



Gambia's Private Sector Commits to Implementing the Gender Equality Seal:

Gambia is among the first African countries to endorse the gender equality seal for private enterprises, with support from UNDP and in collaboration with The Gambia Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GCCI) as the lead partner. On 16th and 17th July 2018, the Gender Equality Seal initiative (GES) was launched in the Gambia. The Gambia Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GCCI), The Gambia Investment and Export Promotion Agency (GIEPA), the Women's Bureau under the office of the Vice President, the Ministry of Trade Industry Regional Integration and Employment, have offered to have their member companies implement the GES.

What the Gender Equality Seal is about:

The Gender Equality Seal (GES) certification programme is supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), with the aim of helping business and government entities achieve Gender Equality, which is Goal Five of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs, dubbed as the global goals, were signed by world leaders in September 2015 at the United Nations General Assembly in New York, with representatives from the private sector, civil society and development partners. The global goals, also referred to as 2030 Agenda, focus on; ending poverty, reducing inequality, zero hunger, good health, quality education, decent work and economic growth among others; as the means to sustainable development for sustainable business. But sustainable development cannot lead to sustainable business by 2030, unless companies work with government to invest in policies that go beyond the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), to promote gender equality in the entire organisation.

The Key Focus Areas for Gender Equality Seal:

1. Increasing women's role in decision-making at middle and upper Management positions.
2. Detecting and eliminating gender-based pay gaps.
3. Developing and implementing policies to improve work-life balance.
4. Increasing women's presence in occupational areas that are traditionally male-dominated.
5. Promoting zero tolerance to sexual harassment in the work-place and creating a safe and supportive environment.

Why implementing the Gender Equality Seal is good for Gambian companies

The Gender Equality Seal certification programme helps companies to put in place business policies and practices for attracting and retaining the talents and skills of both women and men. It levels the corporate playing field for female managers to thrive at the same pace with their male counterparts. Working to achieve the Gender Equality Seal helps management of private companies understand how gender pay-gaps come about and how to boost employee productivity through initiatives for work-life balance and elimination of sexual harassment. The Seal also links a company's business to the global goals. For example the banking sector in The Gambia is well positioned to drive progress on three of the most critical global goals—Goals 1 (poverty), 8 (jobs), 5 (gender equality), 10 (inequalities) and 11 (inclusive cities)—by designing credit and investment products for pro-youth and women-dominated sectors, and by expanding access to services for the urban informal sector.

The GES can also catalyse innovations around gender-appropriate product designs and customer services. For instance, Telecoms can use information from GES process to design Service Data Codes (USSDs) that enable women check and converse about where to get the cheapest fertilizers and medicines for their families. Hotels can adopt GES benchmarks and indicators to design a gender disaggregated customer feedback system, since women are often concerned about ambiance, desserts and the friendliness of waiters and waitresses, while men are usually focused on equipment in the gym, swimming pool and the minibar. These innovations signify that gender equality in the work place and market competitiveness are prerequisites for each other, and that GES can yield business practices that cannot be easily emulated by a company's competitors

How the Gender Equality Seal compliments government policies:

For Government, the Seal facilitates policy dialogues on public-private partnerships in sectors where women and men dominate including agriculture, tourism, energy and finance. The key focus areas and indicators for GES can be used to assess the gender responsiveness of sector plans and budgets at national and local council levels. The GES tools and scoring methods can also be apply to the integration of gender and equity in public procurement processes, followed by capacity development for contracts committees in government agencies.

The 10 steps to earning the Gender Equality Seal (GES):

1. Formulate the organisation's written commitment to gender equality
2. Establish a gender equality committee
3. Train senior management and staff on gender equality
4. Undertake an internal organizational assessment of the company's policies and practices
5. Develop an organisation-wide policy and plan of action for gender equality
6. Implement the gender equality plan of action
7. Conduct an external audit of the progress achieved
8. Achieve official government recognition and certification of the Gender Equality Seal
9. Once the gender equality seal has been awarded, monitor on-going progress and audit for quality assurance
10. Take actions to improve programme and maintain certification status.

Where has the Gender Equality Seal worked and the benefits?

Originally pioneered in; Costa Rica, Uruguay, Brazil and Chile, the Gender Equality Seal Certification Programme is now expanding globally. Over 400 companies across eleven countries of Latin America have been certified since 2009. These companies have reported witnessing a broad range of benefits, including; a better work environment, greater productivity, efficiency, improved relationships among staff, employee commitment, and a reduction in absenteeism and attraction of diversity of talent.

Benefits of the Gender Equality Seal to Private companies in the Gambia:

In light of our country's new dispensation, The Gambia is in need of clear direction to signal that a culture of inclusiveness that leaves no one behind takes root. The GES for private sector provides the opportunity for:

1. Companies to redefine its policies sharpen its focus on gender mainstreaming and create an equitable environment.
2. Make use of a model that will enable working women resolve the conflict caused due to poor work-life balance. Organizations to build their image as having a reputation for respecting the rights of women and girls
3. Promoting gender equality therefore enhanced ability to compete in the local and global marketplace for highly skilled workers.
4. Greater efficiency and staff performance especially amongst women · Increased Employee Commitment.

Early Successes on GES implementation in the Gambia

1. Signed letters of commitment to participate in GES - PS from the 6 participating companies
2. 6 Gender Equality Committees set up by the 6 participating companies
3. Bilateral trainings conducted for each of the 6 participating companies on use of equality@work platform specifically, on the self-assessment exercise, the opinion survey and audit module
4. 14 University of the Gambia (UTG) lecturers trained on the on the Gender Equality Seal
5. 6 pilot company managers and 14 members of the GES Committees trained on the GES Private Sector model
6. Guidance notes and tools on the GES PS provided to 6 participating companies and UTG lecturers
7. Gender Gap Report from 6 participating companies submitted as outcome of the organizational diagnosis : Reports presented to Company boards and gender committees
8. GES PS Syllabus developed and officially handed over to the University of The Gambia for integration into the UTG Curriculum
9. Action plans of 6 companies developed
10. Baseline study on private companies based on 6 pillars of the GES PS completed

Statement from the UNDP Resident Representative

For a long-time, the private sector in Gambia has been on the side-lines of promoting gender equality and women's empowerment, in accordance with international norms and standards, which are enshrined in the Convention of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1979), the Beijing Platform of Action (1995), and most recently Agenda 2030 of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Since it accounts for an increase in employment across industry and services, the private sector has a disproportionate degree of leverage and potential to transform the lives of disadvantaged women, youth, children, men and the elderly in the Gambia. To achieve this, the private sector needs a harmonized framework of action through which corporate policies, practices and products can be aligned to the SDGs, and particularly SDG 5 on gender equality. To address the challenge, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) introduced the Gender Equality Certification Programme for Private Enterprises (GES) as an institutional innovation to promote gender equality and women's empowerment at the work place and in the market place. The GES serves as a learning platform for private companies and partner government institutions on how to fine-tune their corporate policies and strategies, to address gender equality at the workplace, while documenting innovations and showcasing the impacts of private sector interventions on the development of the Gambia. It is therefore timely that the UNDP Country Office in the Gambia, has partnered with the GCCI to support the implementation of GES in Gambia's private sector.

Aissata De UNDP Resident Representative

QUOTES TO PICK FROM:

“Countries with more gender equality have better economic growth. Companies with more women leaders perform better. Peace agreements that include women are more durable. Parliaments with more women enact more legislation on key social issues such as health, education, anti-discrimination and child support. The evidence is clear: equality for women means progress for all.” -UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon

“If gender gaps can be closed in labour markets, education, health, and other areas, then poverty and hunger eradication can be accelerated. Achieving gender equality and women's empowerment is the right thing to do, and is a development imperative.” -UNDP Administrator Helen Clark

“Gender equality is more than a goal in itself. It is a precondition for meeting the challenge of reducing poverty, promoting sustainable development and building good governance.” Kofi Annan, former UN Secretary General

“No industry or country can reach its full potential until women reach their full potential.”

- Sheryl Sandberg, American activist, and Chief Operating Officer of Facebook

“There is a direct relationship between women's representation and a company with greater efficiency. Companies are more productive when they take advantage of a variety of ideas from both male and female perspectives. It's not only a conviction, it's practical.” Laura Albornoz Director of CODELCO Chile.