



DIMENSION 1

Commitment and strategy development

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This dimension is part of the

***'Guide to Promote Gender Equality in
Latin American and Caribbean Companies'***

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strategy development

2 Inclusive talent
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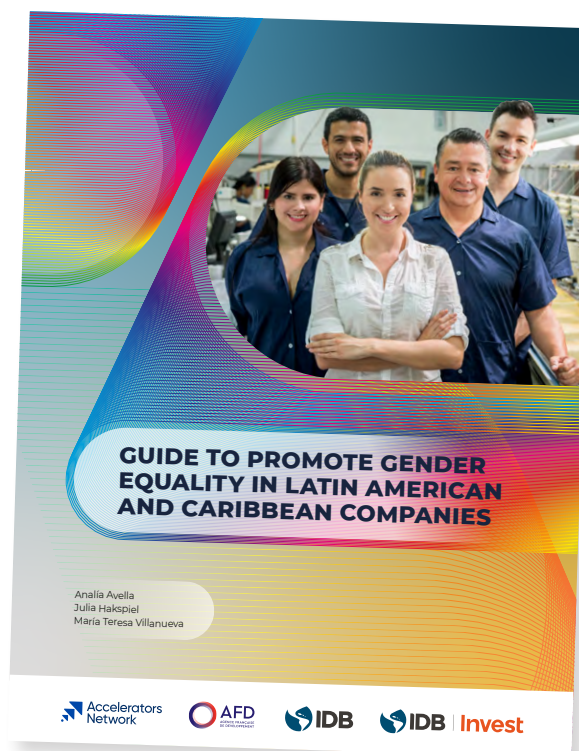
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Commitment and strategy development

The commitment and support of top management is a key factor for companies to advance implementation of actions that favor gender equality.

Context and evidence

Although more extensive studies are still needed in the region to evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of gender equality programs in the private sector, international research identifies a growing commitment to these issues and the development of specific programs and strategies.

The World Economic Forum's Future of Work 2023 report, which surveys more than 800 large companies from 27 industry groups, identifies that more than two-thirds of organizations have a diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) program in place. This proportion rises to 77% for companies in Latin America and the Caribbean. The report also reveals that the quality of work is a relevant concern, and that young people are the ones who particularly prioritize diversity and inclusion at work.

Likewise, the World Economic Forum's DEI Lighthouse 2024 report highlights **committed and engaged leaders as a common success factor in achieving effective gender equality and diversity initiatives**. This study focuses on large companies and notes that top management support facilitates the development of more comprehensive cross-departmental policies and programs. It also highlights that DEI programs have become an integral part of corporate strategies.

At the regional level, a study in Panama in 2023 analyzes gender equality initiatives in small, medium and large organizations, using data from the WEP Gender Enterprise Tool (Women's Empowerment Principles, see Box 3) and a selection of good practices in the local IPG framework. The study reveals that, although **companies recognize the importance of their role in promoting gender equality** and have taken concrete steps to introduce specific practices and policies, they **are still in the process of achieving a strategic approach to implementing their commitment, as well as measuring and reporting their progress** (Almonacid et al., 2023).

Similarly, a report in Argentina analyzes and systematizes the actions implemented by more than 110 companies adhering to the Women's Empowerment Principles until the end of 2019. Of these companies, 60% are large and 40% MSMEs. According to the study, **94% of these organizations have the commitment and support of senior management on gender equality issues**, which they identify as a key factor that has allowed them to make progress on these issues, especially internally (UN Women, 2019).

Having the support of top management is a necessary factor in advancing towards gender equality; however, concrete actions are required to materialize and put this commitment into practice within companies



Potential actions

How to generate commitment?

Companies can formalize their commitment to gender equality through the institutionalization of one or more instruments. These can take various forms and structures depending on the type and operation of the company, such as policies, guidelines or protocols. It is important that these instruments are relevant to the reality and dynamics of the organization, are aligned with its mission and are integrated into its strategic objectives (McKinsey, 2023).

In companies with an international presence, the gender equality policy is generally defined at the global level. However, it is essential to give local teams the possibility of adapting it to their context in order to foster ownership and concrete impact (Washington, 2022). This policy usually takes the form of a framework document with general guidelines framing the strategy and actions to be taken, which helps to avoid isolated measures or measures that are poorly integrated into the company's management.

The gender equality policy can be a driver of organizational change, not only internally, but also through its interaction with the value chain. It is therefore important that it is extended throughout the company and, if possible, to external practices. Likewise, its review, evaluation and updating are necessary factors to maintain its alignment with corporate objectives and business priorities. Finally, it is important not to lose sight of communication. The policy also functions as an element of training and awareness and must therefore be communicated to all personnel. Externally, its dissemination can contribute to improving organizational reputation, attracting talent and reaching new markets and customers.

On the other hand, the organization's commitment to gender equality can also be expressed through adherence to local or international programs that explicitly support and endorse these issues, such as the **Gender Parity Accelerators or the Women's Empowerment Principles** (see Box 3). These initiatives make it possible to publicize companies' commitments, promote access to knowledge and the exchange of experiences, and generate communities and networks.

Seals and certifications are another way of expressing commitment. They are innovative tools, although they are more appropriate for companies that are in advanced stages of their change process. The preparation stage prior to obtaining such accreditations is not only a requirement, but also a valuable learning and improvement opportunity that can accelerate the pace of change. Obtaining a gender equality seal or certification can also bring reputational benefits and facilitate access to specific markets, investors and customers.

Transforming commitment into action

Establishing a clear baseline and drawing up a roadmap are key elements for initiating any action. Knowing where the company is starting from, defining where it wants to go, what resources it needs and who will manage them, are some of the initial questions to address. In general, companies that show progress on these commitments tend to take a more systematic approach to designing their strategies. They have



managed to progress beyond isolated or loosely coordinated initiatives, establishing objectives aligned with the company's overall mission and strategy (McKinsey, 2023).

The following are recommendations for developing a comprehensive gender strategy. These are flexible guidelines that companies can adapt to their particular circumstances.

A Define governance. Form an internal committee or team to lead, organize and prioritize the work in these areas

For greater integration and transversality, **it is important that this committee or team is not only made up of the company's support sectors, such as human resources or communications, but also of the central areas of the business - operations, commercial, finance - and that it has senior leadership for decision-making and resource allocation.** Another important aspect is to define its competencies, the roles and responsibilities of its members and a working methodology (frequency of meetings, decision-making mechanism, time of permanence/rotation of its members, etc.).

In addition, it is important that committee members receive specific training in gender equality and that their performance evaluations include the achievement of gender equality objectives. Voluntary groups of male and female employees, known as Employee Resource Groups (ERGs), can also be created to report to the committee and have a direct approach to the employees. These groups are usually organized by topic of interest and work to promote an inclusive work environment. ERGs are generally formed to provide support, networking opportunities and a sense of community within the organization.

B Measure inequalities. Conduct a quantitative and qualitative diagnosis of existing gaps in the company to define a baseline and identify opportunities for improvement

This analysis can contribute to understanding how inequalities are generated in the organization, identify those practices that reinforce inequities and propose interventions to reduce gender gaps. It can begin with a general evaluation of the organization, for example, through surveys directed at all personnel. It is also important to carry out quantitative measurements to analyze the representation of personnel by gender in areas and hierarchical levels, and to complement the observations with focus groups. It is advisable for the organization to remeasure its gaps and evaluate its progress on a regular basis, for example, every two years.

C Develop an action plan. Design a work plan that includes the areas for improvement and is linked to the company's strategic plan

Using the information gathered through measurements, gap analysis and gender-disaggregated data, companies can plan actions in the areas with the greatest opportunity for improvement. This information allows each company to identify its priorities and challenges and define specific action plans (ILO and UN Women, 2020). **It is also important that these plans are integrated with corporate objectives, in order to achieve a clearer focus within the organization and demonstrate that gender issues are not an isolated priority.**

These plans facilitate the prioritization of short-, medium- and long-term actions, and the possibility of assigning responsibilities, execution times and mobilizing the necessary resources to sustain the initiatives.



To ensure their effectiveness, it is important to establish concrete, measurable and achievable objectives, and to define KPIs (key performance indicators) to evaluate the progress and effectiveness of the initiatives, or to adjust their course if necessary. The support of the organization's leaders is key to the success of these plans, as well as their effective communication to all levels of employees and stakeholders.

D Quantify proposals and allocate resources. Translate the initiatives into numbers, estimating costs and benefits for the company

This action is relevant to support the proposals when presenting them to the organization's leadership and to facilitate the necessary consensus. It provides a better idea of the resources and the specific budget required for the initiative.



BOX 3

FRAMEWORKS FOR COMMITMENT

Implementation of Gender Parity Accelerators (IPG)

In each country where a IPG is developed, a roadmap with six main milestones is implemented: 1) the formation of a Leadership Group, composed of public and private sector leaders to direct the IPG strategy; 2) the activation of a Technical Group and other support figures that accompany the implementation of the initiative; 3) the preparation of a diagnosis to characterize the economic gender gaps in the country; 4) the preparation of an Action Plan with measures to close the economic gender gaps; 5) the launching of the IPG in a public event with government authorities, representatives of the Leadership Group, the IDB, the World Economic Forum and the French Development Agency; and 6) the implementation of specific actions to comply with the Action Plan, the adherence of companies committed to the objectives of the IPG, the generation and exchange of knowledge and technical assistance by the regional coordination of the IPG (Villanueva et al., 2023).

[+ Explore](#)

Women's Empowerment Principles

The [Women's Empowerment Principles](#) (WEPs) are a set of guidelines designed to guide companies in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in the workplace, marketplace and community. Established by UN Women and the UN Global Compact, these principles provide a platform and framework for action for organizations. Grounded in international human and labor rights standards, the WEPs are a tool for advancing the gender equality dimensions of the 2030 Agenda and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The WEPs make it possible to join a global network, make initiatives visible and exchange experiences among companies and actors committed to this agenda around the world. Adherence to these principles makes it possible to express and make visible the commitment from the highest levels of leadership in the organization and to manage concrete and measurable actions in favor of gender equality and women's empowerment. The principles help companies evaluate and assess their current practices and identify areas for improvement. They also provide signatory companies with access to resources and support tools.

[+ Explore](#)



Tools and resources

MEASURING INSTRUMENTS AND LEARNING PLATFORMS	
WEP Gender Enterprise Tool	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Gender gap self-assessment tool. Allows measurement and evaluation of existing inequalities in the organization and identification of areas of opportunity for developing action plans. The tool is free, confidential and applicable to SMEs and large companies. The IPG promote use of this tool. <p>Entity: UN Women, Global Compact, IDB Invest and IDB Lab.</p> <p>+ Explore + Implementation Guide (Available in Spanish).</p>
WEP Learning Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Online training center for WEP signatory companies. This platform offers learning opportunities for women to enhance or acquire new skills and capabilities for their professional development. <p>Entity: UN Women, Global Compact / + Explore</p>
Target Gender Equality Accelerator	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Gender equality accelerator program for Global Compact member companies. Provides support to set and achieve corporate targets for women's representation and ensure equal pay. Participating companies can deepen their implementation of the WEPs, strengthen their contribution to the SDGs and receive expert updates. <p>Entity: Global Compact, UN / + Explore</p>
ALLIANCES AND COMMUNITIES	
The Global Gender Parity Sprint	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Global platform that brings together businesses, governments and international organizations to drive economic transformation, innovation and growth, accelerating economic gender parity by 2030 through three impact pathways:<ul style="list-style-type: none">Labor market: Gender parity in the workforce, representation in senior management positions and salaries;Industry transformation: Gender parity in capital markets (financial services), technology (ICT), consumer and media sectors;Transversal transformation: Gender parity at the core of technological, green and care transitions. <p>The following initiatives and work are part of this platform: Global Gender Gap Report; DEI Lighthouse Program; Gender Parity Accelerators and World Future Council on the Care Economy.</p> <p>Entity: World Economic Forum / + Explore</p>
HeForShe Campaign	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Solidarity campaign that promotes gender equity. It aims to engage men and boys as agents of change, encouraging them to take action to eliminate the inequalities faced by women and girls. <p>Entity: UN Women / + Explore</p>
Paradigm for Parity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Coalition of business leaders and DEI experts dedicated to addressing systemic gender and race gaps in the business sector. <p>Entity: Paradigm for Parity / + Explore</p>



Champions of Change Coalition	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• High-profile coalition of influential men and women united to lead change in their organizations and communities. The objectives are to promote the participation of women in leadership positions and to build respectful and inclusive workplaces. <p>Organization: Champions of Change Coalition) / + Explore</p>
SEALS, CERTIFICATIONS AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS¹	
EDGE Certification	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Global assessment methodology and corporate certification standard for gender equality. This certification ensures a structured and systematic approach to measure, identify and close gender gaps at corporate level linked to 5 dimensions: Equal Pay; Recruitment and Promotion; Leadership Training and Education; Flexible Work; and Corporate Culture. The process is valid for 2 years. <p>Entity: EDGE Foundation / + Explore</p>
ISO 53800	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• This standard proposes guidelines for working on equality between women and men within an organization, regardless of its nature, activity, size or location, including an integrative and continuous improvement approach. <p>Entity: International Organization for Standardization (ISO) / + Explore</p>
Par Ranking and Aequal Certification	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Par Ranking. Free, comparative and confidential annual measurement of organizational policies and processes in gender equity and diversity.• Aequales Certification. Accreditation process for companies of the strategies implemented in gender equity and diversity. <p>Entity: Aequales / + Certification + Par Ranking</p>
Great Place to Work Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• This survey recognizes the quality of the organizational culture. It includes a certification process where employee comments and experiences are analyzed in relation to the programs and practices applied that differentiate the organization as a good place to work <p>Entity: Great Place to Work / + Explore</p>

Source: own elaboration.

1. This list is not exhaustive and does not include national seals and certifications developed and managed by private entities or public bodies in the different countries of the region.



Case studies

Global and regional business practices.



GLOBAL

Ingka Group (IKEA)

Promoting gender parity and pay equity in all operations and levels of the company, through management commitment and strategy execution.

- **Industry:** Retail.
- **Country:** Global, based in the Netherlands.
- The company controls most of the IKEA stores.
- As of 2021, it has a presence in Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic.

More than ten years ago, Ingka Group made a commitment to achieve gender equality across all its businesses and organizational levels. The goal of achieving a 50/50 gender balance throughout the company was set by executive leadership, endorsed by the Board of Directors, and is considered a non-negotiable objective that is prioritized from middle management to senior leadership.

To achieve this goal, the company has designed customized approaches and action plans for each business unit and country. Mentoring programs and inclusive succession plans have been implemented. DEI objectives are directly linked to the performance evaluation of each team manager, with a designated DEI leader in each region to oversee and ensure compliance with the associated KPIs. The Ingka Group has also established that group and country management report annually to the boards on the status of gender pay equity.

Over the past 10 years, the company has managed to increase the number of CEO positions held by women in countries by 20 percentage points, reaching 48% by 2023. In addition, 50.2% of all management positions and 61.6% of positions reporting directly to the CEO are currently held by women.

The full case study for this company is available in the World Economic Forum's [DEI lighthouse 2024](#) report.



REGIONAL

Ecopetrol

Promoting a DEI program that covers the entire life cycle of women, from infancy to the Board of Directors.

- **Industry:** Energy.
- **Country:** Global, based in Colombia.
- Company member of the IPG Leadership Group in Colombia.

In 2019, Ecopetrol launched its **DEI Program**, with a comprehensive work approach that addresses six components and 36 initiatives. Within the gender component, *Sin Fronteras* was designed, an initiative that takes into account the entire life cycle of women, promoting their empowerment, leadership and access to underrepresented roles. The initiative includes actions from childhood to the Board of Directors of Ecopetrol and its 327 directly and indirectly controlled companies. The projects include actions in childhood, new generations, middle career and Board of Directors.

In 4 years of implementing the program, the company managed to increase the participation of women in mid-career by 12.4 percentage points, from 18% to 30%. In addition, between 2018 and 2022, the representation of women in high potential programs increased from 36% to 48% and in succession talent from 30% to 36%. The company currently has 33% women on the Board of Directors.

See the complete case study of this company in Annex 5.1.

BHD

Institutionalizing a comprehensive gender strategy under the direction of a high-level committee headed by the President of the entity.

- **Industry:** Banking and Finance.
- **Country:** Dominican Republic.
- Member of the IPG Leadership Group in Dominican Republic.

In collaboration with the Global Alliance of Banks for Women, in 2015 BHD launched the **Women's Gender Strategy**, expanding its gender focus initiated with the Women's Card in 2013. This strategy is based on three components: internal culture of gender equity, products and services tailored to women, and recognition of women's social work. As part of this strategy, the *Mujer Mujer* Program was created to address the financial and non-financial needs of women. BHD has positioned itself as a leader in financial services for women and has increased its client base in all segments of the bank.



Since the inception of this strategy, the bank has reached more than 125,000 new customers, with average annual growth rates of more than 13%. Its efforts enabled it to position itself as the bank of reference for Dominican women, according to market surveys, and to strengthen its capacity to become a multi-service bank focused on all customer segments.

See the complete case study of this company in Annex 5.1.

Source: Prepared by the authors, based on the DEI Lighthouse 2024 report of the World Economic Forum and information provided by the companies



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