s Empowerment Working Group was launched by the Local Network in Turkey in May 2014. It is overseen and coordinated by the Turkish Confederation of Employer Associations (TISK), and is financially and technically supported by UNFPA and UN Women.

**Who can join?** Unlike the WEPs that are only open to the private sector, representatives from companies, NGOs, academia, UN organizations, and the government can join the Working Group. It has over 50 members as of May 2015.

**What is its structure?** The Working Group has six subgroups: the Technical Team, the Communications Team, the Capacity Development Team, the Mentorship and Counseling Team, the WEPs Implementation Guide Preparation Team, and the Training Materials Preparation Team. Each subgroup has different responsibilities; for example, the Training Materials Preparation Team prepares materials for capacity development to existing and potential WEPs signatories. Members volunteer to join subgroups that interest them and contribute to the responsibilities of the subgroup.

**What does the Working Group do?** The Working Group seeks to provide a platform for members to communicate and learn from each other, sharing best practices on women’s empowerment. It also seeks to contribute to the nationwide promotion of the WEPs. Members of the Working Group meet at least twice a year. During the meetings, they network with each other, brainstorm on how to better promote the WEPs in Turkey, and develop next steps and assign tasks for subgroups.

**What does it bring to the WEPs?** The Working Group provides a platform for multi-stakeholder dialogue and serves as a grid to connect relevant stakeholders working on gender issues in Turkey. Since the Working Group is open to all stakeholders, it brings together resources, guidance, and expertise from stakeholders such as UN agencies and women’s rights NGOs. These stakeholders have the expertise to support WEPs signatories in their goals towards gender equality. The Working Group also creates synergy; for instance, being a member of the Working Group, KAGİDER is also promoting the WEPs among its 200 members while promoting its own initiatives. Most importantly, through the Working Group, different stakeholders are mobilized and can contribute their ideas and expertise. Since the LN only has limited staff, the Working Group brings personnel and resources that the LN needs to better promote and implement the WEPs.
Egypt

Summary

In March 2015, the team conducted 18 interviews and meetings with various stakeholders in Cairo to gain a better understanding of Egypt’s society, culture, gender norms and context, as well as business experience related to gender equality and the Women’s Empowerment Principles. Stakeholders included four companies that have signed on to the WEPs, and five additional companies that are a part of the UN Global Compact. Other stakeholders included Global Compact Local Network representatives, UN Women, government agencies, a women’s rights NGO, two business organizations and a university. Out of 25 total informants from these organizations, all except for one were women. These findings are mostly based on the information and views that stakeholders shared.

The UN Global Compact and the WEPs in Egypt

The Global Compact Local Network in Egypt was established in 2004. It is currently hosted by the Egyptian Corporate Responsibility Center which has the mission to raise awareness, build commitment, and promote engagement for CSR and sustainable business practices. As a part of this effort the organization promotes the Global Compact and its sub-platforms as well as other initiatives such as the ISO 26000 Social Responsibility Standard, Principles for Responsible Investment, and the Equator Principles. The organization receives financial assistance from UNDP and others. To date, 99 companies are Global Compact signatories and seven are WEPs signatories.

National Gender Context: Culture, Stereotypes, and Norms

The following section gives an overview of Egypt’s national gender context, as well as background on the major issues, debates, and challenges related to the efforts towards gender equality. This discussion provides a background on how businesses talk about and understand gender equality and the WEPs, and informs how current business practices and policies are created, and whether they are successful.

National-Level Gender Context

Although Egyptian women have seen some progress pertaining to women’s rights and empowerment in the last few decades, there is still a long way to go when it comes to economic empowerment. In 2014 Egypt ranked 129th out of 142 countries in the Gender Gap Report by the World Economic Forum, which measures the gap between men and women in terms of economic opportunities, educational attainment, health and political empowerment. Fertility rate has dropped significantly from 4.4 children per woman in 1990 to 2.8 children in 2013, while adolescent fertility rate has also decreased dramatically since 1980 and shows a steady, continuous decline (World Bank, n.d.). Egyptian women are also closing in on the education gap.
Ratio of female to male (%)  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>1980</th>
<th>2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary Education</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Education</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary Education</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: World Bank, n.d.)

However, the numbers on women’s participation in the labor market are not as promising. Women’s labor force participation in Egypt is only 23 percent compared to 74 percent for men. Correspondingly, the unemployment rate for women in recent years has consistently been above 25 percent while men’s unemployment rate is below 10 percent. Statistics show that women with tertiary education are much more likely to hold a job than women with primary education - and the gap between those two groups is much larger than between the corresponding groups of men (World Bank, n.d.). However, what may be lacking in this picture is the fact that many Egyptian women, particularly those from lower education and income backgrounds, work in the informal sector, which is not necessarily documented in official numbers.

**Woman, Mother, Employee**

“You find two types of women. One who neglects her work and the other who neglects her family. Finding someone in between is hard.”  
-A female supervisor

The sentiment expressed above was a common thread in all the interviews. Helping women to reconcile their roles as mothers on the one hand and as employees on the other seems to be one of the main challenges that Egyptian women face. A young woman pointed out that it may be detrimental to women to put so much pressure on them and ask them to be “the perfect employee, wife, housekeeper, mother. That is not empowering.” Very few of the interviewees spoke about the roles of fathers when addressing these issues. Taking care of children seems to be the sole responsibility of women, and they need to work out a way to be able to hold a job while also having a family. To help women reconcile their reproductive roles and working duties, the Egyptian government has passed laws relating to maternity. These laws give women three months of fully paid maternity leave, up to two years of unpaid leave and a one hour breastfeeding break per day during the first year after a child is born. However, a woman can only use these benefits twice if she works in the private sector and three times if she works in the public sector (USAID, 2009).

**Discrimination in Hiring and Promotion**

Because the parental leave benefits are framed as women specific they sometimes cause women to be discriminated against, specifically when it comes to hiring and promotion. This is partly because
employers perceive women as being higher-cost employees to whom they have to provide more benefits than their male counterparts. A representative from a women's grassroots organization said it was common in the private sector that “some managers don’t want to hire women who are in the age bracket of giving birth or getting married. ... For them it is a burden and more cost to pay someone who may quit, or pay for childcare, so they try to avoid this age bracket.” Concluding that if recruiters have the choice between hiring a man or a woman they would choose the man. A large company provided their statistics showing that 800 out of 925 female employees are over 40 years old, demonstrating this trend of preferring women past childbearing age. A female interviewee even suggested that the more rights women have in the workplace, the harder it will be for them to find a job: “The laws are... inhibiting employers. There is generous maternity benefit. You have to pay full salaries the whole period. The employer wants to make profit and thus thinks twice about hiring women, especially young women.” One interviewee proposed a solution to this problem by entitling men to the same rights. By doing so, it would be as much a ‘risk’ to the employer to hire men. However, other informants were skeptical that such a policy would work and did not believe that men would make use of these rights.

When women come back from maternity leave they are entitled to their position, however they are now behind their male peers in terms of promotion: “When women are on a leave without pay to care for kids they don’t get the same promotions. Then you come back and start from where you stopped. This is really a problem for many of us,” said a female leader from a public company. It is thus clear that stronger policies and laws are needed, coupled with a change in attitudes, so that working mothers will have equal opportunities and similar outcomes in the labor market as working fathers.

Work-Life Balance

Access to childcare is a serious barrier for many women to enter the workforce. Childcare in Egypt is scarce, often very expensive and of low quality. By law, companies that have more than 100 female employees have to provide nurseries for children under two years old. Numerous interviewees said this law is not working because companies either hire 99 women or simply pay the fine - which is less expensive than providing daycare. One interviewee, a grassroots NGO representative, said they were advocating for a change in the law suggesting that all companies with more than 100 employees, regardless of their gender, should offer nurseries and/or kindergarten.

Women are also experiencing other problems related to their parental roles, such as not being able to stay until late evening – which deprives them of overtime pay, leaves them out of decision making and makes them less attractive as staff members. Additionally, transportation is a real challenge both inside and outside of Cairo with women often feeling unsafe and consequently having the added pressure of finding reliable transportation to and from work.

Informal Work

The restrictions that women face coupled with their roles as mothers doesn’t give them much space to enter the formal workforce. An interviewee explained that if women can’t get out of their homes, they try to organize their economic activities around them. This allows them to take care of their families while also generating some income. As previously mentioned, many more women do informal or
irregular work than those that are employed in the formal sector. As the informal sector is not regulated, women wage workers there do face more blatant discrimination in terms of salaries.

**Gender Barriers**

Egyptian women also face many obstacles in the labor market that are not necessarily linked to their role as mothers but are still gendered problems that need to be addressed.

**Stereotypes at Work**

Many interviewees tried to make the case that women were an asset to the workforce by focusing on qualities that they believe are in women’s nature. Many references were made to women being precise in their work, detail oriented, meticulous, or having nimble fingers. According to our informants, these traits would make them more desirable for jobs such as microbiology, strawberry packing or where high level of cleanliness is required. These views seem to express the belief that women are inherently different from men and should be valued as such, without questioning if these ideas are actually counterproductive. Some supervisors did not see this kind of stereotyping as discriminatory and said that they would, for instance, still advertise jobs only for men as drivers as it is not traditional and not in the nature of women to do that kind of job.

Concerns were conveyed about women having internalized feelings of inferiority against men, believing that men deserve higher pay and more promotions. Equally men were said tending to disrespect women’s opinions and perspectives and think they can always do better than them. One representative even gave examples of men leaving their departments when women became managers. She said the company had to offer training for men who were in the position of having a female supervisor so that they would learn how to deal with the situation without frustration.

**Restrictions for Female Workers**

> “You can have a very good petroleum engineer, a woman, but then they would never promote them or give them positions to go to the rink because they would think that culturally her parents would not allow her to go because it is a male-dominated sector”

- A representative of an international organization

Interviewees shared many stories of restrictions on women’s physical movement by their families or more broadly by society. Women have to negotiate their space and self-determination regardless of whether they are mothers or single, childless women. An interviewee gave an example of a father coming to their office saying his daughter, despite her anthropology training, would never be allowed to do fieldwork. Furthermore, in another case the company had to take on extra cost to cover escort to the field by a family member for a female employee. A representative from the oil industry said the situation in Egypt was extremely tough and that she had encountered stories from both national and international colleagues saying it is much harder to do this type of work as a woman in Egypt than
elsewhere in the Middle-East. In fact, Egyptian Labor Law restricts women’s work in industrial establishments to the hours from 7:00am to 7:00pm, although his restriction does not apply to those in administrative, supervisory, or technical positions (Lohmann, 2010).

**Sexual Harassment**

Sexual harassment was not mentioned in many interviews, but those who did talk about it expressed grave concern over the situation. According to these interviewees, sexual harassment is happening in all public spaces, both on the streets and in the workplace. One interviewee linked the situation to rising misogyny and women generally being pushed out of the public space. She said that the rhetoric around women’s roles led people to believe that women on the streets are fair game – because of the belief that they don’t belong there. Others, who spoke about the workplace, said there is a huge problem with supervisors harassing female workers. Unfortunately many women in this situation feel that their supervisors are entitled to this kind of behavior and thus do not seek to address the issue. People tend to deal with this issues as cases and there is little discussion about it as a systemic problem that needs to be addressed more broadly.

**Business Environment: Policies, Cultures, and Attitudes**

Both the WEPs signatories and non-signatories alike provided a glimpse into policies, culture, and norms in the workplace in Egypt. The business environment for gender equality varies significantly from large multinational companies to small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), and from large cities like Cairo to rural areas. The following section provides some examples of how companies envision their policies to support gender equality. The internal efforts are related to hiring, training, promotion, compensation, and other human resources policies, while efforts to influence women's lives in the community or the society sometimes take the form of philanthropy projects.

**The Influence of Multinational Companies**

A few of our interviewees work for multinational companies with operations in Egypt. They said that the international perspective of their organizations really affected the culture of the workplace. Some of these companies have relatively more women in leadership because they both seek more deliberately to hire women, as well as having foreign women on rotating or cross postings in Egypt. Multinationals are also known to have more rigorous policies on gender equality and non-discrimination than local companies. An interviewee described how their foreign parent company keeps them in check with strict monitoring on everything from their whistleblowing policy to sustainability to gender equality. However, the multinationals sometimes face challenges, such as a subsidiary that was not able to implement the company’s policy on lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) issues as it would be against the national legislation in Egypt. An interviewee said that some local companies see CSR and gender policies as something relevant for multinationals only and advised to make the WEPs more relatable to local companies.
Differences between Public and Private Sectors

In Egypt there seems to be some divide between work in the public and the private sectors, possibly best demonstrated by two different labor laws applying to each sector. It seems that the public sector in Egypt has a working environment that is more conducive to working women, allowing a larger scale of flexible and shorter working hours, more maternity benefits, and a higher chance of regaining the same position upon return from an extended maternity leave. On the other hand, the public sector is also known to not have the same level of training and capacity as larger private companies do, making it harder for the issue of gender equality to be integrated into the organization. Several interviewees believed that there were more opportunities for women to be empowered in the private sector, partly because of the international exposure.

Examples of Company Policies

When asked about what companies should do to support gender equality, the majority of the interviewees spoke about policies to help women combine their roles as mothers and employees. Flexible working hours and working from home was the most common suggestion, however, few attempts were made to clarify what that would entail in practice. Most interviewees also spoke about making childcare affordable and accessible.

One interviewee also stressed the importance of naming things – meaning that when you start to pay attention, monitor numbers and actually count, for instance, the proportion of women and men in different positions – that is when you can actually start to make changes. She gave an example of herself becoming aware of these things and starting to count, which was when she realized that a board she was on only had 13 percent women. By simply naming this problem and presenting the numbers, she could make an explicit attempt to correct the situation. Through this simple measure, the percentage of women on that board went up to 23 percent.

Some of the companies we spoke to have started implementing some very transformative policies and are working to change the opportunities and roles of women in the workplace from the inside out. The most common policies were those related to the role of women as mothers and workers, but there were many other unique and thoughtful policies as well that are outlined below.

- **Motherhood:** Most companies have internal policies that are additional to the Egyptian labor laws regarding motherhood. Several companies offer flexible working hours for working mothers, including options to come in late, leave early, or spend some time working on the weekend. One of our informants explained how her company was forced to stop offering flexible hours for women a few years back and how that had led to a decrease in their female workforce, underlining how effective these kind of policies can be for women. When it is within their capacity, some companies also offer nurseries and one large company created a “Mother’s Room” for nannies and children to spend the day near the working mother.
Professional Development: Professional development was an important subject that was touched on by many of the interviewees. One company has a feminist CEO that encourages female leadership and intentionally recruits and promotes women. Another interviewee mentioned a newly established internal network of women that has the mission to enhance career development, mentoring, and well-being amongst female employees. Additionally, one company is working towards a new policy on promotion that puts more emphasis on achievement and pays less attention to seniority or years working for the company. The main objective of the policy is to give more opportunities to women for promotion and decrease the effect of maternity leaves on their continued career development.

Work-life Balance: One of the major banks in Egypt said that as a part of their restructuring, they relocated over 200 women to branches closer to their homes so that they could spend more time with their families. They also provide female employees with time off to travel on business trips with their working husbands. While it is beneficial for a woman not to lose her job under these circumstances, this policy also reinforces the role of women as serving her husband, especially as it was not mentioned that men could get similar benefits to travel with working wives. An interesting initiative is being implemented in an agriculture company that gives employees, both women and men, the opportunity to submit a short essay about how gender affects their lives and what they are doing to overcome obstacles. These stories are collected into a journal and distributed among the staff.

Education and Training Opportunities: Training programs mentioned throughout the interviews were diverse. As more women have taken leadership roles in one of the companies interviewed, there has been resistance among men in the company. That is why they now have a training program geared towards men on how to work with female leaders that tackles the issue from a cultural perspective asking questions such as: “Can you imagine your daughter in a leadership position one day?” And, “Can you imagine she will make mistakes sometimes?” On the other hand, a company focusing on sustainable business is putting much emphasis on training and provides basic literacy and writing training to their factory employees as well as reproductive health education to their female staff.

The Importance of a Multi-Stakeholder Approach

While the interviews conducted were mostly about gender equality in the corporate setting and companies’ efforts to accelerate the process, many of the interviewees also acknowledged that the private sector does not operate in a vacuum and that changes need to happen on a larger societal scale. Some of the interviewees mentioned that the labor law in Egypt is different for the private sector and the public sector and emphasized the need to unify and strengthen this legislation. They also talked about the need for these laws to include a gender perspective instead of being framed as only beneficial to women, like providing equal benefits to fathers or changing the nursery law so that companies would have to provide childcare dependent on the total number of employees rather than the total number of
female employees. Interviewees were also mindful that majority of female workers work in the informal sector and thus suggested including informal and irregular workers under the labor law and providing them with social protection, health insurance, and pension. For specific recommendations on what the legislation should or could entail interviewees mentioned provisions that forbid asking about pregnancy or family planning during job interviews. Also, ideas were presented about setting gender quotas for company boards, although some acknowledged that it may be still too early to do that in Egypt: “Take it one step at a time,” a representative from a multilateral organization advised.

Many other potential or actual initiatives were mentioned during the interviews. There is, for instance, a project taking place called Women on Board that brings together diverse stakeholders from academia, international organizations, business organizations, private sector and government to increase the number of women on corporate boards. Activities include training for women on corporate governance, policy analysis, and creation of a database of qualified women. According to the interviewee, the database serves to help people, who claim they are not biased and have the authority to determine who sits on boards, to find women. Then they will not be able to say that they “just can’t find women that are qualified,” she added.

Bilateral organizations such as the German Development Cooperation Agency (GiZ) are supporting projects like Econowin that help companies implement comprehensive policies and initiatives in the workplace to empower women. Also, grassroots organizations are helping women to file complaints about harassment or discrimination at work. Furthermore, most of the informants spoke about awareness raising, change in attitudes and cultural change. It was, however, unclear what specific actions should be taken to initiate these, but possible stakeholders included the school system, business schools, NGOs, government and the private sector. Finally, having role models for women to see how they could succeed in the workplace was emphasized.

**The WEPs: Motivation, Implementation, Challenges, and Recommendations**

**Motivation**

Most of the WEPs signatories in Egypt were motivated to sign on to the WEPs because the platform aligned with what the company was already doing, and the WEPs were an avenue for increased recognition and extended resources. As there are only a few WEPs signatories so far in Egypt, we also asked other companies about their motivations to sign on to various sustainability, CSR and gender equity initiatives to get a better sense of the motivations to do so. Building on their answers, motivations to participate can be categorized into four main areas: combining gender equity as part of an existing vision on corporate responsibility, gaining access to international recognition and transformative practices, company leadership desires change, and utilizing the benefits these platforms provide.

- **Alignment with company vision and values**: One of the most common motivations to join the WEPs and other sustainability/gender equity platforms was the alignment with current company
policies and activities. “Because we are already practicing it,” said a representative of a development consulting firm, when asked about their motivation for becoming a Global Compact signatory. Often times these platforms are seen as a complement to a company’s diversity and/or sustainability policies. As an examples, a company in the oil industry already has diversity and inclusiveness principles that focus heavily on gender and women’s empowerment in business. “It is something that is already in the culture,” said their representative. Although introducing companies such as this one to the WEPs ideally helps form stronger, more organized policies, it also needs to be coupled with outreach to companies who are not yet on board with gender-specific and/or non-discrimination policies.

- **International recognition and practices:** Companies understand that with globalization come certain standards for transformative practices. A few companies said their reason for signing on to the WEPs and other CSR platforms was that doing so brought international recognition of their efforts. A pharmaceutical company representative said that they became a UN Global Compact member as a part of their overall re-branding and restructuring of the company. They wanted to become a trusted partner for local and international stakeholders by showing their dedication to international best practices.

  Globalization also means that multinational companies are making their way to emerging markets and developing nations, and Egypt is no exception to this. Multinationals have certain standards that they abide by and often these include standards on sustainability and non-discrimination. Furthermore, a Global Compact Local Network representative added that for local companies, joining these platforms increases their visibility in the international sphere and increases chances for outside investment and development, while allowing like-minded companies to engage in a meaningful conversation about gender equality issues.

- **Opportunities for support, training, and networking:** Joining platforms like the WEPs gives access to networks and resources that many companies find appealing and encourages them to join. The findings suggest that companies need help understanding their internal, country, and international policies and labor practices regarding gender equality. They want assistance to strategize ways to implement newly created policies whether they regard gender equity, sustainability, or CSR. A representative of one of the largest banks in Egypt, found that access to a consultant, who helped assess the company’s internal CSR activities and company policies, was the main motivator for signing on to both the Equator Principles and the UN Global Compact. Whether it is access to a network of like-minded businesses, a facilitator, or access to knowledge, there are many attractive benefits for companies to sign on to the WEPs.

- **Champions for gender equality:** Finally, having a leadership within the company that supports and champions gender equality is a clear motivator to sign on to and implement the WEPs. The champions we came across were often female leaders of companies where it seem to be a natural fit for them to support gender equality; leaders of local companies that had a special
focus on sustainability; and leaders of multinationals that had already adopted the policies and cultures of their holding companies.

Promotion

Before the WEPs were launched, the UN Women country office in Egypt was engaging with the private sector through the promotion of the Gender Equity Seal (GES) - a program that supports companies’ self-assessments and making of action plans towards improved gender equality in the workplace. When the WEPs came into existence in 2010 the companies that were already participating in the GES were offered to become the first signatories of the WEPs in Egypt. Since then, activities towards promotion have been limited but have been picking up in the last few months with increased cooperation between UN Women and the Global Compact Local Network in Egypt. The organizations are now building on the network of the LN encouraging the UN Global Compact signatories to adopt the WEPs.

The two sponsor organizations, UN Women and the Global Compact Local Network are interested in doing a more organized outreach to companies both in terms of promoting the WEPs to get more signatories as well as to help them implement the principles successfully. Currently, the organizations have resources broadly for the Global Compact and Women’s Economic Empowerment projects respectively but are lacking dedicated resources for the WEPs specifically. Having specific funding would help in dedicating time to outreach activities, such as meetings with company representatives, and in providing networking or training opportunities to companies that have already joined.

Framing Strategies and Recommendations

All of our interviews resulted with some fantastic recommendations from the people who are directly and indirectly involved in gender equity work in Egypt. Most strategies and recommendations fell under one of four categories: making the business case, making the sustainability case/incorporating with current strategy, focusing on international transformative practices, and a national development lens. Remaining strategies that were very interesting but were not able to be categorized are listed under “other recommendations and strategies.” The important takeaway here is that the “selling” strategy must be catered to each targeted company. That is, some companies will need a business case, some will need a sustainability case, and so forth.

- The Business Case: Most interviewees mentioned the ‘business case’ for gender equality as the most compelling strategy to get businesses on board. However, presenting evidence to back up the business case was in overwhelming demand - specifically something that might be particularly relevant in the local context. According to an academic interviewed, there have been some indications that the business case may not be as strong in every context as has been shown in many Western countries citing a research from Malaysia showing that increased
number of women on boards did not bring the expected economic gain. She continued by caution too much reliance on the business case:

"I don’t particularly favor the correlation between women in leadership positions and the bottom line. I hate the word business case. Because what if it doesn't improve your bottom line? Tax evasion would improve your bottom line so for me it is a value based choice. So if a company is engaging in social responsibility it has made a value based decision."

- **International Practices:** Linking the WEPs to international transformative practices is something that some companies are interested in. A company representative said she is interested in being up to date on international standards for both the public and private sector and the WEPs are helping her in that regard.

- **National Development:** One recommendation was very relevant to Egypt, a country that is experiencing a lot of political and economic volatility. A couple of the interviewees suggested looking at gender equality as a part of national development, saying that utilizing the talents of women and including them in the workforce would be beneficial to the country’s economy. However, it is necessary to consider that gender equity may not be the number one priority in a post-revolutionary economy even though it could have significant positive economic impacts.

- **Sustainability Case and Integrating Existing Policies:** Many people highly recommended including the promotion of the WEPs as part of a larger framework. One interviewee suggested that the WEPs, rather than being promoted as its own entity, should be introduced as part of the UN Global Compact framework. Once companies feel that they are already engaging in the necessary work, it will not be a challenge to make them signatories.

- **Other Recommendations:** Some interviewees gave recommendations on getting groups of people or industries together. One bank representative brought in the idea of focus groups within industries, such as financial services. She was convinced that if one industry gets together, for a cause, they will be successful. Adding that, it would be good to learn from the experiences of others. There was also an emphasis among interviewees on promoting success stories of women in the workplace and also including the stories women who are represented in sectors that are uncommon for women.

**Implementation**

The biggest challenge encountered among the companies and organizations interviewed was a lack of knowledge on what to do after the WEPs have been signed. That is, the WEPs are considered to be rather vague by many of the companies, and it is unclear how they will directly translate into company
practices. Additionally, some signatories find it difficult to conceptualize the implementation of Principle 5 on enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practices that empower women.

One of the most important aspects of organizational and systemic change such as this is a strong interest from the company leadership. That is, C-level employees must be on board and promote these changes in order for them to be fully integrated into companies. Feminist CEOs and heads of department who promote gender equality can help facilitate both implementation of platforms such as the WEPs as well as put their companies on the radar to be targeted by the WEPs. A UN Women representative said that “as long as it is just a commitment, it will be dangerous to add a lot of signatories.” Since the WEPs are not a platform for monitoring, there is a common concern among stakeholders that gaining too many signatories at once could result in mediocre implementation of the principles which, ultimately, could affect the legitimacy of the WEPs as a whole.

Strategies and Recommendations

Company representatives that were interviewed gave some interesting and thoughtful ideas on how companies could better implement the WEPs and what would be needed to do so.

- **Monitoring and Guidelines:** One company in particular was very interested in monitoring and evaluation. This was mostly because there was a push coming from their parent company to keep diligent progress records. However, most interviewees did not seem to be too concerned with monitoring and believed there were other priorities before that.

- **Self-Assessments and Audits:** This recommendation comes as an inspiration from several other sustainability and gender equity platforms such as ISO and the Gender Equity Seal. Self-assessments are recommended because companies know their own operations best and can identify their own gaps effectively. Additionally, considering the amount of capacity between the UN Global Compact and UN Women, a self-assessment is more practical than an external assessment. One interviewee suggests that the UN Women can host the audits after a company self-assesses. Part of the assessments should include gender disaggregated data, which some of the companies interviewed already have.

- **Industry-Specific Groups:** As previously mentioned, working within an industry can be a great way to get like-minded individuals together to work toward a common goal. A representative from a large Egyptian bank explained that the Federation of Egyptian Banks worked together to vote on a large project where each member contributed two percent of their annual budget.
Global Recommendations

Through an analysis of global and local findings, our team has generated a set of recommendations to strengthen the promotion, adoption, and implementation of the WEPs. By building on the WEPs’ key strengths, and by addressing certain key challenges, the UN Global Compact and WEPs Secretariat can more effectively support companies and Global Compact Local Networks to advance gender equality and women’s empowerment at all levels of business.

1. Capitalize on existing resources and networks of the United Nations and the UN Global Compact

The United Nations and the UN Global Compact provide a vast, sophisticated network of resources and credibility that can effectively catalyze the WEPs further into the business world. Global Compact Local Networks have the opportunity to optimize existing UN resources, and take advantage of the access to experts and training through the UN system. The WEPs alone are an additional platform to bring companies together to make change in their respective companies, industries, or regions. For companies, the WEPs bring the credibility of the UN, and the automatic international recognition.

The UN Global Compact & WEPs Secretariat should:

- Encourage greater collaboration between the Local Networks and other local UN offices, starting with country offices of UN Women and UNDP.

- Foster deeper networks and communities of practice amongst WEPs signatories at the local, regional, and global levels. Facilitate the creation of local and regional multi-stakeholder initiatives that promote women’s empowerment using the WEPs as a platform, such as the Women’s Empowerment Working Group in Turkey. Identify focal points at LNs who work specifically on promoting the WEPs, taking into account capacity constraints. Encourage collaboration between focal points from different LNs in matters that relate to the WEPs.

- Enhance communication between LNs and headquarters on availability of resources. Gather information and resources, including best practices, guides on implementation, translated materials, etc., into a cloud service to which all the LNs have access to. This would facilitate the sharing of information and collaboration between LNs, as well as prevent overlap in their efforts.

- Clarify the responsibilities of all stakeholders in promoting the WEPs. Clearly communicate what responsibilities the WEPs Secretariat can undertake, and the expected role of the Local Networks in promoting the adoption and supporting the implementation of the WEPs.
Global Recommendations

- Package resources in a more clear and digestible manner for LNs and the WEPs signatories. Simplify the organization of existing resources on the website and other platforms to ensure easier access for LNs and companies to the WEPs materials and supporting documents.

2. Make and promote the business case for gender equality at the local levels

The WEPs provide a compelling narrative and a unified vision for companies. They resonate with companies through the business case for gender equality, and their flexible nature allows for local adaptation and contextualization. The business case is a strong motivator for companies to adopt the WEPs and promote gender equality.

*The UN Global Compact & WEPs Secretariat should:*

- Channel support towards companies, networks, or researchers who can substantiate and promote the business case at local levels.
- Drive or support efforts to translate and promote existing materials and resources asserting the business case to Local Networks.

3. Help facilitate more guidance and structured support for companies on the implementation of the WEPs at different levels of progress

The WEPs, while broad enough to importantly allow for flexibility, are sometimes vague to companies seeking detailed, specific targets to measure their progress on gender equality. While the WEPs were created to be a set of principles for companies to sign on to as an aspiration, and should continue to be an overarching vision for companies to empower women, they can also provide further guidance and support for companies to achieve their targets. In some cases, companies do not have a clear understanding of the principles and how they translate into everyday policies and practices for individual firms. Similarly, while signatory companies agree that gender equality drives strategic business interests, they do not necessarily have in-house expertise or understanding on gender matters to consistently create impact throughout the company and communities they work in.

*The UN Global Compact & WEPs Secretariat should:*

- Support regional and/or local networks to provide more guidance, support, training, and outside expertise to companies who need it. While many resources do exist, many companies interviewed did not know about them, and these were often not available in the local language.
Global Recommendations

- Support LNs to identify and promote transformative practices at the local level. They should highlight and promote successful policies or programs, but also describe how they were implemented.

- Provide more guidance on implementation through a step by step approach, disseminating a guide for companies to take next steps after signing on to the WEPs. Support LNs to develop a similar guide with information on local resources, initiatives and networks.

4. Collaborate with all sectors and stakeholders to maximize potential to achieve the goals of the WEPs

The WEPs are one initiative of many seeking to establish gender parity in the workplace. Other UN agencies, NGOs, private companies, and government entities have established certification programs, seals, and similar initiatives to the WEPs. In addition, it is clear that there is a need for regional cooperation and a collaborative, multi-sector approach to achieve advancement of gender equality in the global workforce. The effort to transform culture, attitudes, policies, and processes requires stakeholders from the private sector, multilaterals, government, nonprofits and advocacy organizations, academia, and others.

*The Global Compact Local Networks should:*

- Carry out stakeholder analyses to develop a clear understanding of the landscape of gender initiatives in the private sector, in order to identify relevant partners and resources. Develop a targeting strategy that prioritizes companies that are participants of other gender equality initiatives, as well as other locally determined priorities.

*The UN Global Compact & WEPs Secretariat should:*

- Promote collaboration with other gender equality initiatives by developing materials to facilitate interactions between Local Networks and organizations leading these initiatives. These may include, but are not limited to, a formal statement that clarifies the role and rationale behind the WEPs, and how they can be complementary to more structured gender equality initiatives such as gender equality seals.
5. Empower Global Compact Local Networks to adapt to contexts and structures effectively themselves in order to adequately support companies

Global Compact Local Networks face several challenges in promoting and implementing the WEPs, whether it is a lack of resources or capacity, or the overlap of responsibility between local chapters of the UN Global Compact, UN Women, UNDP or other stakeholders. In addition, language of the WEPs should be tailored to local context, and appropriately convey the goals of the WEPs.

The UN Global Compact & WEPs Secretariat should:

- Channel resources towards translating important material (such as the WEPs Reporting Guidance, Companies Leading the Way, and others). With the support of the Global Compact LNs, ensure that these translations are relevant to the local context.

- Along with the Global Compact Local Networks, create platforms for information sharing across countries and regions to encourage collaboration, particularly amongst LNs that speak the same language.
Conclusion

The WEPs are an important UN initiative that engages businesses in the promotion of gender equality and women’s empowerment in all of their operations, from the boardroom to the supply chain. The UN Global Compact, along with UN Women, is at the forefront of promoting the WEPs and encouraging the private sector to create further opportunities for women in the workplace. Through a cross-country comparative study in Colombia, Chile, Turkey, and Egypt, the team came up with findings and recommendations that would likely help the UN Global Compact to: 1) better understand the influence of the local contexts in the promotion of gender equality and 2) advance the WEPs not only in the four countries of interest but also globally.

The research reveals that signatories in all four countries share similar characteristics and face similar obstacles. In general, companies whose visions are aligned with the WEPs and who had existing efforts to promote diversity, sustainability, human rights, and other corporate citizenship platforms are more likely to become a signatory. They are motivated to join because the WEPs provide a platform to formalize existing effort, it showcases their commitment, and allows for interaction with the international community. The dominant framing used when discussing gender equality is that of the business case but companies also talk about the WEPs as a sustainability issue or a human rights issue. The implementation of the principles varies across signatories and is influenced by the country gender context. As all four countries have entrenched stereotypes of women as mothers and wives which affects how companies shape their policies. Efforts seem to be concentrated on targeting work-life balance and improving human resources policies, related to hiring, selection, promotion, and training.

When talking about challenges, companies identify inadequate guidance on next steps after signing the CEO Statement of Support as the main obstacle, indicating a lack of awareness about some of the existing tools available. Pipeline problems for the male-dominated industries, cultural stereotypes, and legislative restriction are also the obstacles to successful implementation of the principles. Companies also pointed out that the LNs face capacity constraints in funding, resources, and expertise, which limits their ability to better promote and assist the signatories with the implementation of the WEPs.

Our team believes that there is a great potential for the advancement of the WEPs in all four countries and prepared a set of recommendations to the WEPs secretariat and the LNs based on the findings and rigorous analysis: capitalize on the existing resources and networks of the UN and the UN Global Compact; attract companies with data-driven research proving the business case for gender equity in the local context; provide companies with more guidance and help facilitate structured support on implementation of the WEPs at the different levels of progress; empower LNs to adapt to context and structure themselves effectively in order to adequately support companies; collaborate with all sectors and stakeholders to maximize potential in achieving the goals of the WEPs. These recommendations are applicable not only to the countries of interest but also to other regions in which the WEPs are launched, and could hopefully bolster the role of the private sector in improving and catalyzing equality and empowerment for women around the world.
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B. List of Interviewees

*Informational interviews with UN Global Compact and WEPs Secretariat:*

❖ Lauren Gula
❖ Danielle Leavy
❖ Javier Cortés
❖ Alexandra Tarazi
❖ Zak Martellucci
❖ Dzana Ferhatbegovic
❖ Tulsi Byrne

*Interviews during fieldwork in Chile, Colombia, Egypt, and Turkey:*

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The five interview guides below were designed to serve as a framework for field research, each was tailored in the process to better adapt to the different contexts of the respective country.

### Interview Guide for Key Informant - UN Global Compact WEPs

**1. Representative of a WEPs signatory company**

**Target Audience:** Representatives/employees of companies that are signatories to WEPs.

**Purpose:** To gain insight on factors that drive companies to take up WEPs, understand overall business engagement with WEPs, and the presence of WEPs throughout the company and its activities.

**Assumptions:** Translation provided as necessary; private setting for the interviews; business representatives have access to information about WEPs; representatives will provide honest responses related to their company’s practices and efforts; the representatives have a strong understanding of the WEPs and their use within the company.

**Research Questions**

1. How are WEPs incorporated into signatories’ internal organizational structure and external activities?
2. Why do businesses sign on to the WEPs? How is it benefiting or not benefiting their organization and affects the ways companies are doing business?
3. How are employees involved and engaged with the WEPs?

### I. Introduction / Preamble

Hello, thank you for meeting with us today. Our names are ____________. We are student researchers at Columbia University, working on behalf of the UN Global Compact to learn about how businesses are engaged with the Women’s Empowerment Principles. We are researching the adoption of the WEPs by companies in several countries, and trying to understand what leads to successful adoption of the
principles. Thank you so much for taking time to meet with us. We appreciate your time and will not take more than 45 minutes of your time.

Before we begin our conversation, would you like us to keep your identity anonymous in the final report of this project or other documents related to it? Also if there is any specific information that you share with us that you would like to keep confidential please let us know and we will exclude it. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask us at any time. You are also welcome to stop the interview at any time.

Can we record this conversation, so that we can refer to your responses when we transcribe the tape? These recordings will remain confidential.

_Check consent_

Do you have any questions for us before we begin the interview?

**II. Key Questions**

**Overview**

1. Can you tell us a little bit about your company – what does your company do?
2. Can you tell us about yourself and your role in the company?

**Company Engagement - Motivation**

3. Could you tell us about the trajectory of your company’s involvement with the WEPs?
   a. How long has your company been a signatory to the WEPs?
   b. What was the motivation to sign on to the WEPs?
   c. How are employees engaged in the WEPs?
4. Why do you think your company wants to expand women’s empowerment?
   a. Are there any plans in place to achieve this?

**Company Engagement - Implementation**

5. What impact has your company’s involvement with the WEPs had, both at a company-wide level and at a personal level?
   a. [COMPANY-WIDE] When your company became a signatory to the WEPs, what other steps did you take / what changes have been made in your company?
   b. Has it led to any changes in the internal organization (culture)? Can you give any examples? (high-level corporate leadership for gender equality, fair treatment of all women and men at work, better standards of health, safety and well-being of all women and men workers, opportunities for more education, training and professional development for women)
   c. How are the WEPs incorporated into any external business activities? For example: how it does business with other companies, choice of business partners or community initiatives. Can you give us any examples?
   d. [PERSONAL] Has adoption of the WEPs affected your perception of the company?
e. Has adoption of the WEPs changed your work, responsibilities or work environment?
f. Have you personally experienced positive outcomes after your company committed to WEPs? Can you give any examples? Would you say that’s a typical experience for most employees? Can you give some examples?

Evaluation

6. Does the company evaluate its progress towards gender equality and women’s empowerment? If yes, what are the mechanisms through which it does so?
   a. What are the challenges to doing this?

Support & Challenges

7. How do companies involved with WEPs support each other/ network with each other? What are the main methods of collaboration (in person, online, etc.?)
8. Has the company faced any challenges in promoting and incorporating the WEPs, and better encouraging women at work, the marketplace, and their communities?
   a. Has it experienced any resistance?
   b. How about other companies?
9. What does a company need to better incorporate the WEPs into its business environment?
   a. If you could give any advice to the UNGC on how to better assist companies with the WEPs, what would it be?

IV. Closing

Thank you for your insights. We’re very thankful that you could take the time to help us understand the role of WEPs in your business and work.

1. Is there anything else that you would like to share with us that we have not touched upon?
2. Would you recommend that we meet with someone else who could give us more insight into this topic?
3. Is there any information you shared that you would like us not to include in our report or to share?
4. May we include your name in the list of people we met in our final report?
5. Would you be comfortable with us contacting you again if we have follow up questions?

Thank you so much for your time. Here is our contact information for your reference. We will be happy to answer any questions you may have for us.
Appendices

Interview Guide for Key Informant - UN Global Compact WEPs

2. Representative of a non-signatory company

Target Audience: Employees/reps of non-signatory companies to the WEPS who are a part of the UN Global Compact

Purpose: To gain insight on business’ engagement with the UNGC, companies’ knowledge and understanding of the WEPS, and to reveal how companies address gender equality and why the signatories to the UNGC are not signatories to the WEPS.

Assumptions: Translation provided as necessary; private setting for the interviews; business representatives have access to information about UNGC and WEPS; representatives will provide honest responses related to their company’s practices and efforts; the representatives have an understanding of the UNGC and their use within the company.

Research Questions

How are the UNGC principles incorporated into signatories’ internal organizational structure and external activities? How is it benefiting or not benefiting their organizations?

How do businesses promote gender equality? What do businesses know and think about the WEPS and why do businesses sign on to the UNGC but not to the WEPS?

What value can the WEPS bring to the companies in addition to the UNGC principles?

I. Introduction / Preamble

Hello, thank you for meeting with us today. Our names are ____________. We are student researchers at Columbia University, working on behalf of the UN Global Compact to learn about how businesses are engaged with the UN’s Women’s Empowerment Principles. We are researching the adoption of the WEPS by companies in several countries, and trying to understand what leads to successful adoption of the principles. Thank you so much for taking time to meet with us. We appreciate your time and will not take more than 45 minutes of your time.

Before we begin our conversation, please inform us if you would like to keep your identity anonymous, or to keep confidential any information you share with us. If you have any questions, please feel free to interrupt us at any time. You are also welcome to stop the interview at any time.
Can we record this conversation, so that we can refer to your responses when we transcribe the tape? These recordings will remain confidential.

*Check consent*

Can we begin interview now? Do you have any questions for us before we begin?

II. **Key Questions**

**Overview**

1. Can you tell us a little bit about your company – what does your company do?
2. Can you tell us about yourself and your role in the company?

**Engagement with UN Global Compact**

3. Could you tell us about the trajectory of your company’s involvement with the UNGC?
   a. How long has your company been a signatory to the UNGC?
   b. What was the motivation to sign on to the UNGC?
4. What has been the impact of your company’s involvement with the UNGC, both at a company-wide level and at a personal level?
   a. [COMPANY-WIDE] Has it shaped company’s internal activities? (Activities related to WEPs: high-level corporate leadership for gender equality, fair treatment of all women and men at work, better standards of health, safety and well-being of all women and men workers, opportunities for more education, training and professional development for women).
   b. Has it shaped any external business activities? Can you give us any examples? (Activities related to WEPs: enterprise development strategies, supply chain and marketing practices; is equality through community initiatives and advocacy promoted by the organization, how were your relationships with other organizations affected?
   c. [PERSONAL] Have you personally experienced any positive outcomes after your company committed to the UNGC? Would you say that is a typical experience for most employees? Why or why not?
5. How do companies involved in the UNGC support each other/ network with each other? What are the main ways of collaboration (in person, online, etc.)?

**Women’s Empowerment & WEPs**

6. What do you know about the Women Empowerment Principles?
   a. If they have any knowledge about the WEPs: Where and when did you learn about these? If not, define.
7. How would you describe the status of women and men in your company? Can you give examples?
   a. Examples related to leadership, hiring practices, salary, treatment at work, health, safety, and well-being, educational and professional development opportunities
8. Does your company have any specific goals with respect to expanding women’s empowerment? How does your company plan to achieve this?
9. What do you think are some of the challenges your company faces to better empower women at work, the marketplace, and their communities?
10. Do you think signing on to the WEPs will help the company in its efforts to empower women? Why or why not?
11. What do you think a company needs to do to achieve equality for everyone in the workplace?
   a. If you could give advice to the UNGC on how to better assist LNIs with women empowerment efforts, what would it be?

IV. Closing

Thank you for your insights. We’re very thankful that you could take the time to help us understand the role of UNGC in your business and your insights on women empowerment and/or the WEPs.

1. Would you like to share any other information with us?
2. Would you recommend that we meet with someone else who could give us more insight into this topic?
3. Is there any information you shared that you would like us not to include in our report or to share?
4. May we include your name in the list of people we met in our final report?
5. Would you be comfortable with us contacting you again if we have follow up questions?

Thank you so much for your time. Here is our contact information for your reference. We will be happy to answer any questions you may have for us.
Interview Guide for Key Informant - UN Global Compact WEPs

3. Representative of Global Compact Local Network

Target Audience: Representatives/employees of a Global Compact Local Network (UNGC LNs)

Purpose: To gain insight into LNs’ understanding of the WEPs, organizational structure of the UNGC LNs, outreach and networking practices and LN’s role in promoting the WEPs.

Assumptions: Translation provided as necessary; private setting for the interviews; representatives have access to information about WEPs; representatives will provide honest responses related to their LNs’ practices and efforts; the representatives have a strong understanding of the WEPs and their use within the company

Research Questions

1. How do LNs understand the WEPs?
2. What is LNs role in promoting the WEPs?
3. What are the most successful outreach and networking practices in promoting the WEPs?

I. Introduction / Preamble

Hello, thank you for meeting with us today. Our names are ____________. We are student researchers at Columbia University School of International and Public Affairs, working on behalf of the UN Global Compact to learn about how businesses are engaged with the Women’s Empowerment Principles. We are researching the adoption of the WEPs by companies in several countries, and trying to understand what leads to successful adoption of the principles. Thank you so much for taking time to meet with us. We appreciate your time and will not take more than 45 minutes of your time.

Before we begin our conversation, would you like us to keep your identity anonymous in the final report of this project or other documents related to it? Also if there is any specific information that you share with us that you would like to keep confidential please let us know and we will exclude it. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask us at any time. You are also welcome to stop the interview at any time. Can we record this conversation, so that we can refer to your responses when we transcribe the tape? These recordings will remain confidential.
Appendices

Check consent

Do you have any questions for us before we begin the interview?

II. Key Questions:

Overview

1. Could you please describe the development of your LN, the role that it plays with the UN Global Compact, how it was started, and how decisions are made at the LN level?
   a. Relationship/contact between LN and HQ?
   b. Duties/responsibilities in comparison to HQ?

UNGC Principles

2. Before we get in depth on the WEPs, we’d like to understand better the relationship between the Global Compact principles and the WEPs. What are your thoughts on the relationship between the two sets of principles?

WEPs

3. Could you tell us more about the LN’s work specifically related to the Women’s Empowerment Principles? What is the role of the LN when it comes to promoting and implementing the WEPs among businesses?
   a. Role of LN in promoting the principles of UNGC?
   b. How long has your LN been involved in the WEPs?
   c. What type of outreach/networking practices are used to promote the WEPs? Examples?
   d. What are best practices and challenges?

Company Engagement - Interest and Outreach

4. Could you tell us more about your experience working with companies through the LN on the WEPs? In particular, please share your thoughts on companies’ interest in the WEPs, and the process of signing on to WEPs.
   a. Has interest in the WEPs changed (grown) over time?
   b. How do companies become signatories, and what do you think are their motivations for doing so?
   c. What are examples of best practices and challenges to getting companies to sign on?

Company Engagement - Implementation

5. Could you describe the processes and challenges relating to implementation of the WEPs in the signatory companies?
   a. After signing on to the WEPs, how do companies work to better implement the principles? What usually happens in companies after signing on to the WEPs?
   b. How does the Global Compact/LN support companies to take the next steps related to implementation? Examples?
Appendices

c. How do signatories to the WEPs support each other/ network with each other? What are their modes of collaboration?
d. To your knowledge, have any of the companies faced resistance in promoting and incorporating the WEPs?
e. What do companies need to better incorporate the WEPs into their business environment?

Company Engagement - Evaluation

6. Are there any mechanisms to evaluate company’s progress toward gender equality and women’s empowerment?
   a. If yes, what are the mechanisms through which it does so?
   b. If no, are there plans for developing these mechanisms by the LN or helping companies develop evaluation mechanism in the future?

Learning and Development

7. How does the LN learn and grow? Could you describe the relationship between Colombia’s LN and other LNs? What kind of support is given from HQ, other LNs, or other networks?
   a. How is information shared among the networks? ie sharing of best practices and challenges
   b. How do LNs support each other / network

Future and Growth

8. How do you see the status of women in business changing in the future?
9. What are the LNs focus areas for the future?

III. Closing

Thank you for your insights. We’re very thankful that you could take the time to help us understand the role of LNs in promoting WEPs.

1. Is there anything else that you would like to share with us that we have not touched upon?
2. Would you recommend that we meet with someone else who could give us more insight into this topic?
3. Is there any information you shared that you would like us not to include in our report or to share?
4. May we include your name in the list of people we met in our final report?
5. Would you be comfortable with us contacting you again if we have follow up questions?

Thank you so much for your time. Here is our contact information for your reference. We will be happy to answer any questions you may have for us.
Interview Guide for Key Informant - UN Global Compact WEPs

4. Representative of a women’s rights/gender equality organization

Target Audience: Representative of a women’s rights/gender equality organizations in Local Network countries

Purpose: To gain insight on the local gender context in relation to labor; to assess the engagement of civil society in the promotion and adoption of the WEPs and gender equality in business/labor market more generally.

Assumptions: Translation provided as necessary; private setting for the interviews; representatives have access to information on the gender equality context in the country; representatives have access to information about WEPs.

Research Questions:

1. What is the local gender context in relation to the labor market?
2. How are women’s rights organizations engaged in promoting the WEPs and gender equality?

I. Introduction / Preamble

Thank you for meeting with us today. Our names are ____________. We are student researchers at Columbia University, working on behalf of the UN Global Compact to learn about how businesses are engaged with the Women’s Empowerment Principles. We are researching the adoption of the WEPs by companies in several countries, and trying to understand what leads to successful adoption of the principles. Thank you so much for taking time to meet with us. We appreciate your time and will not take more than 45 minutes.

Before we begin our conversation, please inform us if you would like to keep your identity anonymous, or to keep confidential any information you share with us. If you have any questions, please feel free to interrupt us at any time. You are also welcome to stop the interview at any time.

Can we record this conversation, so that we can refer to your responses when we transcribe the tape? These recordings will remain confidential.

Check consent
Can we begin interview now? Do you have any questions for us before we begin?

II. Key Interview Questions

Overview

1. Could you please tell us a little bit about yourself and your background, and give us a brief overview of the organization?
   a. Organization’s mission, main goals/objectives, and activities/programs

Gender Context - Challenges

2. We would like to better understand the gender context in country. What would you say are the main challenges for women in the labor market in country?
   a. Issues to consider: Labor force participation rates; Women on Boards; Women in executive positions; Work/life policies (maternity/paternity leave and daycare options; Societal expectations about mothers and fathers; Gender pay gap; Stereotypes about men’s and women’s work; Gender-divided labor market (men are doctors, women are nurses, etc.); Gaps in education; Sexual harassment in the workplace or other forms of gender-based violence).

Gender Context - Organization’s Role/Overcoming Challenges

3. In your opinion, what is being done to overcome some of these challenges? What steps has your organization taken / do you think should be taken in order to improve women’s situation in the labor market? How effective is civil society/NGOs in improving these issues?
   a. Lobbying government, local government, and/or private sector companies?
   b. What approach has been used? (Rights-based approach, justice and equity, stressing the business case, emphasizing macroeconomic effects or others)
   c. What methods have been effective? (Activism, professional advocacy organizations, protests, unions, networking, media, running for office, setting up women-led companies)

Role of Government

4. How are issues related to gender equality and women’s empowerment prioritized/not prioritized at the government level? What has been the government’s response to these challenges? (Laws, regulation, policies, statements)

Role of Private Sector

5. What is the status of corporate responsibility here in Colombia, particularly related to gender equality and women’s empowerment? What do you think is the private sector’s role in these issues, and how would you evaluate them currently? What has been the private sector’s response to these challenges? (Policies, statements, initiatives, scholarships, etc.)
   a. Do you think private sector companies are actively implementing policies to improve women’s status in the labor market?
b. Do you think private sector companies see value (the business case) in providing better working conditions for women or attract more women to their companies?

**WEPs**

6. *Ask if aware of WEPs, if not, define.* Does your organization play any role in relation to the WEPs? If so, how? How do you/does your organization view the WEPs and their impact?

**Future and Trends**

7. What direction do you think _____ (country) is moving in with regards to women’s empowerment in the business/economic context?

8. What are the organization’s focus areas for the future in regards to women’s empowerment?

**III. Conclusion**

Thank you for your insights. We’re very thankful that you could take the time to help us understand the local gender context in your country, as well as the level of engagement of civil society in promoting the WEPs.

1. Would you like to share anything else with us?

2. Would you recommend that we meet with someone else who could give us more insight into this topic?

3. Is there any information you shared that you would not like us to share or include in our report?

4. May we include your name in the list of people we met in our final report?

5. Would you be comfortable with us contacting you again if we have follow up questions?

Thank you so much for your time. Here is our contact information for your reference. We will be happy to answer any questions you may have in the future.
Target Audience: Representative of a government agency or institution in Local Network countries

Purpose: To gain insight on the local gender and business contexts, particularly in relation to labor, the economy, and society; to understand and assess the engagement and investment of government officials/agency in the improvement of gender equality and women’s empowerment more generally throughout the country.

Assumptions: Translation provided as necessary; private setting for the interviews; representatives have access to information on the gender equality context in the country; representatives have access to information about UNGC/WEPs.

Research Questions:
1. What is the local gender context in relation to the labor market?
2. What is the role of government related to these issues, and what steps is the government taking to address these issues?

I. Introduction / Preamble

Thank you for meeting with us today. Our names are _____________. We are student researchers at Columbia University, working on behalf of the UN Global Compact to learn about how businesses are engaged with the UNGC’s Women’s Empowerment Principles. We are researching the context for women in business, and trying to understand success and challenges related in ______(country). Thank you so much for taking time to meet with us. We appreciate your time and will not take more than 45 minutes.

Before we begin our conversation, please inform us if you would like to keep your identity anonymous, or to keep confidential any information you share with us. If you have any questions, please feel free to interrupt us at any time. You are also welcome to stop the interview at any time.

Can we record this conversation, so that we can refer to your responses when we transcribe the tape? These recordings will remain confidential.

Check consent
Can we begin interview now? Do you have any questions for us before we begin?

II. Key Interview Questions

Overview

1. Could you please tell us a little bit about yourself and your background, and give us a brief overview of this government agency?
   a. Agency’s main goals/objectives, and activities/programs

Gender Context - Challenges

2. We would like to better understand the gender context in country. What would you say are the main challenges for women in the labor market in country?
   a. Issues to consider: Labor force participation rates; Women on Boards; Women in executive positions; Work/life policies (maternity/paternity leave and daycare options; Societal expectations about mothers and fathers; Gender pay gap; Stereotypes about men’s and women’s work; Gender-divided labor market (men are doctors, women are nurses, etc.); Gaps in education; Sexual harassment in the workplace or other forms of gender-based violence).

Gender Context - Overcoming Challenges

3. In your opinion, what is being done to overcome some of these challenges? What steps has the ________ (country’s) government taken / do you think should be taken in order to improve women’s situation in the labor market?

Role of Government

4. How are issues related to gender equality and women’s empowerment prioritized/not prioritized at the government level? What has been the government’s response to these challenges? (Laws, regulation, policies, statements)
   a. Major agencies who are involved in these issues?

Role of Private Sector

5. What is the status of corporate responsibility here in Colombia, particularly related to gender equality and women’s empowerment? What do you think is the private sector’s role in these issues, and how would you evaluate them currently? What has been the private sector’s response to these challenges? (Policies, statements, initiatives, scholarships, etc.)
   a. Do you think private sector companies are actively implementing policies to improve women’s status in the labor market?
   b. Do you think private sector companies see value (the business case) in providing better working conditions for women or attract more women to their companies?
   c. What incentives does the government provide companies to improve their social responsibility?
   d. How can businesses be encouraged to promote women’s empowerment and gender equality at a deeper level?
Future and Trends

6. What direction do you think _____ (country) is moving in with regards to women’s empowerment in the business/economic context? What do you think are key focus areas in the next five years?

III. Conclusion

Thank you for your insights. We’re very thankful that you could take the time to help us understand the local gender context in your country, as well as the level of engagement of civil society in promoting the WEPs.

6. Would you like to share anything else with us?
7. Would you recommend that we meet with someone else who could give us more insight into this topic?
8. Is there any information you shared that you would not like us to share or include in our report?
9. May we include your name in the list of people we met in our final report?
10. Would you be comfortable with us contacting you again if we have follow up questions?

Thank you so much for your time. Here is our contact information for your reference. We will be happy to answer any questions you may have in the future.