

BASELINE STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF THE WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT PRINCIPLES (WEPS) ON BUSINESSES IN GEORGIA

2021



In support of

**WOMEN'S
EMPOWERMENT
PRINCIPLES**



UN Women is the UN organization dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global champion for women and girls, UN Women was established to accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide.

UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to implement these standards. It stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on five priority areas: increasing women's leadership and participation; ending violence against women; engaging women in all aspects of peace and security processes; enhancing women's economic empowerment; and making gender equality central to national development planning and budgeting. UN Women also coordinates and promotes the UN system's work in advancing gender equality.

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Established by UN Women and the
UN Global Compact Office



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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

GCCI	Georgian Chamber of Commerce and Industry
GEL	Georgian Lari
Geostat	National Statistics Office of Georgia
ILO	International Labour Organization
IT	information technology
NGO	non-governmental organization
PSA	public service announcement
PwC	PricewaterhouseCoopers
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
W4T	Business Leaders' Federation "Women for Tomorrow"
WEPs	Women's Empowerment Principles

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Background

Georgia has made significant progress in terms of the legislative and policy landscape related to gender equality and women's empowerment. It ratified the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1994. The Constitution and the Law of Georgia on Gender Equality provide women and men with equal rights and opportunities and recognize the need for temporary special measures to achieve meaningful equality between women and men. Gender equality is reflected in other relevant laws and in numerous policies, strategies and action plans. However, challenges remain in implementation, including in areas related to women's economic empowerment. Women spend 45 hours a week on homemaking – the equivalent of working a full-time job, with regular overtime.¹ According to the 2020 Global Gender Gap Report, Georgia ranked 61st among 153 countries with regard to economic participation and opportunity. Social and cultural barriers, the gendered division of work and unpaid care work as well as weaker financial incentives for women to work, as reflected in the gender pay gap, constitute the major obstacles preventing

women from engaging in income-generating activities.² There is a more than 5 per cent difference in the unemployment rate among women and men, at 12.63 per cent and 6.99 per cent respectively. The official government statistics estimated the gender wage gap to be 36.2 per cent in 2019, and 56.9 per cent of women participated in the labour force, as opposed to only 38.2 per cent of men.³ Informal employment and the lack of stable job prospects in Georgia's regions make rural women most vulnerable economically. In this context, the private sector can play an important role in gender equality and women's empowerment.

According to UN Women, the private sector is increasingly recognized as a key player not only to drive economic growth but also to promote sustainable social development, and companies are being held to account for their impact on society. With the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs) as a road map, the private sector can foster multi-stakeholder partnerships to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and advance gender equality in the workplace, marketplace and community.

Implementation of the WEPs in Georgia

In 2017, to strengthen the private sector's role in women's economic empowerment, with the support of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, UN Women launched the project "A Joint Action for Women's Economic Empowerment in Georgia" (JAWE).

The private sector is one of the key stakeholders in the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment; thus, its engagement was one of the priorities of the project. The WEPs are a set of principles offering guidance to businesses on how to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in the workplace, marketplace and

1 UN Women, Women's Economic Inactivity and Engagement in the Informal Sector in Georgia (2018).

2 UN Women, Women's Economic Empowerment in the South Caucasus – Project Brief (2018).

3 Geostat, Women and Men in Georgia 2020.

community.⁴ Established by the UN Global Compact and UN Women, the WEPs are informed by international labour and human rights standards and are grounded in the recognition that businesses have a stake in, and a responsibility for, gender equality and women's empowerment. The WEPs are a primary vehicle for corporate delivery on gender equality dimensions of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The WEPs encompasses seven principles:

Principle 1: High-level corporate leadership

Principle 2: Fair treatment of all women and men at work without discrimination

Principle 3: Employee health, well-being and safety

Principle 4: Education and training for career advancement

Principle 5: Enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practices

Principle 6: Community initiatives and advocacy

Principle 7: Measurement and reporting

According to UN Women, as of 1 March 2021, more than 5,000 companies in 141 countries, representing collectively over 10 million employees, have signed and committed to implementing the WEPs.

In 2018, an awareness-raising campaign was launched throughout Georgia to increase public awareness of the role that the private sector can play to accelerate the implementation of the SDGs and the equally vital role that women can play when they are empowered and actively included in the economy.

The implementation of the WEPs in signatory companies in Georgia was supported by a consultant and two partners: the Business Leaders' Federation "Women for Tomorrow" (W4T) and the Georgian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GCCI). The GCCI is the largest business association in Georgia (representing more than 1,000 companies), while

W4T is a business federation of women entrepreneurs and women-led businesses. UN Women together with the partners provided companies information on why gender equality is critical to business performance and helped them identify and implement further actions.

Businesses' increased understanding of the importance of gender equality was evidenced by the increased number of WEPs companies in Georgia, growing from 25 to 44 in 2019 and reaching almost 80 companies by October 2020. Participatory Gender Audits (PGAs) through the WEPs Gender Gap Analysis Tool⁵ were conducted with companies interested in committing to the WEPs to assess their gender mainstreaming gaps and needs. Trainings were held to gender-sensitize companies to promote understanding of the benefits of gender equality in the workplace and how staff can contribute to an enabling environment that respects human rights and diversity. UN Women provided technical assistance to WEPs signatory companies by assisting them in developing WEPs strategies and action plans and revising internal and external policies and practices, particularly corporate sourcing policies to increase women's inclusion in value chains. WEPs signatory companies were also supported to develop gender-sensitive recruitment practices, to launch workplace mentoring programmes, to establish sexual harassment complaints mechanisms, and to create opportunities for women's career advancement, particularly for vulnerable groups of women, through the provision of scholarships, mentorships, internships, transitional job placement programmes, study/training grants and other types of support. Companies were also provided with incentives such as public recognition in annual award ceremonies on the local and global level.

Since 2018, almost every company has taken concrete actions to contribute to gender equality and empower women after signing the WEPs. This report will highlight some of the initiatives launched by the companies as relayed through the case studies in the following chapters and appendices.

⁴ See <https://www.weps.org/about> (accessed on 20 February 2021).

⁵ The WEPs Gender Gap Analysis Tool was developed by UN Women and can be accessed at <https://weps-gapanalysis.org/>.

Baseline study

Rationale

The overall goal of the assignment is to collect baseline data and analyse information on the work undertaken by the WEPs signatory companies in Georgia on gender equality and women's empowerment from 2017 to 2020. In addition to the baseline study, through the case studies of good practices, the study report intends to assess the extent to which business outcomes were improved by inclusive company policies and culture.

Objectives

In line with the Terms of Reference (ToR), the baseline study aims to document the performance of WEPs signatory companies and provide recommendations for further interventions, as follows:

- ▶ Quantification of undertaken work by companies
 - Statistical data on gender diversity and women's leadership at all levels (including top management, middle management, boards, staff)
 - WEPs implementation per principle at companies in respective years (2017-2020), including specific measures undertaken by the companies to promote women's economic empowerment in the workplace, marketplace and community
 - Statistical data on the number of women supported through various initiatives under each principle
 - Benefits the companies gained through implementing the WEPs (quantified in numbers)
- ▶ Monetization of WEPs work
 - Value-for-money analysis of WEPs work undertaken by the companies
 - Monetary value (where possible) of the pro-bono activities undertaken by the companies for the benefit of women in the community

- ▶ Demonstration of real cases of companies implementing the WEPs
 - Case studies of good corporate practices, initiatives and campaigns
 - Business cases for gender diversity in the workplace and the various success factors that drive company behaviour for inclusion
- ▶ COVID-19 effect on WEPs implementation
 - Company actions and innovative solutions to promote gender equality and women's social and economic inclusion in the workplace, marketplace and community during COVID-19
- ▶ Recommendations for future programmatic interventions of UN Women

A consortium led by PwC Georgia and in association with PwC India (jointly referred to as "PwC") was commissioned by UN Women Georgia to conduct the baseline study to analyse the WEPs work accomplished in Georgia. The role of PwC was to roll out the study and develop a report summarizing the WEPs signatory companies' experience and outcomes of their work related to gender equality and women's empowerment. The study report will be used to raise greater awareness of the tangible business benefits of diversity and inclusion within private sector companies in Georgia. At the same time, the study report will help UN Women analyse the results of WEPs work accomplished in Georgia and use it for UN Women's future programming.

Our approach and methodology

Our approach

A three-phased approach was adopted for the study implementation and is described in the diagram below.

PHASE I	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Prepare a workplan with a brief description of the activities to be undertaken, methodologies to be used, time frames and corresponding team members responsible for each activity▶ Finalize the survey questionnaire and interview guide in Georgian and English
PHASE II	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Collect information via an online survey from the WEPs signatory companies based on a survey questionnaire▶ Conduct in-depth interviews with UN Women's consultant, partner organizations (W4T and the GCCI) and selective WEPs signatory companies
PHASE III	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Submit the draft report▶ Produce the final report for UN Women in Georgian and in English, incorporating feedback from UN Women

Our methodology

This report is a consolidation of the work undertaken by PwC to meet the project objectives. A mixed-model research method was used throughout the project that combines quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques and analysis, specifically:

- ▶ Quantitative study – online survey
- ▶ Qualitative study – in-depth interviews

Online survey: Using the interview guideline prepared by UN Women Georgia, the PwC team developed a detailed questionnaire that covered all

aspects of the undertaken WEPs work. The questionnaire included structured questions aligned with the key purpose of the baseline study and the critical parameters to be assessed under the study. Additional open-ended questions were used to understand the views and perspectives of the respondents. The questionnaire was agreed upon with UN Women Georgia's representatives and tested with the consultant and partners for their relevance and completeness. The full questionnaire is presented as Appendix 1 of this report.

The finalized questionnaire was uploaded to the Qualtrics online platform that was used to distribute the online survey questionnaire among the 80 WEPs signatory companies (the sample) in Georgia. The Qualtrics platform, in combination with Microsoft Excel, was used for the quantitative data analysis. In addition to the quantitative data, the qualitative data was analysed to identify the trends and patterns of responses to complement the research findings.

In-depth interviews: In addition to the online survey of the WEPs signatory companies, in-depth interviews were conducted with UN Women, its consultant, the partner organizations (W4T and the GCCI) and three WEPs signatory companies. The main purpose of these interviews was to gain insight into the following:

- Overall perspective of the need for the WEPs and the context in which the programme was initiated
- Processes, issues and challenges in initiating the WEPs in 2017 and beyond
- WEPs implementation per principle at companies over the years (2017-2020), including specific measures undertaken by the companies to promote women's economic empowerment in the workplace, marketplace and community
- Case studies of good corporate practices, initiatives and campaigns

- Perspective on the benefits that the companies gained through implementing the WEPs
- Business cases for gender diversity in the workplace and the various success factors that drive company behaviour for inclusion
- Company actions and innovative solutions to promote gender equality and women's social and economic inclusion in the workplace, marketplace and community during COVID-19
- Recommendations for future programmatic interventions of UN Women

Timeline

The baseline study was conducted during the period from December 2020 to February 2021.

Ethical considerations

This is a baseline study commissioned by UN Women Georgia. All views captured from various stakeholders are objective and clear of any biases and have been inclusive of the key ethical considerations.

PwC ensured that the study was conducted with the standards of integrity and respect for the beliefs, manners and customs of the social and cultural environment; for human rights and gender equality; and for the “do no harm” principle in light of the utilization of virtual platforms for research. Researchers respected the rights of institutions and individuals to provide information in confidence. Accordingly, researchers ensured that sensitive data are protected, cannot be traced to their source and must validate statements made in the report with those who provided the relevant information. All information was obtained with informed consent for the use of private information from those who provided it. Given that the study was conducted virtually, PwC requested that select critical respondents grant permission to have the conversation recorded for internal purposes only.

Ethical considerations were applied at the following two stages:

(i) Prior to initiation of the study:

- Utilizing innovation for data collection in light of COVID-19, including methods like online surveys and virtual platforms for in-depth interviews.
- Including a gender adviser in the study team – We understand that ethics is not just about the procedure but about being reflective about possible ethical issues within the local context, taking a step back, discussing, creating mitigation strategies and adjusting plans before heading into data collection. In this regard, the gender adviser contributed by providing the perspective on the national context in order to frame a holistic and ethical study design.

(ii) During data collection and reporting:⁶

- Securing personal and sensitive information – We were managed personal data with utmost confidentiality and were solely used for the purpose of the study. No phone numbers were collected.
- Omitting personal information – No personal information was collected during the roll-out of the online survey. This ensured limited access to the respondent's personal information and also provided anonymity to the responses.
- Conducting face-to-face interviews – In light of COVID-19, all respondents were asked if they would like to be interviewed virtually or face-to-face.
- Accounting for biases and limitations – The study team was sensitive to the fact that surveys can be prone to biases due to restricted sample frames or low response rates. Since accurately presenting findings is core to the integrity of the evidence generation, we have acknowledged any possible bias and potential lack of representativeness of the data and all potential limitations/caveats.

6 See <http://www.unstudy.org/document/detail/2866> (accessed on 28 January 2021).

- Making select recordings – Given that the study was mostly virtual in nature, the study team requested permission to record the conversation for select respondents; if permission was granted, the team then recorded the conversation for internal documentation purposes only.
- Protecting data – The study team treated data systems as valuable organizational assets; thus, data backup was a mandatory affair. Further, the team safeguarded sensitive data to guarantee privacy and confidentiality; for example, the team's servers were accessible to limited study members only.
- Maintaining independence – The study team respected the independent nature of the study and refrained from influencing or applying undue pressure on those participating in it.
- Ensuring impartiality – The study team shared no personal relationship with any stakeholder (internally and externally), ensuring unbiased behaviour. Further, the use of data for the study was also impartial and respected, protected and promoted human rights as per appropriate international standards. The study did not discriminate on the basis of gender, race, religion or any other factor.
- Upholding accountability – The study was conducted in a rigorous, fair and balanced way, and any judgments made have been based on sound and complete evidence that can be verified.

Study limitations

Some of the limitations of the study include the following:

- The study was conducted during the long winter and holiday period of December and January, which limited the participation of the companies due to their absence from offices. A total of 40 companies completed the online survey, out of the total 80 signatory companies. The study primarily depends on the perspective and views of the respondent/signatory companies and not based on supportive documentation or other evidence.
- Not all online survey participants provided explanatory information, and some of them only shared partial explanatory responses.
- In-depth interviews were conducted with a limited number of selected WEPS signatory companies and stakeholders, and their comments do not claim to cover the opinions of all WEPS signatory companies.

This report summarizes the key findings, analysis and recommendations drawn from the online survey and in-depth interview responses.

CHAPTER II

PROFILE OF THE STUDY PARTICIPANTS

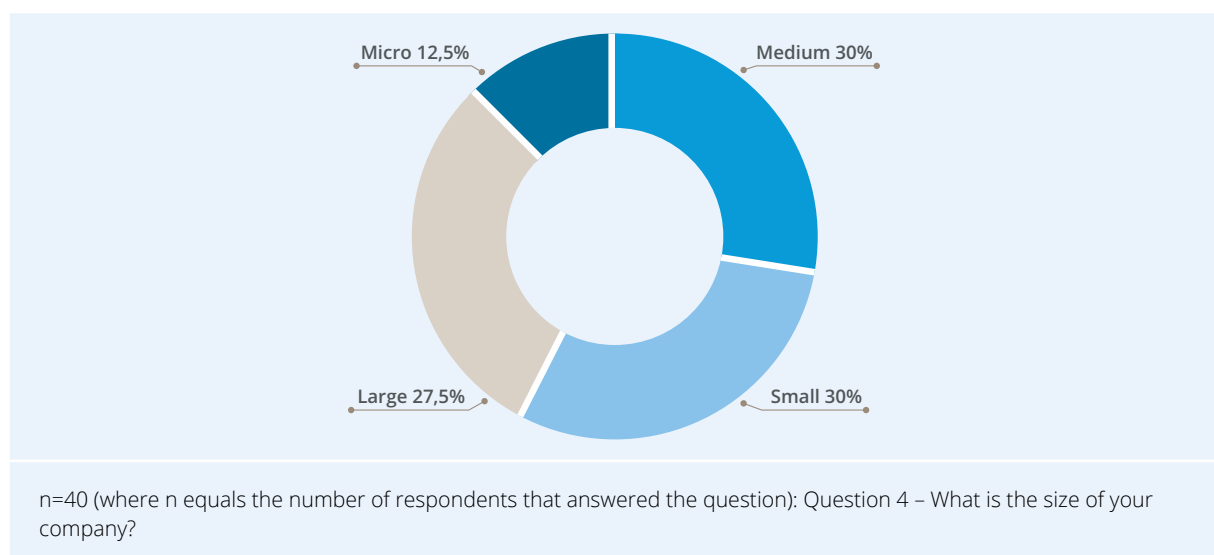
The online survey was completed by 40 signatory companies. As demonstrated in Figure 2, 77 per cent of the online survey participants are mostly operating in Tbilisi. Only six respondents (23 per cent) are conducting most of their economic activities in the regions of Georgia.

An almost equal amount of the online survey participants represents large, medium and small-sized companies, while only 13 per cent of respondents are from micro-sized companies. The majority of the respondents are represented by companies from the financial and insurance sector (20 per cent), followed by companies engaged in professional,

scientific and technical activities (18 per cent) and administrative and support service activities (10 per cent).

The stakeholders who are engaged in managing the WEPs work in the private companies expressed that the success of WEPs implementation is not linked to the size of the company. The only criterion used for signatories was their number of staff (at least 10 employees). The other stakeholders also indicated that, nevertheless, having large companies is important as it establishes role models for other companies to follow.

FIGURE 1
Companies by size⁷



⁷ Size of companies by number of employees: micro – employing up to 9 people; small – employing between 10 and 49 people; medium – employing between 50 and 249 people; large – employing more than 250 people.

FIGURE 2

Companies by location

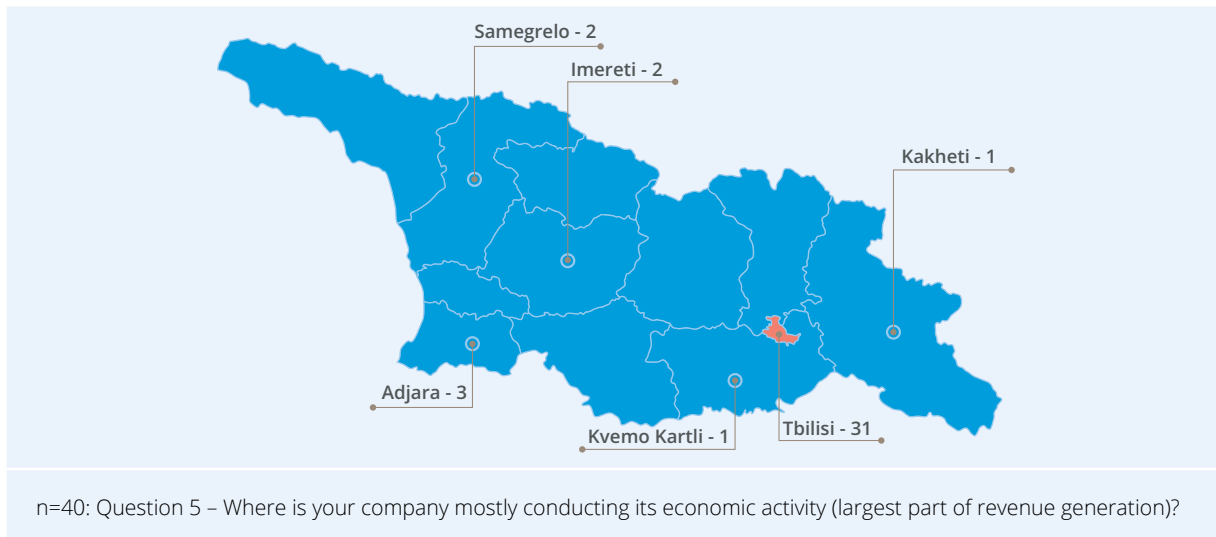
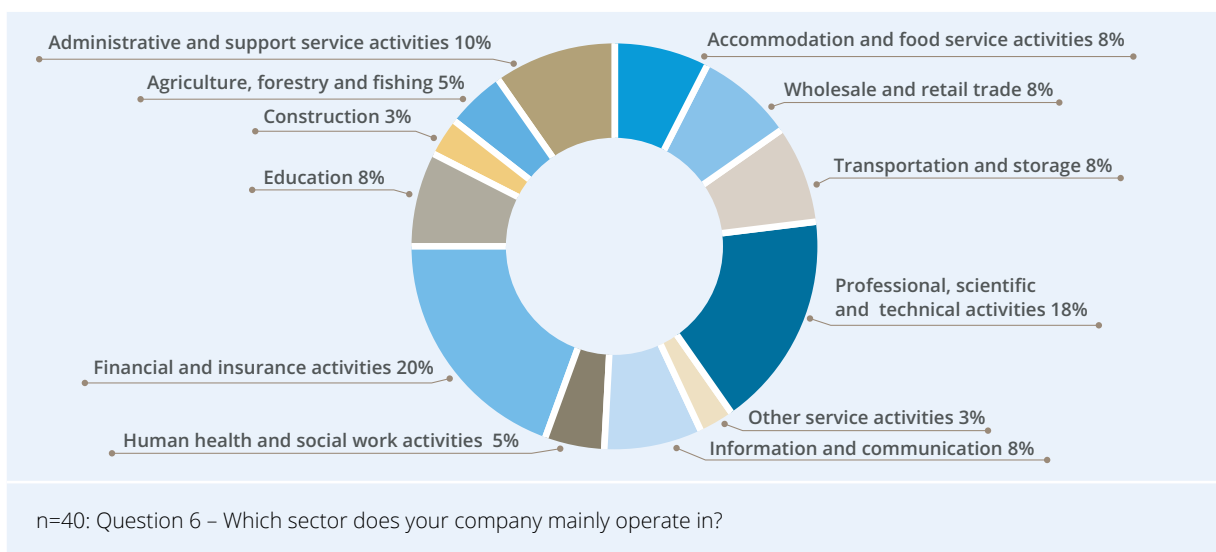


FIGURE 3

Companies by sector



According to the stakeholders representing UN Women Georgia, at the initial stage of the project, there was a lack of awareness at the private sector level about UN campaigns and overall gender issues. During the delivery of the project, the goal was to determine the readiness of the private sector to start WEPs work, and most of the initial signatory

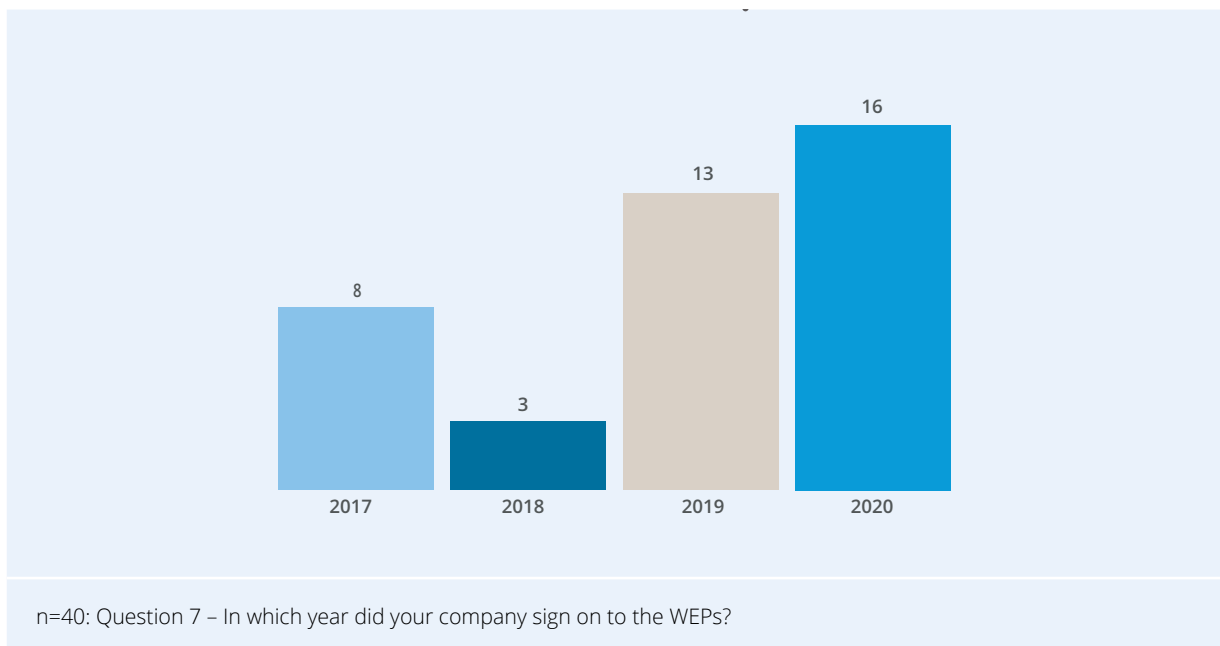
companies were directly approached by UN Women Georgia. In the ensuing years, more signatories joined through the support of W4T and the GCCI. Still, signing up the companies is only the first step; the real challenge is related to the effort needed to implement the WEPs, including significant resources for technical assistance.

A diverse range of companies have joined the signatories since the WEPs' inception in 2017. This has included companies from the microfinance, hospitality, communications and IT sectors. However, as reflected in Figure 3, the two sectors that represent more than 10 per cent of the signatories are from financial and insurance activities (20 per cent) and professional, scientific and technical activities (18

per cent). Segregating the companies by the year in which they signed on to the WEPs, as demonstrated in Figure 4, reflects that the majority of respondent companies became WEPs signatories in 2020 (40 per cent), followed by 2019 (32 per cent) and 2017 (20 per cent), while only 8 per cent of companies joined the WEPs in 2018.

FIGURE 4

Companies by the year they joined the WEPs



CHAPTER III

ANALYSIS OF THE BASELINE STUDY

Gender diversity and women's leadership

Women's active participation and decision-making in the economy is crucial for long-term economic prosperity. According to UN Women Georgia, companies and organizations achieve success in the economy when they take action to eliminate gender stereotypes in the workplace and ensure that the talents, skills and perspectives of women are welcomed and valued in the boardroom. Building gender equality into the corporate governance and board leadership translates into tangible success for companies.

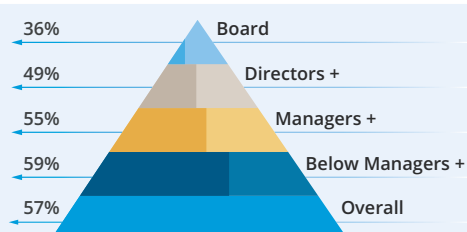
The respondents were asked about their knowledge regarding their company's share of female employees across different positions at the time of joining

the WEPs and subsequently by the end of 2020. The aim was to understand whether there has been any shift in the number of women across different positions and whether signing the WEPs had any role to play in this.

According to the analysis, when compared among all online survey respondents, there has been almost no change in the share of female employees by level of employment. The total number of staff employed in all online survey participant companies has increased by 54 per cent (from 10,471 to 16,125 employees). As reflected in Figures 5 and 6, there was an overall 1 per cent increase in the number of female employees (from 57 per cent to 58 per cent).

FIGURE 5

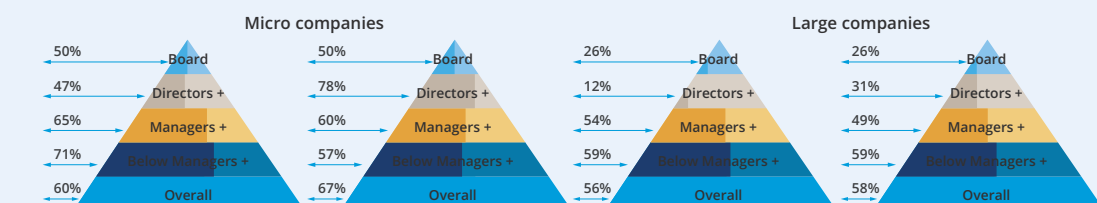
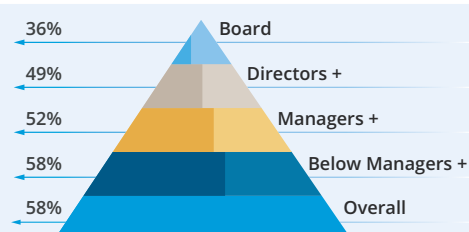
Share of female employees by level at the time that the company joined the WEPs



n=40: Question 8 – Can you provide the split of your employees by gender during the year when you joined the WEPs?
n=40: Question 9 – Can you provide the recent split of your employees by gender?

FIGURE 6

Share of female employees by level by the end of 2020

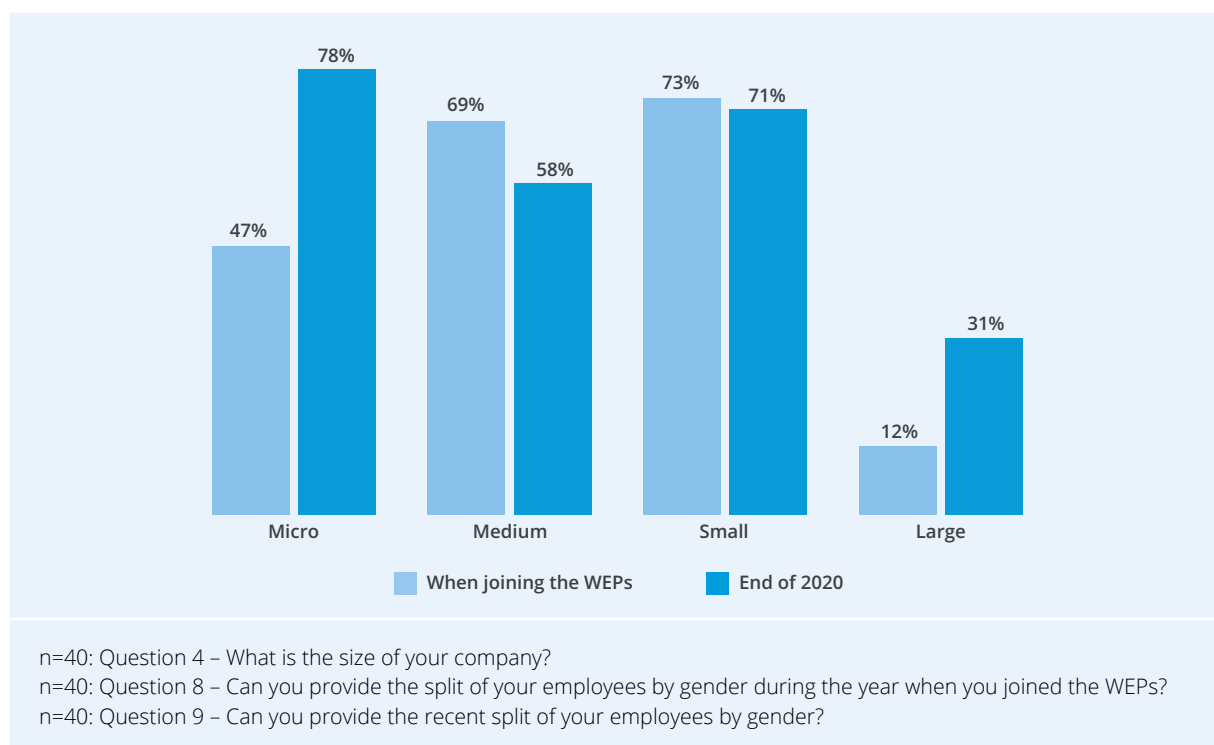


n=40: Question 4 – What is the size of your company?
n=40: Question 8 – Can you provide the split of your employees by gender during the year when you joined the WEPs?
n=40: Question 9 – Can you provide the recent split of your employees by gender?

The difference between Figures 5 and 6 demonstrated a very limited change in the overall number of female employees in all respondent companies, including the number of women in leadership roles. However, there are significant changes if respondents are compared by the size of the company and the sectors in which they are employed. As evident in Figure 7, since joining the WEPs, the share of female employees in leadership roles (i.e. in the position of director and above) has increased by 40 per cent in the micro-sized companies and has almost tripled in the large-sized companies. However,

there was almost no change in the small-sized companies, and a drop of 19 per cent was reported by respondents representing the medium-sized companies. Even though small and medium-sized enterprises represent 60 per cent of all of the online survey respondents, overall, there has been a 150 per cent increase in women's leadership since companies became signatories of the WEPs. This can be explained by the significant increase in women's leadership among the large-sized companies, as they employed 89 per cent of all staff in respondent companies by the end of 2020.

FIGURE 7
Change in women's leadership since joining the WEPs



As reflected in Figure 8, there is a considerable difference in the number of female employees in the position of director and above when compared among sectors. In half of the sectors, there was an increase in female leadership. Almost no change was identified in three sectors (agriculture; construction; and transportation and storage), while a decrease was observed in three other sectors (education; financial and insurance activities; and wholesale and retail trade). The change in the share of women in

all positions also varies from sector to sector. As of the end of 2020, the top three sectors in terms of an increased total number of women employees were administrative and support service activities (a 19 per cent increase); human health and social work activities (a 13 per cent increase); and construction (a 10 per cent increase). The largest drop was identified in the financial and insurance activities sector (a 52 per cent drop).

FIGURE 8

Share of female employees in positions when the company joined the WEPS and by the end of 2020, by sector

Sectors	Number of companies	Overall (when joining the WEPS)	Overall (end of 2020)	Directors+ (when joining the WEPS)	Directors+ (end of 2020)
Other service activities	1	100%	100%	70%	100%
Human health and social work activities	2	87%	100%	91%	100%
Administrative and support service activities	4	78%	97%	46%	86%
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	2	72%	72%	50%	50%
Financial and insurance activities	8	70%	18%	70%	38%
Professional, scientific and technical activities	7	69%	75%	68%	75%
Wholesale and retail trade	3	54%	50%	54%	50%
Accommodation and food service activities	3	47%	45%	1%	57%
Education	3	46%	52%	75%	43%
Information and communication	3	28%	22%	33%	40%
Transportation and storage	3	28%	24%	31%	30%
Construction	1	24%	34%	67%	67%

n=40: Question 6 – Which sector does your company mainly operate in?

n=40: Question 8 – Can you provide the split of your employees by gender during the year when you joined the WEPS?

n=40: Question 9 – Can you provide the recent split of your employees by gender?

How to read the map

The above heat map indicates what percentage of women were employed by companies from various sectors for all employees together (overall) and for directors and above, including what was their share by the end of 2020. For example, the share of all female employees in the education sector (only covering respondent companies) prior to joining the WEPS was equal to 46 per cent and increased to 52 per cent by the end of 2020. The share of female employees in the position of director and above in the same sector was equal to 75 per cent prior to joining the WEPS and was reduced to 43 per cent by the end of 2020. Please note that respondents could choose more than one answer and that percentages do not add up to 100 per cent.

Company benefits through implementation of the WEPs

The respondents were asked about their initial motivation to join the WEPs and whether this motivation has actually resulted in benefits to their companies. The aim was to understand how companies' perception of WEPs benefits changed with experience and over time.

The online survey demonstrated that the overall ranking of criteria for their motivation to join the WEPs and the actual benefit that they received is mostly similar. According to Figure 9, the strongest motivator for the survey respondents to join the WEPs was attributed to the idea that "contributing to women's empowerment will also help the economy". The same criterion was named as the second largest benefit that companies gained from the WEPs. The largest benefit that 58 per cent of companies received from the WEPs was related to "a stronger corporate reputation". The positive effect that the WEPs work has had on female employee productivity was among the top three main motivators (63 per cent of respondents) and actual benefits (48 per cent of respondents) indicated by the respondent companies. This was also corroborated through in-depth interviews with UN Women Georgia, according to which the motivation of companies to join

the WEPs is diverse – from enhancing their reputation and fulfilling the requirements of international corporate leadership to following other companies in the sector.

The most significant difference (20 per cent) between motivation and actual benefit was reported on the criteria of "contributing to women's empowerment will also help the economy" and "company's contribution to the SDGs". None of the criteria was indicated to be of greater benefit than the degree of motivation. Nevertheless, the difference between the motivation and the actual benefit was closest for three types of responses: (1) an increase in interested investors who have substantial confidence in the company; (2) the company's increased access to capital/financing; and (3) an increase in loyal customers. Among these responses, the one reported as the lowest in terms of both motivation and benefit is related to the "company's increased access to capital/financing".

However, the interviews revealed that motivation factors vary based on individual focal points, CEOs and HR officers; thus, all require an individual approach.

FIGURE 9**Companies by motivation and benefits of the WEPs**

Reason	Motivated	Benefited
A stronger corporate reputation	68%	58%
Contributing to women's empowerment will also help the economy	73%	53%
Company's female employees are motivated and more productive	63%	48%
An improvement in internal communication, better commitment from colleagues and the promotion of a culture of shared values	60%	43%
Company's contribution to SDGS	55%	35%
An increase in the recruitment and better retention of talented individuals	40%	30%
An increase in interested investors who have substantial confidence in the company	28%	25%
Attracting more female customers/clients	35%	25%
An increase in loyal customers	25%	20%
Improved competitiveness in the market	25%	18%
There is better retention of female staff	25%	15%
Less violence and reducing company costs by addressing violence	10%	10%
Company's increased access to capital/financing	8%	5%
Other	5%	5%
n=40: Question 10 – What motivated your company to join the WEPs, and what actual benefits did you receive?		

Spending of signatory companies on WEPs activities

The respondents were asked to estimate the amount that their companies spent on WEPs work internally and externally from 2018 to 2020, as well as the amount spent on procurements from women suppliers in 2020. The aim was to quantify the spending of respondent WEPs signatory companies on activities related to WEPs implementation.

In total, 21 respondent companies indicated spending on WEPs work internally and externally throughout the 2018-2020 period and on women suppliers in 2020. The total amount of their spending amounted to 1 million Georgian Lari (GEL).⁸ As reflected in Figure 10, the largest amount (GEL 446,000) was spent on procuring goods/services from women entrepreneurs and women-owned businesses. A total of GEL 573,000 was spent by

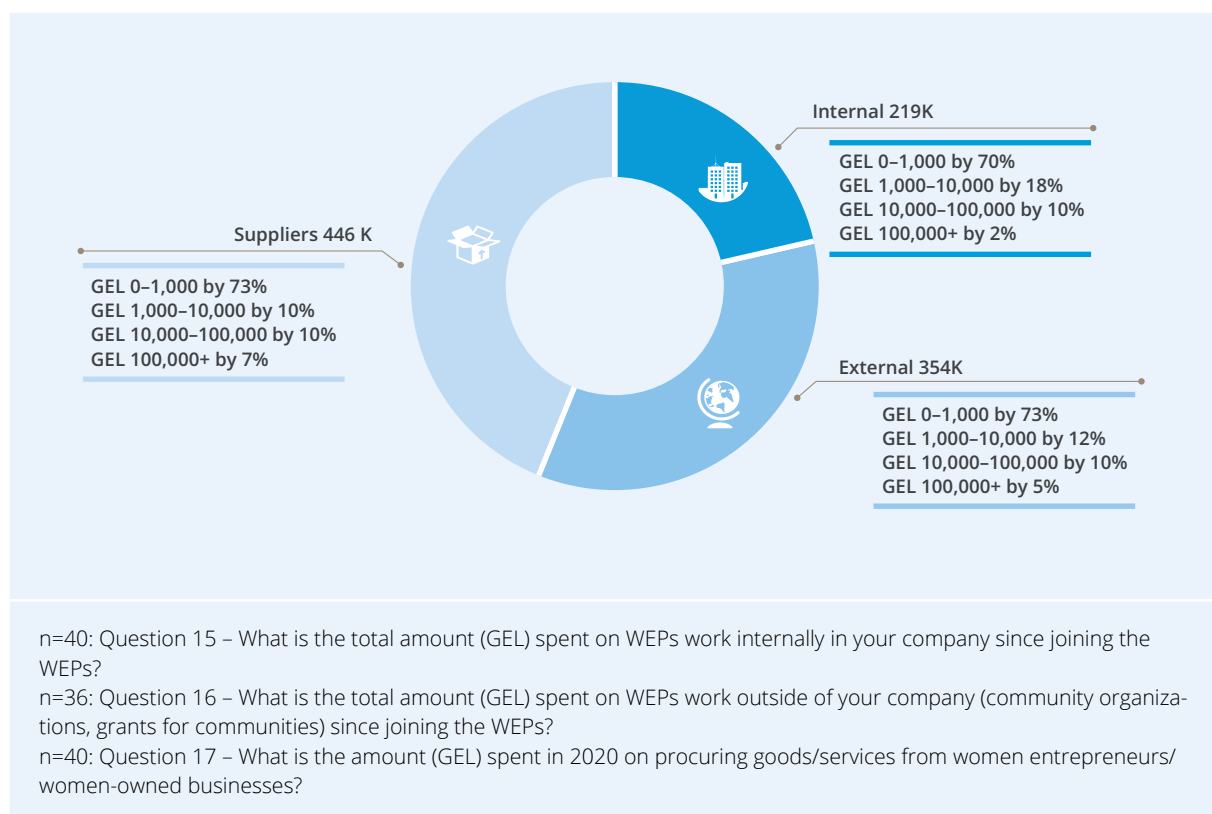
respondent companies on WEPs activities that included training, grants and scholarships for their internal staff and money spent on community organizations and grants for women outside of the companies. According to the in-depth interviews, the signatory companies were eager to invest in women employees' training since an increase in women employees' skill level was directly beneficial to the companies.

While spending varies from organization to organization, the large majority of companies (70–73 per cent) spent from GEL 0 to GEL 1,000, and only 2–7 per cent of companies spent more than GEL 100,000. There is no clear correlation between companies' spending and their size.

⁸ The USD/GEL exchange rate at the time of the study was equal to 3.30.

FIGURE 10

Companies by total spending on WEPs activities (procurement from women suppliers, WEPs activities inside and outside of companies)⁹



Monetarization of pro-bono activities undertaken by companies

One of the important factors of WEPs work is to capitalize on extensive resources and regional coverage of the private sector to enable access to a larger share of the population. Signatory companies that gain knowledge and guidance from the implementation of WEPs work are encouraged to empower women through pro-bono activities, including training women outside of their companies, promoting and branding products produced by female entrepreneurs, providing services (mainly consultancy services) for free to women entrepreneurs, and providing external mentoring and coaching to women in the communities, among other types of activities. More details about the pro-bono activities undertaken by WEPs companies is presented under Principle 6.

In addition to the actual monetary spending, companies dedicated their and their managers' time for various external WEPs activities. The respondents were asked to estimate the total amount of time that their employees spent on such external WEPs work. As seen in Figure 11, the total time spent by all respondent companies equals almost 2,500 hours from 2018 to 2020. The time was split between training women entrepreneurs outside of companies (60 per cent), supporting women entrepreneurs with promotion of their businesses (21 per cent), mentoring and coaching women in communities (11 per cent), supporting branding activities of women-owned businesses (5 per cent) and other activities like consultations and support for accounting activities (3 per cent). There is a

⁹ These estimates are based on online survey responses and were not verified with companies' financial reports.

significant increase in the total hours spent on all activities in 2020, especially the training of women entrepreneurs (66 per cent of the total hours spent on training activities). Signatory companies that were interviewed within the scope of the study indicated that due to the higher usage of online technologies

during COVID-19, companies were able to conduct more trainings and cover larger groups of women. The larger coverage of trainees was described as an advantage of online trainings, while the lack of face-to-face interaction was cited as a key disadvantage.

FIGURE 11

Total hours spent by employees on external WEPs work per year

External Work			2018	2019	2020	Total Hours
Training			212	290	958	1,460
Promotion			10	38	472	520
Mentorship/coaching			6	65	192	263
Branding			0	0	113	113
Other			0	30	65	95
Total			228	423	1,800	2,451
0-200 hrs	200-400 hrs	400-800 hrs	800-1200 hrs	1200-1500 hrs		
n=23: Question 19 – What is the total amount of time (in hours) spent by your employees on external WEPs work per year?						

These pro-bono activities undertaken by the respondents have benefited women in business and in communities outside of the WEPs companies. If such activities were undertaken by the consultants or service providers of UN Women Georgia, the

average rate of GEL 50–85 per hour would apply. Using these rates, it can be estimated that the indicative time spent by the respondent companies (2,451 hours) is equal in value to between GEL 122,550 and GEL 208,335.

Number of women supported

According to Figure 12, the total number of employees of respondent companies and women outside of their organization that received WEPs-related support from 2018 to 2020 equals almost 7,000 women. Most of the women (33 per cent) received support in professional development (for internal staff), followed by the training of employees on gender equality issues (17 per cent) and an online course on the prevention of sexual harassment (9 per cent). In 2020, compared to 2019, the number of employees who benefited from the company's other WEPs activities increased by more than 16

times. Other company activities from which women employees benefited included improved health insurance packages, flexible working hours, counselling and childcare support. There was also a 99 per cent increase in the number of women entrepreneurs and representatives of women's associations who were trained by WEPs companies, a 188 per cent increase in the number of women and girls who received scholarships from respondent companies and a 46 per cent increase in the number of women and girls who received internships. In 2020, there was also a minor drop of 7 per cent in the number of

employees trained on gender equality issues compared to 2019. However, there was an even more considerable 45 per cent drop in the number of women employees who were engaged in workplace mentorship programmes. This can be explained by the majority of companies working remotely during the COVID-19 lockdown in 2020. During this period,

more emphasis was placed on online trainings, which was reflected in the 56 per cent increase in the number of employees who completed an online course on the prevention of sexual harassment and a 46 per cent increase in the completion rate of the online course "I Know Gender".

FIGURE 12

Number of women/employees who received WEPs-related support by different activities per year

Women/employees	Number of companies	2018	2019	2020	Total
Women employees received professional development	13	15	1,191	1,089	2,295
Employees trained on gender equality issues	10	102	557	519	1,178
Women employees benefited from your company's other WEPs activities implemented	7	1	45	725	771
Employees completed the online course on the prevention of sexual harassment	11	184	184	281	649
Women employees engaged in workplace mentorship programme	9	4	386	214	604
Employees completed the online course "I Know Gender"	9	156	171	249	576
Women entrepreneurs/representatives of women's associations trained by your company	7	0	132	263	395
Women/girls received scholarships from the company	6	0	52	150	202
Women/girls received internships at the company	6	3	41	60	104
Women outside the company who benefited from your company's other WEPs activities implemented	5	0	30	43	73
Women/girls received grants from the company	4	0	0	70	70
External women mentees of your company	4	0	21	36	57
Total		465	2,810	3,699	6,974

n=35: Question 18 – Please indicate the number of women/girls/employees who received WEPs-related support for different activities (indicate the number for each year) that was spent on each activity (since joining the WEPs).

How to read the map

The above heat map indicates the number of women who received WEPs-related support from respondent companies over the years 2018, 2019 and 2020. For example, 15 women employees received professional development support from respondent companies in 2018. An additional 1,191 women received the same support in 2019 and 1,089 in 2020. In total, there were 2,295 women who received professional development support from respondent companies during this three-year period.

CHAPTER IV.

WEPS IMPLEMENTATION PER PRINCIPLE

Once a company becomes a WEPs signatory, an action plan based on a gender gap analysis of the company is developed to ensure the gradual implementation of the seven principles that are the core of WEPs work. Companies have no legal obligation to implement the principles, and their work is fully voluntary. As a result, accomplishment of the WEPs is different for each organization. Businesses can contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment in multiple ways. Beyond the basic responsibilities of respecting human rights, companies can choose from a menu of options to advance women's empowerment within their workplaces, marketplaces and communities. As reflected in Figure 13, the overall implementation of the WEPs by all respondent companies ranges from 52 per cent to 75 per cent.

According to the National Statistics Office of Georgia, the majority of companies in Georgia have male CEOs. Nevertheless, there is a slightly higher number of women-managed companies among the WEPs signatories in Georgia. According to the stakeholders engaged from the side of UN Women

Georgia, there is no evident trend that women-led companies are more successful with implementing the WEPs. This insight was further substantiated by the findings of the online survey. Figure 13 demonstrates that women-led organizations on average have only a 1 per cent higher level of implementation of all seven principles. The exception relates only to Principle 5, whereas figures for Principle 6 are almost equal for women- and men-led organizations. During the in-depth interviews, it was also emphasized that in certain cases of male CEOs, WEPs focal point duties are assigned to women employees as men are less interested in joining the implementation process and that it would be of more interest to women.

The highest level of WEPs implementation in women-led companies is related to Principles 2 and 7, while the lowest level of implementation occurs under Principle 5. The highest level of implementation in men-led enterprises is related to Principle 2, while Principles 4, 5 and 6 are equally implemented by the respondents (59 per cent).

FIGURE 13**WEPs implementation in women-led versus men-led companies, by principle**

Principles	All companies	Women's leadership	Men's leadership
All principles	64%	65%	64%
Principle 1: Establish high-level corporate leadership for gender equality	66%	68%	66%
Principle 2: Treat all women and men fairly at work — respect and support human rights and non-discrimination	75%	77%	74%
Principle 3: Ensure the health, safety and well-being of all women and men workers	65%	67%	63%
Principle 4: Promote education, training and professional development for women	60%	61%	59%
Principle 5: Implement enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practices that empower women	52%	46%	59%
Principle 6: Promote equality through community initiatives and advocacy	58%	58%	59%
Principle 7: Measure and publicly report on progress to achieve gender equality	73%	79%	65%

n=40: Questions 21–64

How to read the map

The above heat map indicates the share of all respondent companies that implemented the WEPs, as well as the share of women-led and men-led respondent companies that implemented the principles. The categorization of women- and men-led organizations was made based on the gender of the top manager in the organization. For example, 64 per cent of all respondent companies implemented Principle 1, while 68 per cent of women-led companies implemented Principle 2.

PRINCIPLE 1:

Establish high-level corporate leadership for gender equality

Principle 1 aims to establish high-level corporate leadership for gender equality and, according to UN Women, provides the basis for the successful implementation of all seven principles. As per the WEPS: “Corporate leadership is a key and integral part of making gender equality and women’s empowerment a top strategic priority. It publicly signals the CEO’s and the executive team’s goals and targets for implementing the WEPS and how the seven Principles will become part of the corporate sustainability strategy, day-to-day operations and organizational culture.”¹⁰

To implement Principle 1, businesses are encouraged to take the following steps:

- Affirm high-level support and direct top-level policies for gender equality and human rights
- Establish company-wide goals and targets for gender equality, and include progress as a factor in managers’ performance reviews
- Engage internal and external stakeholders in the development of company policies, programmes and implementation plans that advance equality
- Ensure that all policies are gender-sensitive – identifying factors that impact women and men differently – and that corporate culture advances equality and inclusion.¹¹

Under this principle, companies are also advised to review the requirements for board membership and other governance bodies to remove any discrimination or bias against women. Managers at all levels are expected to be held accountable, through performance reviews, for the results. A strong commitment from the highest level of government and organizations can help realize gender parity in corporate leadership.¹²

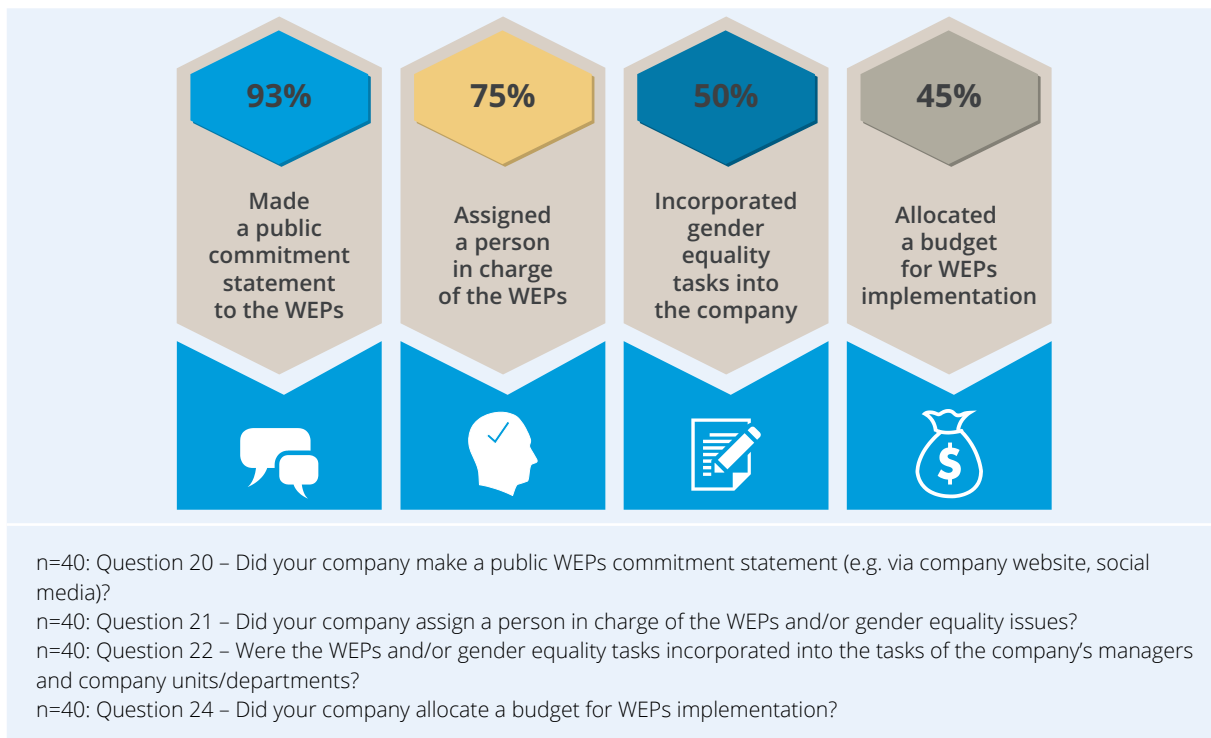
According to the stakeholders that work with signatory companies on implementing the WEPS, engagement of the CEO in the process and active-ness of the focal point is one of the key success factors for full implementation of the principles.

Almost all respondent companies made public WEPS commitment statements; three fourths of companies assigned a person in charge of the WEPS; half of them incorporated gender equality tasks into the job descriptions of the staff; and slightly less than half of respondents allocated a budget for WEPS implementation.

10 See <https://www.weps.org/principle/high-level-corporate-leadership> (accessed on 20 February 2021).

11 UN Women, Towards Equality in Business: Putting Gender Equality at the Heart of the Business Sector in Georgia (2019). Available at <https://georgia.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2019/11/toward-equality-in-business> (accessed on 12 March 2021).

12 UN Women, The Power of Working Together: Emerging Practices that Advance Women’s Economic Empowerment (2020). Available at https://www.weps.org/sites/default/files/2020-12/THE_POWER_OF_WORKING_TOGETHER_FINAL_0.pdf (accessed on 12 March 2021).



More details on this topic are provided in the section on gender diversity and women's leadership in Chapter III.

PRINCIPLE 2:

Treat all women and men fairly at work – respect and support human rights and non-discrimination

Principle 2 targets the treatment of all women and men fairly at work, as well as respect and support for human rights and non-discrimination. As per the WEPs: "Treating all women and men fairly at work aligns with international human rights principles. It also translates to better talent acquisition, higher employee retention and satisfaction, increased productivity and better decision-making. Removing all forms of discrimination in corporate policies, strategies, culture and practices is a solid step forward in a company's WEPs journey."¹³

Principle 2 commits businesses to treat all employees fairly, regardless of gender, and to respect and support human rights and non-discrimination. Signatories are encouraged to stand firmly against inequality, racism and discrimination and to ensure that the perspectives, skills and talents of women from diverse backgrounds with different abilities and identities are represented and valued in company initiatives, programmes and decision-making. When implementing the WEPs, an intersectional lens should underpin strategies for advancing gender equality and targeting racism and discrimination in the workplace.¹⁴

¹³ See <https://www.weps.org/principle/treat-all-women-and-men-fairly-work-without-discrimination> (accessed on 20 February 2021).

¹⁴ UN Women, Towards Equality in Business.

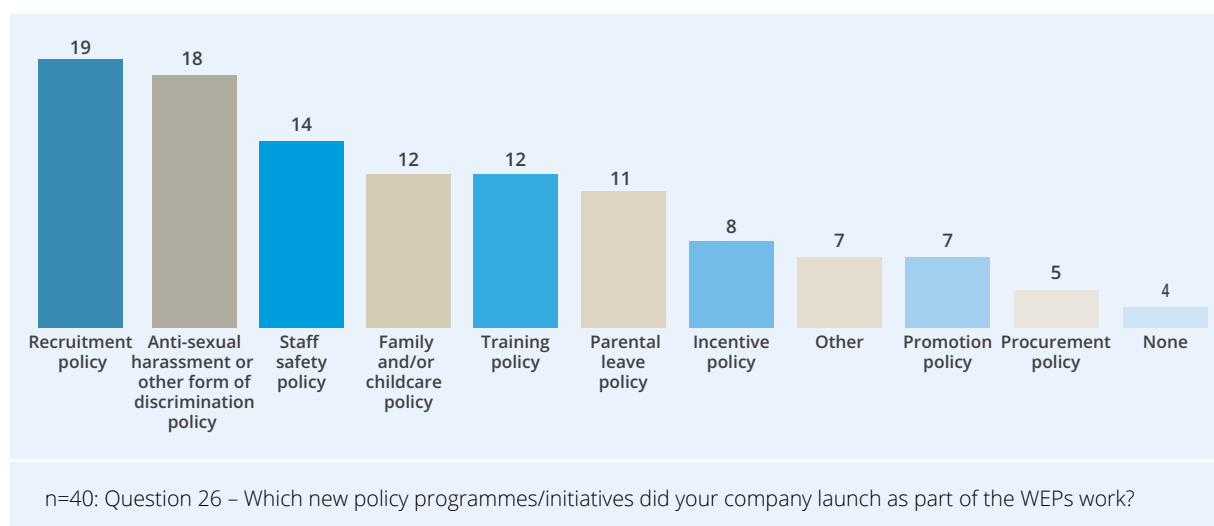
According to Principle 2, businesses can do the following:

- Pay equal remuneration, including benefits, for work of equal value, and strive to pay a living wage to all women and men
- Ensure that workplace policies and practices are free from gender-based discrimination
- Implement gender-sensitive recruitment and retention practices, and proactively recruit and appoint women to managerial and executive positions and to the corporate board of directors
- Assure sufficient participation of women – 30 per cent or greater – in decision-making and governance at all levels and across all business areas
- Offer flexible work options, leave and re-entry opportunities for positions of equal pay and status
- Support access to child and dependent care by providing services, resources and information to both women and men.¹⁵

The principle calls on companies and organizations to implement gender-sensitive recruitment and retention practices to proactively recruit and appoint women to managerial, executive and corporate board-level positions. As reflected in Figure 14, almost half of survey respondents introduced recruitment policies and policies on anti-sexual harassment and other forms of discrimination. It was highlighted during the in-depth interviews that sexual harassment policies were the most culturally sensitive and thus challenging for companies to introduce. About 30–35 per cent of companies implemented staff policies related to safety, family and/or childcare. The least popular answer among the respondents, with a 12 per cent response rate, was related to the introduction of procurement policies. Only 10 per cent of respondent WEPs signatories did not implement any of the listed policies. Companies that responded by selecting the option “other” included changes made to their company charter, code of ethics and/or corporate guidebook.

FIGURE 14

Ranking of new policy initiatives launched as part of WEPs work, by number of companies



15 UN Women, The Power of Working Together.

Figure 15 shows that 58 per cent of respondents reviewed their company policy documents in terms of gender equality or non-discrimination. About one fourth of companies consider that their company already had those policies in place, and only 15 per cent of companies made no changes at all.

According to Figure 16, most of the revisions were made in vacancy announcements (40 per cent), followed by an equal number of companies (25 per cent) who respectively updated their code of ethics, employment agreements and recruitment policies. Only 5 per cent of respondents updated the draft welcome mail. The “other” option mainly includes the company charter.

FIGURE 15
Companies by policy documents reviewed in terms of gender equality or non-discrimination

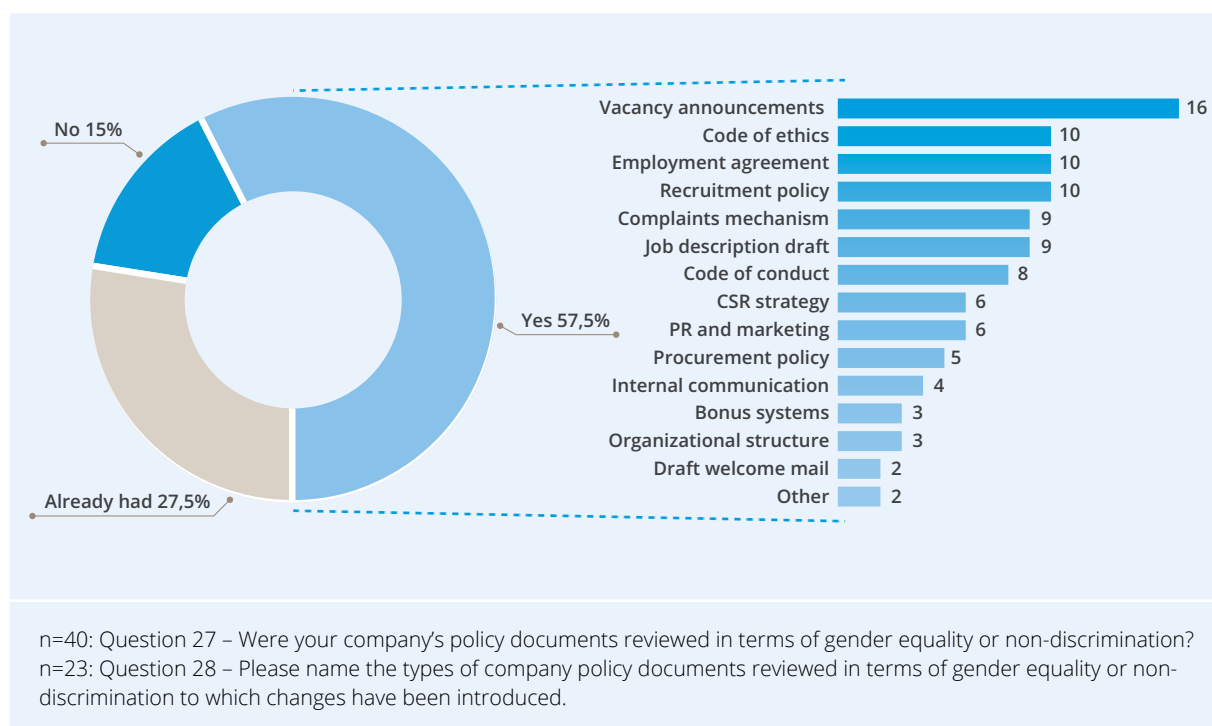
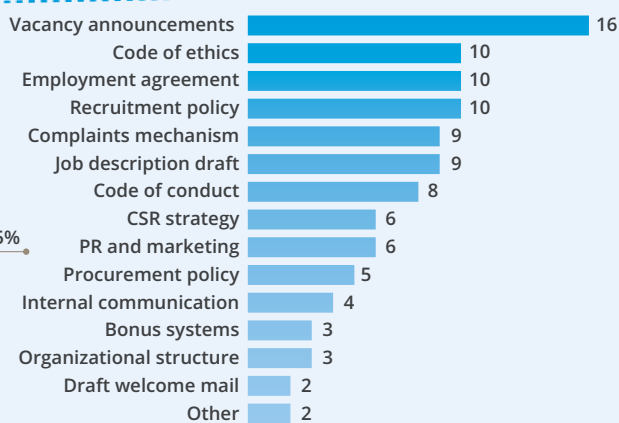


FIGURE 16
Types of documents reviewed

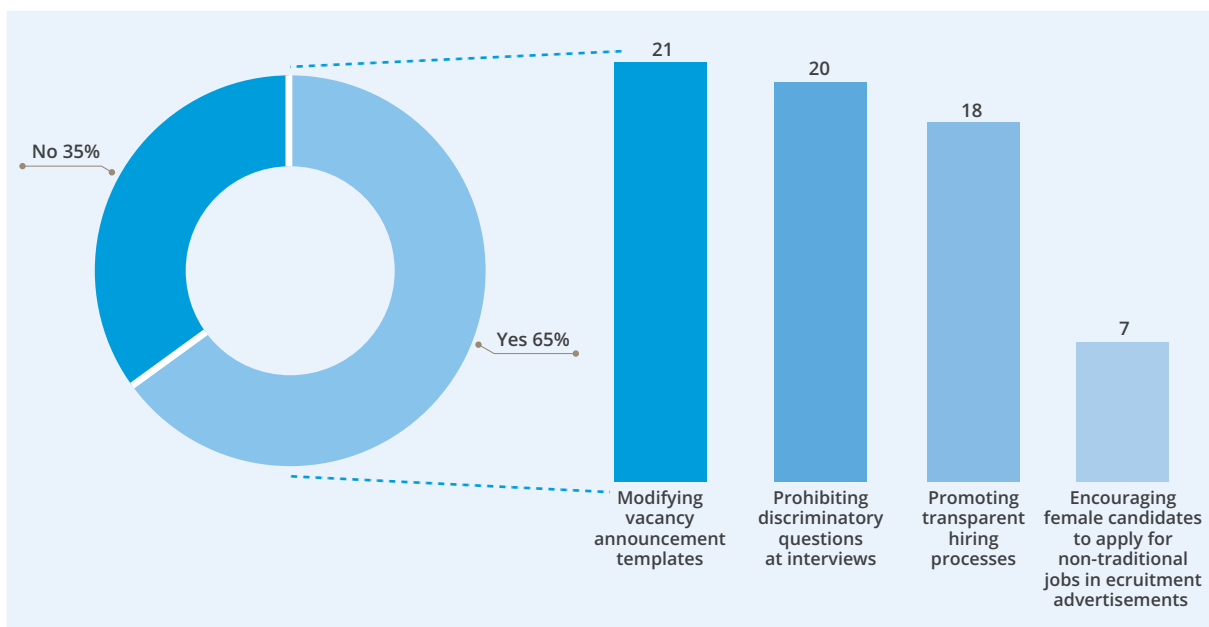


A “recruitment policy” was considered as one of the most popular responses among surveyed companies. Compared to 58 per cent of companies that “reviewed their policy documents in terms of gender equality and non-discrimination” in Figure 15, Figure 17 shows that a larger share (65 per cent) of respondents worked on improving their recruitment practices to avoid discrimination. About half of the

companies modified their vacancy announcement templates, prohibited discriminatory questions at interviews, promoted transparent hiring processes or implemented a combination of these practices. The least popular choice indicated by the respondents was encouraging female candidates to apply to non-traditional jobs in recruitment advertisements.

FIGURE 17

Companies by improved recruitment practices to avoid discrimination



n=40: Question 31 – Did your company improve recruitment practices to avoid discrimination?

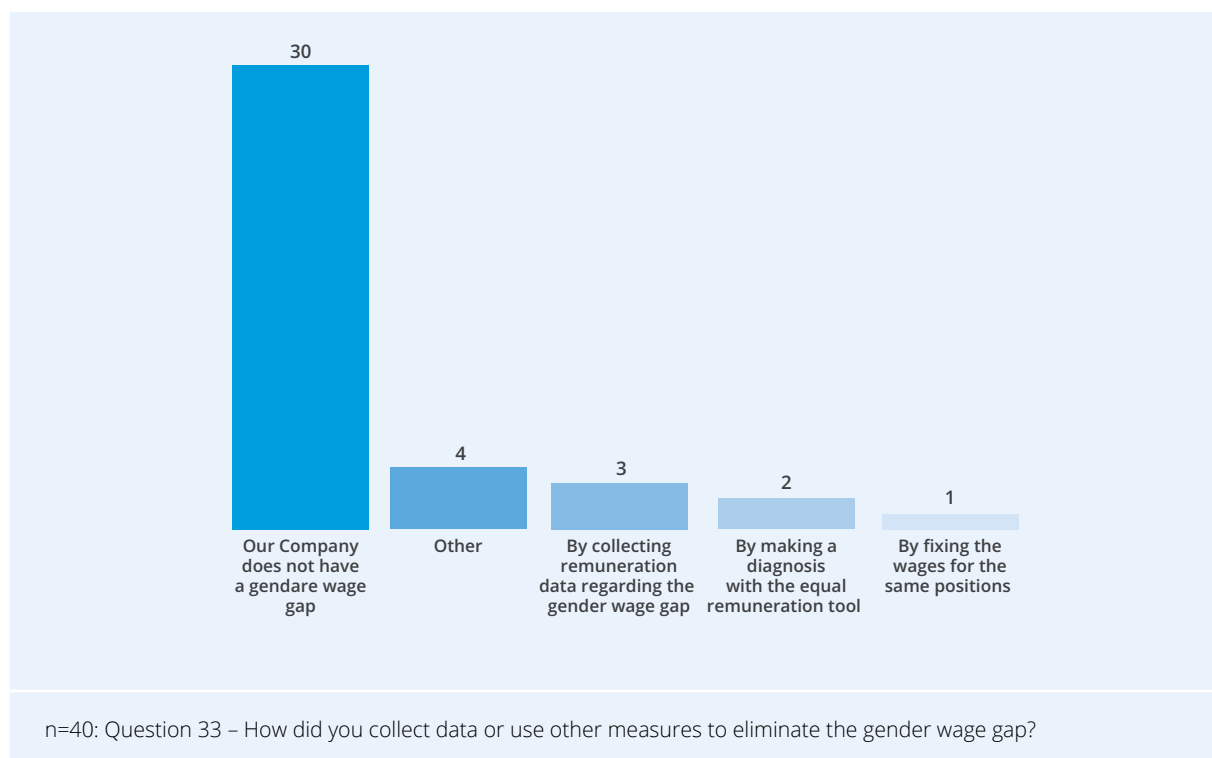
n=26: Question 32 – Please provide details regarding improved recruitment practices to avoid discrimination.

According to UN Women Georgia, companies play an important role in addressing gender pay gaps and are increasingly taking action to remove discrimination in the workplace. Still, many organizations do not yet uphold the principle of “equal pay for work of equal value”. Applying the principle of equal pay for work of equal value is critical to address the conscious and unconscious biases in determining the value of work and eliminating gender-based discrimination towards the achievement of gender equality.

According to Figure 19, three fourths of the online survey respondents do not consider or assume that their companies have gender wage gaps. Those companies that confirm wage gaps started the collection of remuneration data, made a diagnosis with the equal remuneration tool and fixed the wages for the same positions. Companies that indicated “other” as their response did not provide information regarding the undertaken measures.

FIGURE 19

Companies by type of measure undertaken to eliminate gender wage gaps



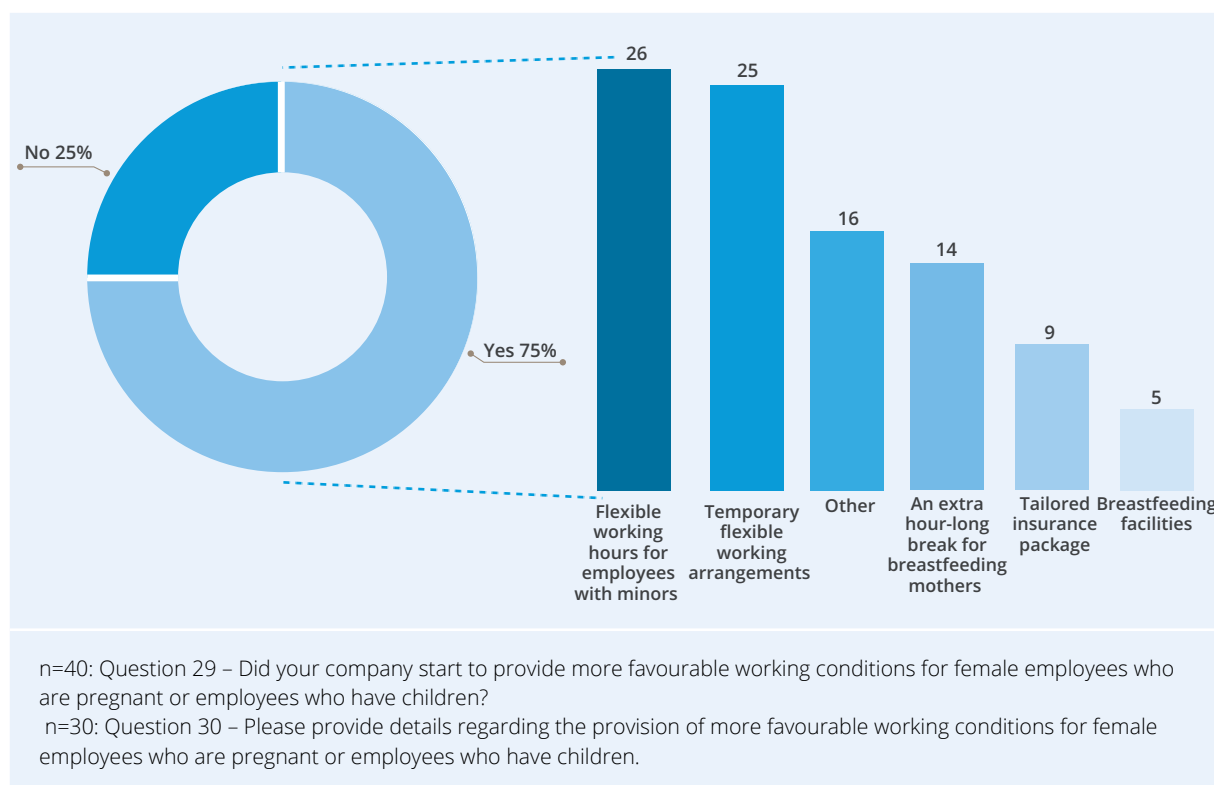
According to UN Women Georgia, companies are encouraged to establish family-friendly policies that fosters equal opportunities for mothers and non-mothers. Supporting parents in the workplace by establishing inclusive and comprehensive leave policies, encouraging the equal uptake of childcare, and providing flexible working arrangements are measures that contribute to gender equality, resulting in increased employee retention, reduced absenteeism and lowered overall recruitment costs.

As reflected in Figure 20, 75 per cent of respondents provided favourable working conditions for employees who are pregnant or who have children, including men. The largest number of respondents provided flexible working hours to employees with minors (65 per cent¹⁶) and/or provided temporary flexible working arrangements (62 per cent). Only 12 per cent of companies provided breastfeeding facilities to nursing mothers.

16 65 per cent of all 40 respondents and 87 per cent of 30 companies responded “yes” to the question related to providing favourable working conditions for employees who are pregnant or who have children.

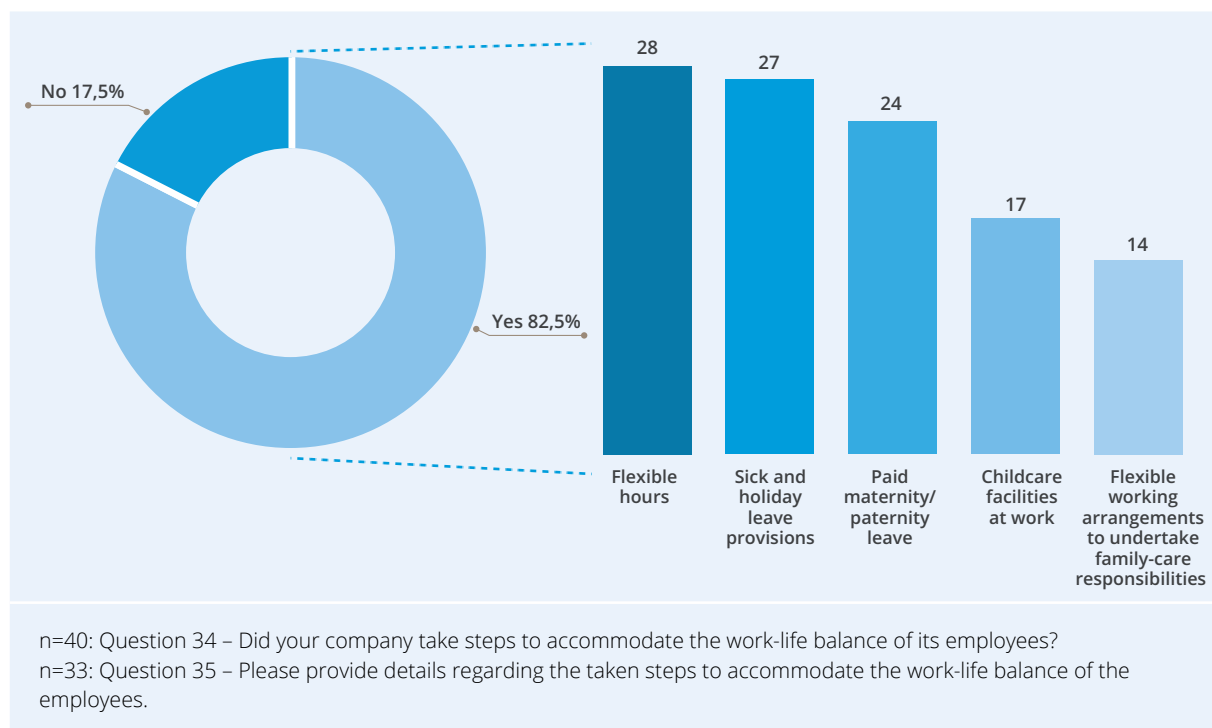
FIGURE 20

Companies that provided favourable working conditions for employees who are pregnant or who have children



According to Figure 21, a larger share (83 per cent) of the respondents took steps to accommodate the work-life balance of their employees. Most of the companies (70 per cent) generally provided flexible

working hours, while the fewest respondents (35 per cent) offered flexible working arrangements to undertake family-care responsibilities.

FIGURE 21**Companies that took steps to accommodate work-life balance of employees**

In line with Figure 22, the vast majority of the companies offer both maternity leave (98 per cent of respondents) and paternity leave (80 per cent of respondents). In 95 per cent of the companies, maternity leave is paid, while paternity leave is paid in 72 per cent of the online survey participants. As reflected in Figure 23, the most widely offered duration for maternity leave is six months (32 per cent of respondents), followed by four months (22 per cent) and three months (16 per cent). Similar to maternity leave, six months of paternity leave is also the most

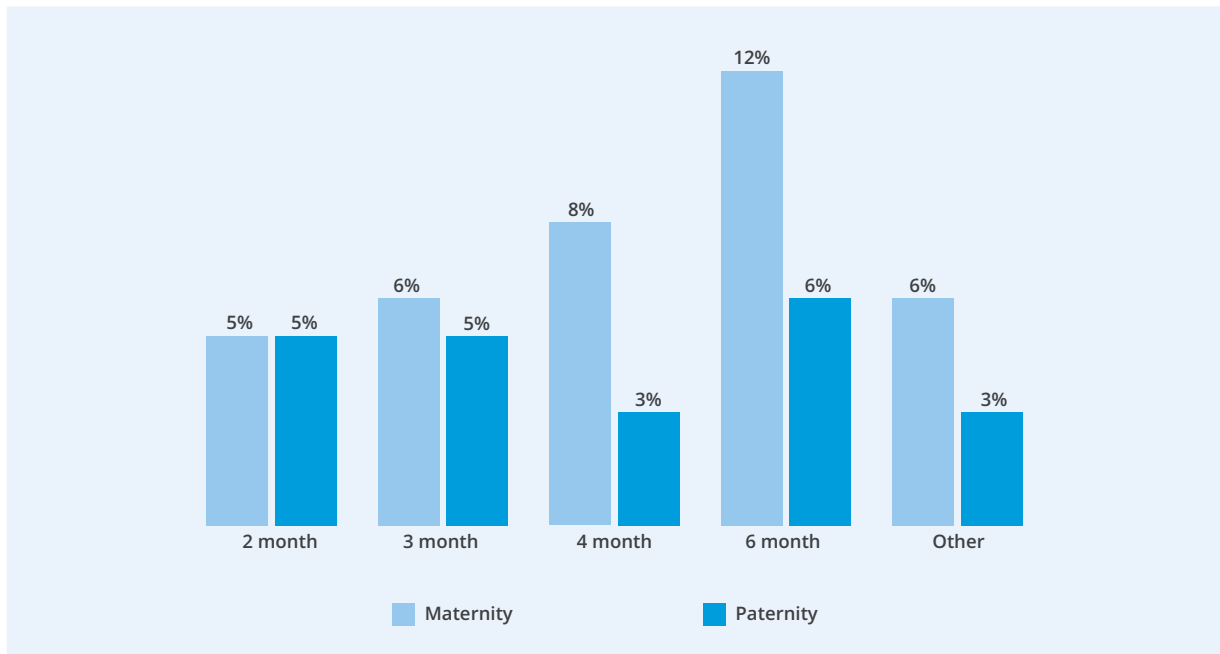
frequently offered duration (27 per cent of respondents), followed by equal shares for two and three months (23 per cent). Other arrangements are utilized by fewer companies. For example, 16 per cent of respondents enable their female employees to take longer periods of leave or offer flexible working arrangements, while 14 per cent of companies give several days of paternity leave to their employees. The gender bias and the stereotypical role of women as the primary caregiver is reinforced through these findings.

FIGURE 22**Maternity/paternity leave in companies**

n=40: Question 45 – Does your company offer maternity leave to the employees?
n=39: Question 46 – Is the maternity leave paid?
n=40: Question 48 – Does your company offer paternity leave to the employees?
n=32: Question 49 – Is the paternity leave paid?

FIGURE 23

Companies that offer paid maternity/paternity leave, by leave period



n=37: Question 47 – How many months are covered for paid maternity leave?

n=23: Question 50 – How many months are covered for paid paternity leave?

PRINCIPLE 3:

Ensure the health, safety and well-being of all women and men workers

Principle 3 aims to ensure the health, safety and well-being of all women and men workers. As per the WEPs: “Employers play a key role in preserving and promoting the physical and emotional health, safety and wellbeing of their women and men employees. Sexual harassment and violence signify high costs to women in terms of lost earnings, missed promotions and overall wellbeing. Companies are impacted in [the] form of employee absenteeism and productivity losses.”¹⁷

Companies can implement Principle 3 in the following ways:

- Provide safe working conditions and protection from exposure to hazardous materials and disclose potential risks, including to reproductive health
- Establish a zero-tolerance policy for all forms of violence at work – including verbal and/or physical abuse – and prevent sexual harassment
- Strive to offer health insurance or other needed services – including for survivors of domestic violence – and ensure equal access for all employees
- Respect women and men workers’ rights to time off for medical care and counselling for themselves and their dependants

- In consultation with employees, identify and address security issues, including the safety of women travelling to and from work and on company-related business
- Train security staff and managers to recognize signs of violence against women and understand laws and company policies on human trafficking, labour and sexual exploitation.¹⁸

According to UN Women Georgia, the costs of sexual harassment in the world of work are extremely high – for the individuals affected and for the companies where it occurs. The private sector plays a key role in tackling gender-based violence in the workplace. Workplace health and safety management processes must consider all of the risks associated with violence and harassment, including identifying hazards or risk factors, and must ensure that adequate information and training is in place. Companies that invest in building inclusive culture based on safety, respect and dignity are better positioned to attract and retain talent and increase customer satisfaction.

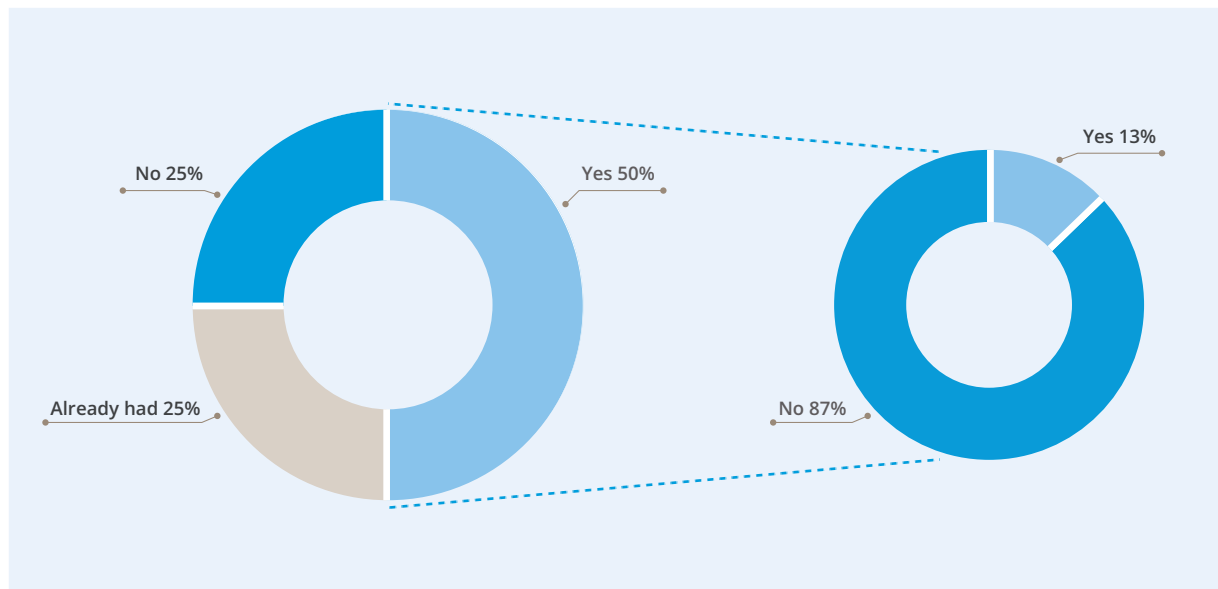
Based on the results from Figure 24, three fourths of companies either had in place or revised its sexual harassment policy. Of the 20 companies (50 per cent) that confirmed that they revised the sexual harassment policy, only 13 per cent actually received a complaint regarding sexual harassment issues, as reflected in Figure 25.

¹⁷ See <https://www.weps.org/principle/employee-health-well-being-and-safety> (accessed on 20 February 2021).

¹⁸ UN Women, Towards Equality in Business.

FIGURE 24

Companies that established or revised its sexual harassment policy

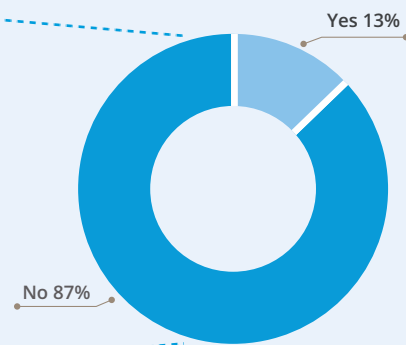


n=40: Question 36 – Did the company establish or revise its sexual harassment policy?

n=20: Question 37 – Did your company receive a complaint regarding sexual harassment issues after establishment or revision of the policy?

FIGURE 25

Company that received a complaint regarding sexual harassment issues

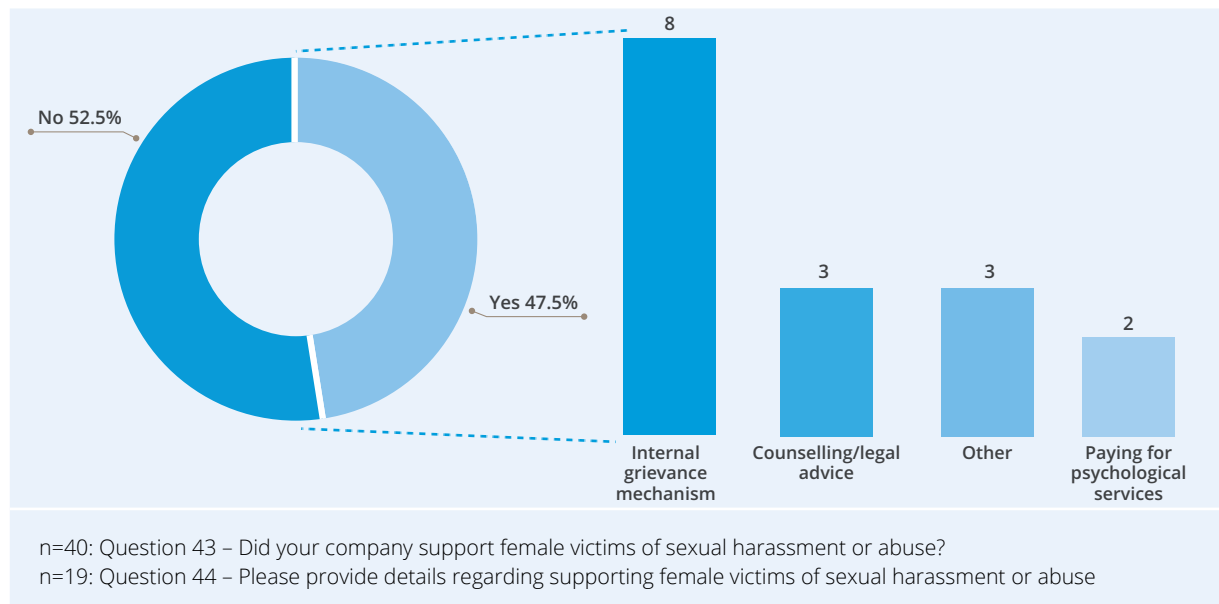


As reflected in Figure 26, just under half of the surveyed companies provide some sort of support to female survivors of sexual harassment or abuse, and half of that group chose to do so by introducing an internal grievance mechanism in the company.

Companies that selected “other” as a response indicated that they provide retraining and employment opportunities to women who are survivors of sexual harassment or abuse.

FIGURE 26

Companies that supported female survivors of sexual harassment or abuse



According to Figure 27, slightly less than half of companies revised their health insurance packages to better address women's needs. Specifically, 30 per cent of companies added a pregnancy option,

while only one company added a special package for single parents. No clear options were provided by the respondents that selected the "other" option.

FIGURE 27

Companies that revised their health insurance packages to better address women's needs

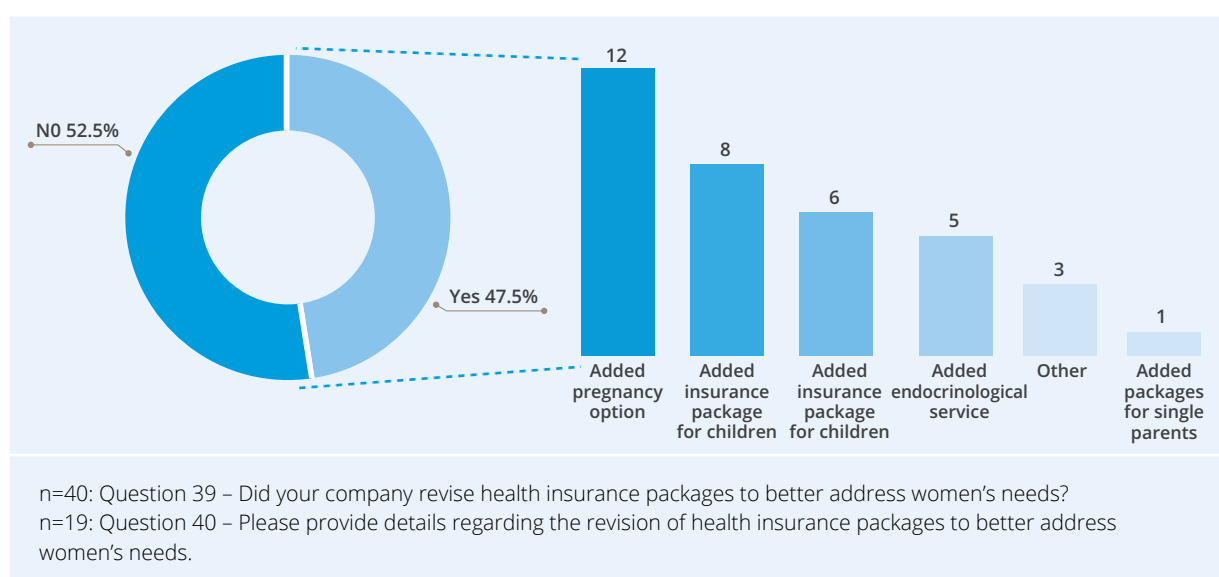
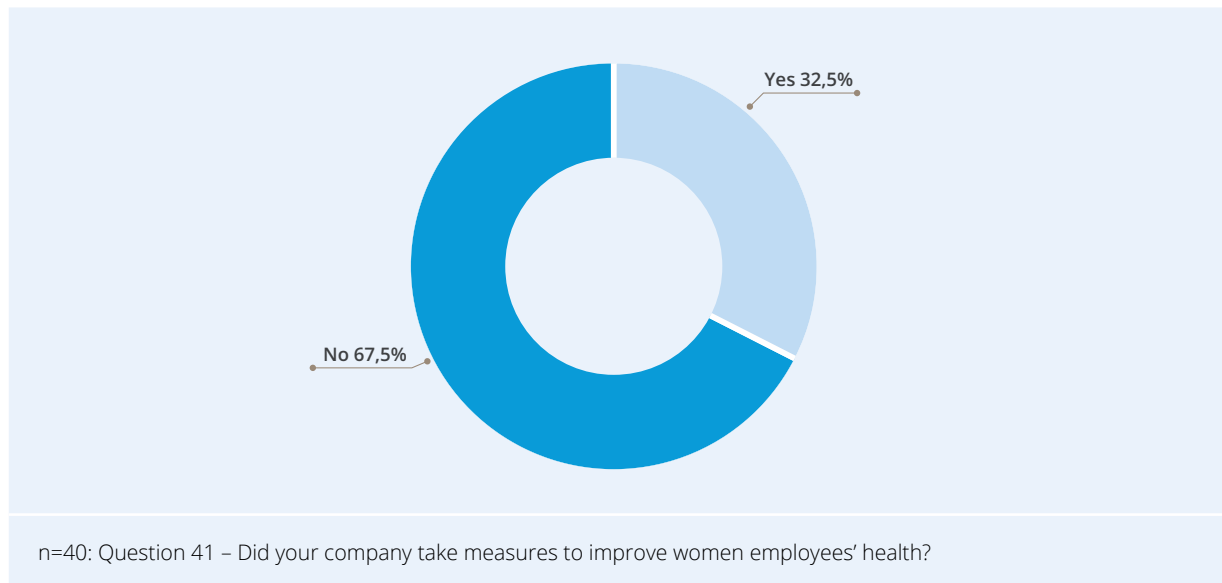


Figure 28 shows that about one third of the companies took special measures to improve women employees' health. Some of these measures that were tailored to women employees' needs included

providing fitness passes, decreasing the level of physical work, offering the possibility of distance work and financing medical tests and diagnoses.

FIGURE 28

Companies that took measures to improve women employees' health



PRINCIPLE 4:

Promote education, training and professional development for women

According to UN Women Georgia, providing education, training and professional development opportunities is not only important for the personal development of employees but also critical in empowering companies.

Principle 4 calls on companies and organizations to invest in workplace policies and programmes that open avenues for women's advancement at all levels and across all business areas. WEPs signatories are also encouraged to conduct training about the company's gender equality policy and action plan, as well as awareness-raising on sexual harassment, unconscious bias and other training that could help foster an inclusive workplace. Companies and organizations are urged to ensure women's equal access to all company-supported education and training programmes, formal and informal networking and mentoring programmes. Businesses that offer better learning and skills development opportunities can enhance their competitiveness and attract talent.

Principle 4 calls on the companies to do the following:

- Invest in workplace policies and programmes that open avenues for the advancement of women at all levels and across all business areas, and encourage women to enter non-traditional job fields
- Ensure equal access to all company-supported education and training programmes, including literacy classes and vocational and IT training
- Provide equal opportunities for formal and informal networking and mentoring.¹⁹

Principle 4 promotes education, training and professional development for women. As per the WEPs: "Training for all employees about how the company is advancing gender equality and women's

empowerment can align everyone around shared values and help ensure compliance with company policies and practices. Effective programmes to support women's professional advancement include education and training that is complemented by networking and mentoring programmes.²⁰

During the in-depth interviews, the stakeholders of the study indicated that signatory companies were interested in the implementation of Principle 4 since they were motivated to train their employees. Respondents indicated that since signing the WEPs, in total, 2,295 of their women employees received professional development, 604 women engaged in their workplace mentorship programme, 395 women entrepreneurs and representatives of women's associations were trained by the respondent companies and 104 women and girls received internships.

According to UN Women Georgia, mentoring is an effective way for businesses to drive positive organizational culture change because mentoring tends to lead to a greater number of promotions and more career success – and can also improve a company's performance, productivity, organizational effectiveness, consumer satisfaction and return on investment.

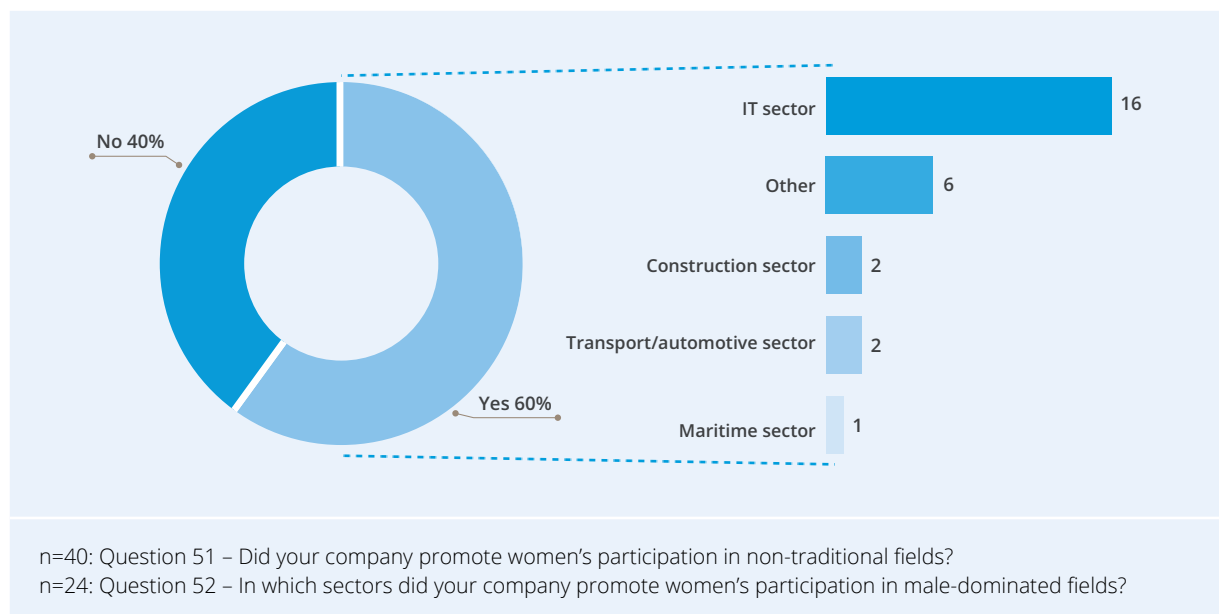
According to Figure 29, 60 per cent of the online survey respondents promote women's participation in non-traditional fields. Specifically, 40 per cent of companies promoted women's participation in the IT sector, which is considered to be a more male-dominated field. Other fields identified by 15 per cent of companies included farming, security, courier services and manufacturing.

¹⁹ UN Women, Towards Equality in Business.

²⁰ See <https://www.weps.org/principle/education-and-training-career-advancement> (accessed on 20 February 2021).

FIGURE 29

Companies that promoted women's participation in non-traditional fields and in certain sectors



Companies used various approaches to motivate their women colleagues to join non-traditional fields; these approaches included the following:

- Provision of scholarships and free courses to women employees
- Provision of training targeted at women employees
- Provision of paid internships
- Development of social media campaigns
- Arrangement of dedicated events where women speakers talked about their experience

PRINCIPLE 5:

Implement enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practices that empower women

Companies have a great opportunity to promote gender equality through their relationships with their suppliers, as well as through the values they promote in their marketing campaigns.²¹

Principle 5 calls on companies and organizations to require business partners, contractors and suppliers to adopt the WEPs and to establish supplier diversity programmes that actively seek to expand business relationships with women-owned enterprises. Signatories implementing Principle 5 should seek gender-sensitive solutions to women's barriers to accessing financial products and services and systematically source their goods and services from other enterprises that align with the WEPs. Doing so does not mean that quality, efficiency, cost savings or value for money would be compromised.²²

To implement Principle 5, WEPs signatories are encouraged to take the following steps:

- Implement enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practices that empower women
- Expand business relationships with women entrepreneurs and women-owned enterprises, including small businesses
- Support gender-sensitive solutions to credit and lending barriers
- Respect the dignity of women in all marketing and other company materials.²³

The stakeholders who are engaged in managing the WEPs work in the private companies expressed that Principle 5 was the most challenging to implement. The challenge was mainly related to the integration of the WEPs into procurement processes, adherence to rules and regulations and prioritization of women-led suppliers or businesses. It was emphasized

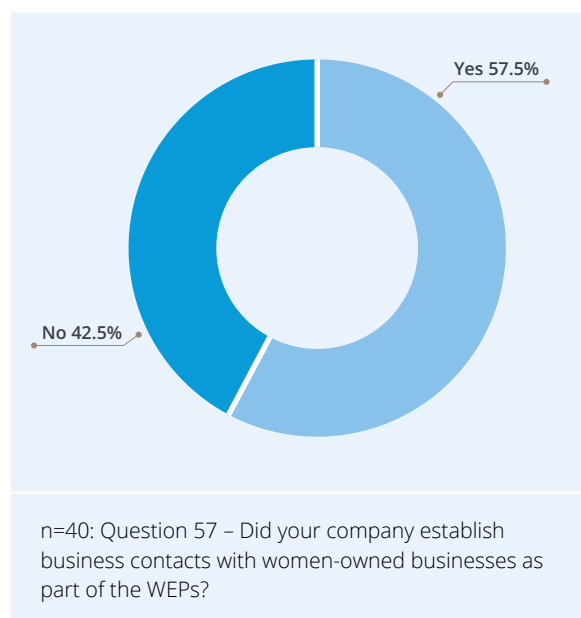
that companies had difficulty understanding why priority should be given to women suppliers when quality and price play major roles for business, not the gender of the supplier.

According to UN Women Georgia, diversifying the supplier base by increasing sourcing from gender-responsive companies and women-owned businesses is crucial to enhance women suppliers' opportunities to grow and gain exposure to business networks and sustainable revenue streams.

According to Figure 30, more than half of the surveyed companies established business contacts with women-owned businesses as part of the WEPs.

FIGURE 30

Companies that established business contacts with women-owned businesses



21 UN Women, Towards Equality in Business.

22 UN Women, The Power of Working Together.

23 UN Women, Towards Equality in Business.

There are various approaches that companies use to work with women-owned businesses, including the following measures:

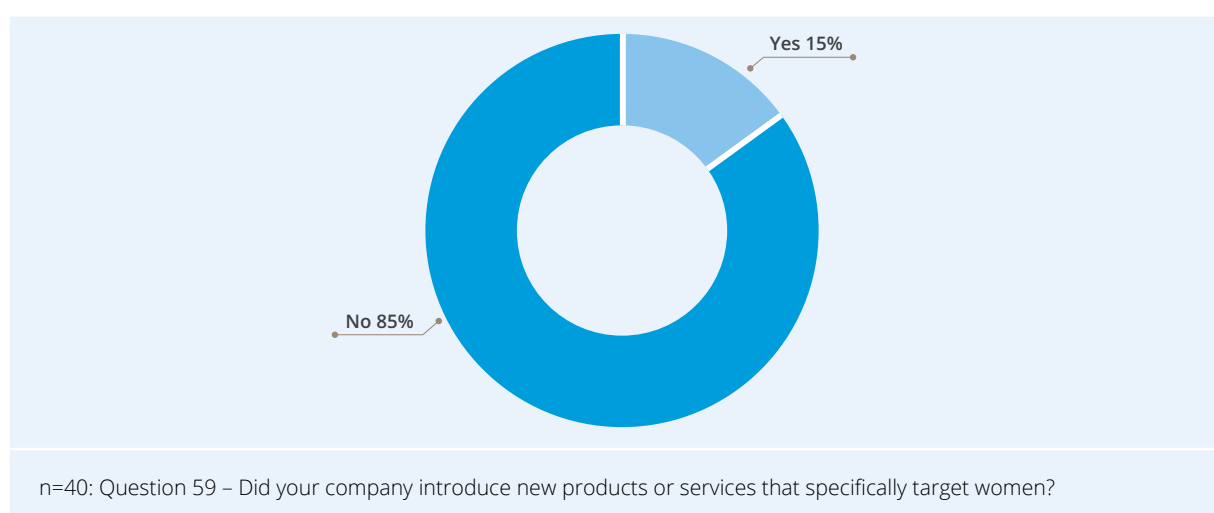
- Trying to include women-owned businesses in their vendor searches and selections
- Purchasing products, including corporate gifts for the New Year, from women-owned businesses
- Providing internships, trainings and workshops
- Offering pro-bono services

According to UN Women Georgia, women often face barriers related to access, including access to information, skills, knowledge, markets, finance, networks and services. Companies' products and services should be introduced in a way to capture the special needs of women. For example, companies in the financial sector are specifically well placed to support women's access to finance – a crucial challenge for many women in Georgia.

As reflected in Figure 31, only 15 per cent of respondents introduced new products or services that specifically target women.

FIGURE 31

Companies that introduced new products or services that specifically target women

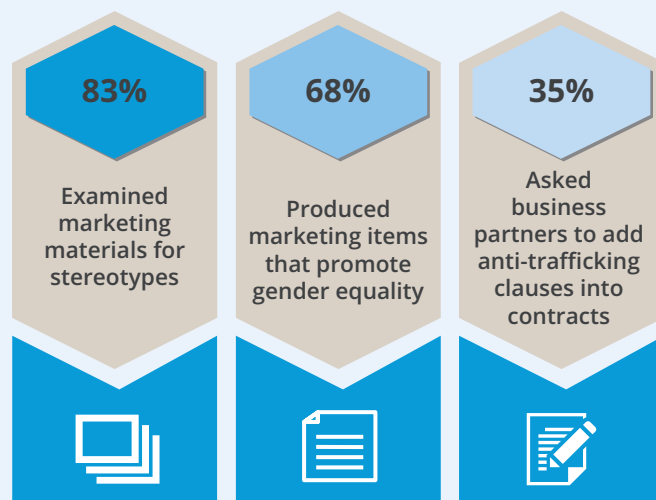


Some of the products and services introduced by the respondent companies included the following:

- Web platform for women
- Series of podcasts on women
- Coding school for women
- Women Corporate Bonds
- Free consultancy services for women
- Discounted medical services
- Business valuation and insurance packages for women

As per the WEPs: “Negative and diminished conceptions of women and girls are one of the greatest barriers for gender equality. Advertising is a powerful driver to change perceptions and impact social norms –portraying women and men in modern, authentic and multidimensional roles.²⁴ According to our analysis, in order to empower women, 83 per cent of the online survey respondents examined marketing materials for stereotypes, 68 per cent produced marketing items that promote gender equality and 35 per cent asked business partners to add anti-trafficking clauses into contracts.

24 See <https://www.weps.org/principle/enterprise-development-supply-chain-and-marketing-practices> (accessed on 20 February 2021).



n=40: Question 54 – Did your company examine marketing and advertising materials for gender stereotypes?
n=40: Question 55 – Did your company produce marketing or advertising items that promote gender equality and non-traditional gender roles?
n=40: Question 56 – Does your company ask its business partners/suppliers to include anti-trafficking and anti-exploitation clauses in their contracts?

PRINCIPLE 6:

Promote equality through community initiatives and advocacy

Companies have several opportunities to lead by example and contribute to women's empowerment within the wider community.²⁵ They can play a crucial role in achieving gender equality through corporate social responsibility projects in fields such as health, sports, arts, culture and the environment, as well as through other initiatives such as grant programmes.²⁶

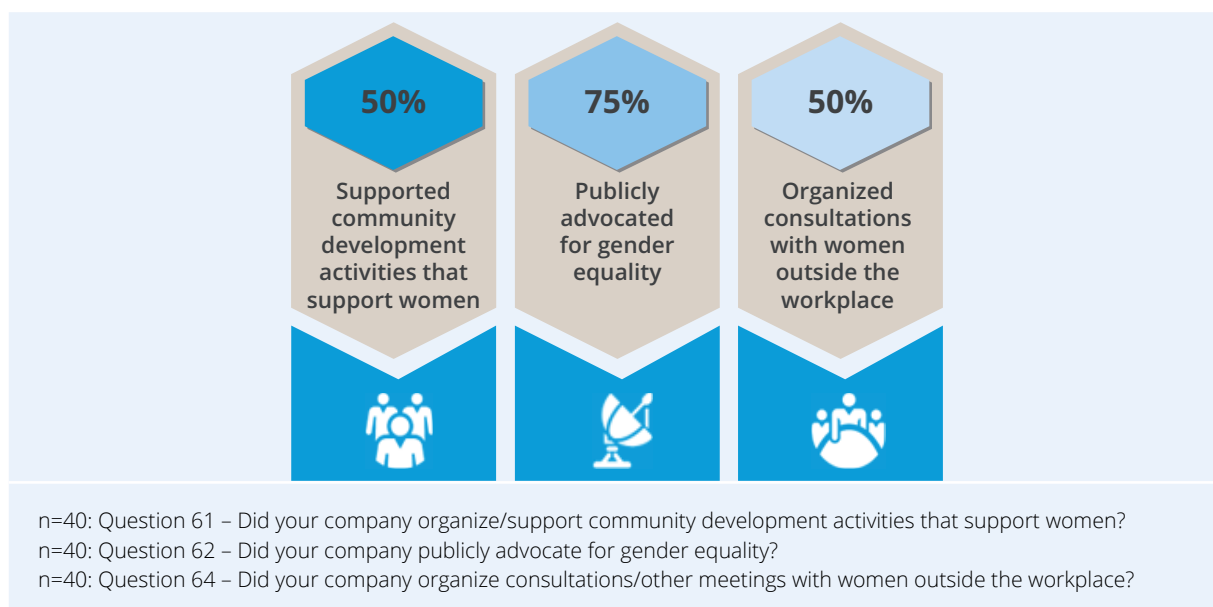
Principle 6 encourages the promotion of equality through community initiatives and advocacy. As per the WEPs: "Companies are increasingly investing in community development programmes to make valuable, effective and responsible contributions to gender equality and women's empowerment. They are encouraged to actively engage and consult with women and girls on their views, needs and aspirations, and to ensure that their voices are heard."²⁷

To implement Principle 6, WEPs signatories are encouraged to take the following steps:

- Leverage influence, alone or in partnership, to advocate for gender equality and collaborate with business partners, suppliers and community leaders to promote inclusion

- Work with community stakeholders, officials and others to eliminate discrimination and exploitation and open opportunities for women and girls
- Use philanthropy and grants programmes to support company commitment to inclusion, equality and human rights.²⁸

Based on the results from the conducted survey, in order to support women in communities, half of the respondents supported community development activities that support women; 75 per cent publicly advocated for gender equality; and 50 per cent organized consultations with women outside the workplace. Many signatories have set up recruitment programmes and community-based career training opportunities for women and girls to increase gender equality in traditionally male-dominated sectors. The publicity of gender equality activities reflects that a larger number of companies intend to showcase its commitment to gender equality, thus reflecting the positive impact of WEPs activities on the companies.



25 UN Women, Towards Equality in Business.

26 Ibid.

27 See <https://www.weps.org/principle/community-initiatives-and-advocacy> (accessed on 20 February 2021).

28 UN Women, Towards Equality in Business.

During the in-depth interviews, the stakeholders of the study indicated that implementing the principles that required financial resources was more challenging for signatory companies. Still, respondent companies used different methods that did not require spending to advocate for gender equality, including:

- Announcing their gender equality commitments on their company's social media pages (the most popular choice)
- Engaging in the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence
- Launching a TV programme dedicated to the gender wage gap²⁹
- Training women outside their workplace
- Supporting women entrepreneurs by providing them with branding and marketing support
- Publishing marketing materials to break stereotypes

According to UN Women Georgia, some companies promoted gender equality through community initiatives and advocacy as described in the following examples:

- Liberty Bank has developed an online training platform for women entrepreneurs (via Skype) on the topics of negotiations, the basic tools of business management, marketing and sales strategies. The training series was provided to women entrepreneurs and farmers.

- In 2020, LAB hosted an online event called "Women in IT" to scale up young women's and girls' participation in the IT sector. During the event, representatives from the private and NGO sectors discussed women's role in technology, including challenges and opportunities, and how women can change the IT world.
- Through a partnership with the TASO Foundation, Crystal implemented three community projects: potable water was provided to 25 households in Tsageri Municipality; a medical ambulatory was opened in the village of Guliani in Lanchkhuti, Guria; and a public library in the village of Pipileti in Oni, Racha saw the light of day.
- To break the commonly held stereotype that women are poor drivers, SOCAR distributed specialized bumper stickers at their petrol stations, and to combat stereotypes about so-called "male professions", the company produced a video featuring Mary Gvasalia, a female car mechanic. In the video, Mary is a licensed racing driver who has a good understanding of repairing cars. The campaign quickly went viral online and showed that a woman is perfectly able to do a "man's job".
- In 2018, Adjara Group conducted awareness-raising trainings on combating violence against women in the communities living in Kazbegi Municipality, where the company initiated a project titled "The Employment of Women Survivors of Domestic Violence". Consequently, three women were successfully employed within the company as a result of this project.

29 See <https://www.facebook.com/TV25ge/videos/388469372539459>.

PRINCIPLE 7:

Measure and publicly report on progress to achieve gender equality

Principle 7 calls on companies to measure and publicly report on progress to achieve gender equality. It requests that the companies publish company policies, practices and progress for promoting gender equality, as well as to plan, measure and report annually on progress, both internally and externally, using gender-disaggregated data. WEPs signatories are also encouraged to use the WEPs Gender Gap Analysis Tool to assess their company's strategic approach to gender equality, identify gaps and opportunities for continuous improvement, benchmark against peers and industry standards, and set goals and targets.³⁰ As per the WEPs, "Transparency and accountability are required for companies to uphold their commitments to gender equality in the workplace, marketplace and community."³¹

Measuring and reporting the goals and identifying the shortcomings in existing policies and processes will provide opportunities to define road maps and popularize effective initiatives. By using standardized parameters to appraise progress, companies can more clearly compare their performance to others and provide indications of progress to stakeholders. Annual reports on a company's gender

equality policies, plans and activities, as well as the inclusion of gender equality in performance indicators, fall within the scope of this principle.³²

It was highlighted during the in-depth interviews that Principle 7 is the one of the most challenging principles to implement since reporting and monitoring requires additional human capital, which companies are often lacking. According to Figure 33, 83 per cent of companies, from time to time, revise their WEPs action plans. Figure 32 shows that 63 per cent of survey participant companies started collecting sex-disaggregated data. The collection of sex-disaggregated data allows for the measurement of differences between women and men on various social and economic dimensions and is one of the requirements in obtaining gender statistics.³³ Companies that responded "no" to the question in Figure 32 are mostly medium-sized (46 per cent), large-sized (27 per cent) and small-sized (27 per cent) enterprises. These companies represent the following sectors: financial and insurance (20 per cent), accommodation and food service (13 per cent) and information and communication (13 per cent).

30 UN Women, The Power of Working Together.

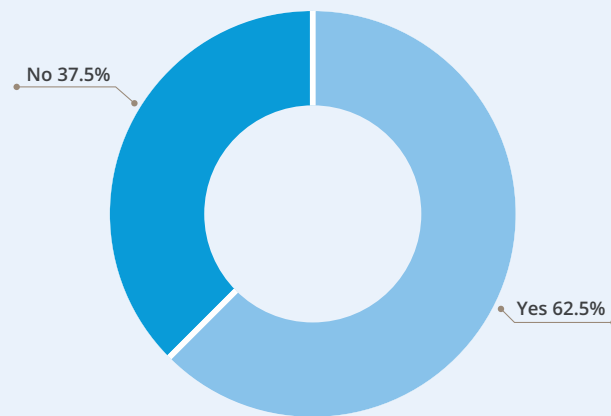
31 See <https://www.weps.org/principle/measurement-and-reporting> (accessed on 20 February 2021).

32 UN Women, Towards Equality in Business.

33 See <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/methods-tools/sex-disaggregated-data>.

FIGURE 32

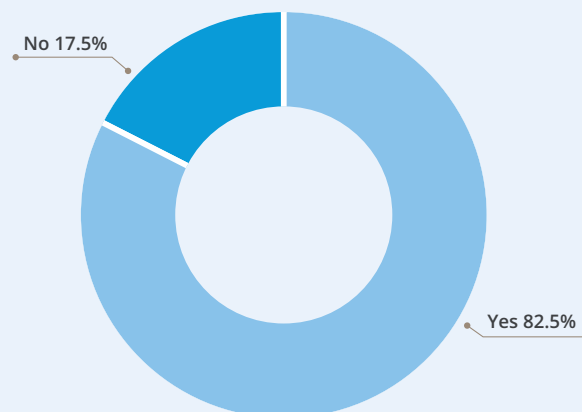
Companies that started to collect sex-disaggregated data on some area



n=40: Question 23 – Did your company start to collect sex-disaggregated data on some area?

FIGURE 33

Companies that have revised their WEPs action plan from time to time since joining the WEPs



n=40: Question 25 – Does your company revise its WEPs action plan from time to time since joining the WEPs?

CHAPTER V.

EFFECT OF COVID-19 ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WEPs

According to UN Women, COVID-19 is putting past decades' progress on gender equality at risk. The ongoing pandemic has delivered a significant shock to the global economy, but COVID-19 is hitting women particularly hard, threatening decades of gains on gender equality.³⁴ Barriers to accessing digital technology, disruptions to supply chains, unequal access to financial and non-financial supports, increased care and family responsibilities, and heightened risks of domestic and workplace violence are a few examples of COVID-19's influence on women's economic opportunities.

COVID-19 has had a significant effect on the performance of the private sector and impacted various areas of business, from revenues and employment to access to finance. According to the stakeholders responsible for supporting the private sector in the implementation of the WEPs, the tourism sector, which was hit most severely by COVID-19,

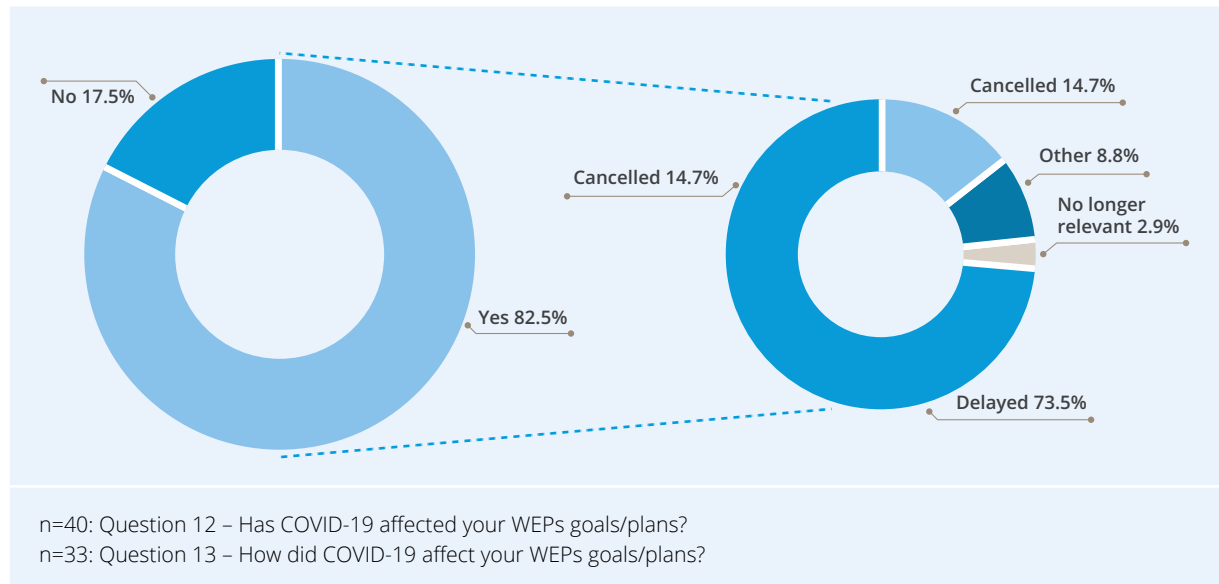
faced considerable delays and cancellation of WEPs plans. It was highlighted that the most significant change during COVID-19 was a shift in companies' approach towards the real needs of individual employees. During this period, UN Women developed a survey and shared it with WEPs signatory companies, targeted at understanding the well-being of employees.

As reflected in Figure 34, the vast majority of the online survey respondents (83 per cent) reported that COVID-19 has impacted their WEPs goals and plans. The most significant effect was related to the delay of WEPs activities due to COVID-19 (74 per cent of respondents), followed by the cancellation of WEPs plans (15 per cent) and the irrelevance of WEPs activities (3 per cent). Companies that selected the "other" option indicated that they changed the planned activities to online activities.

34 See https://www.weeps.org/sites/default/files/2020-12/Bridging_the_Gap_UN_Women_IFC_1.pdf.

FIGURE 34

Companies that reported an impact of COVID-19 on their WEPs goals/plans

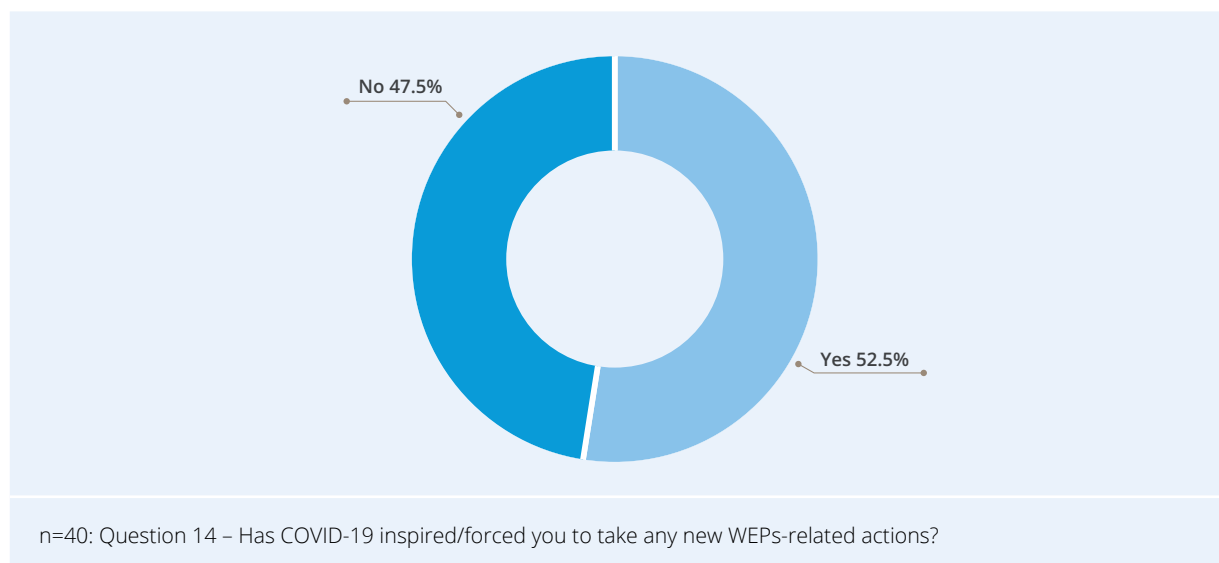


Despite the fact that COVID-19 had an overall negative impact on businesses and their plans related to the implementation of WEPs activities, there were still some innovative solutions that further inspired

WEPs implementation. According to Figure 35, more than half of the respondents were able to identify new ways to implement WEPs actions.

FIGURE 35

Share of companies that were inspired/forced to take new WEPs-related actions



From the early months of the pandemic, the respondent private sector companies in Georgia started to respond to COVID-19 to ensure that they continue to support and empower women, including employees, suppliers and community members at a large. The companies have primarily taken action in the following six areas: well-being and mental health of their employees; flexibility and family-friendly policies; equal access to and use of digital technologies and platforms; equal access to financial and non-financial services; inclusive supply chains and support for women-led businesses; and awareness and prevention of gender-based violence.

During the in-depth interviews, the stakeholders of the study highlighted that there was a significant increase in the number of trainings conducted by WEPs signatories. Still, coverage in rural areas was problematic due to limitations in Internet connections and the availability of proper technologies. Other innovative solutions identified by the respondent companies to continue WEPs work included the following:

- Work on visual materials with beneficiaries
- Flexible working arrangements offered to employees
- Increased promotion of gender equality via companies' social media pages
- Distance/online recruitment forums
- Guidance to women entrepreneurs on protective measures related to COVID-19

According to UN Women Georgia, concrete examples of other innovative WEPs work during the pandemic are as follows:

- Facing the COVID-19 pandemic, to ensure the provision of uninterrupted online education, LAB provided free Internet packages for two

months for 50 female students of Business and Technology University who live in rural areas of Georgia.

- During the hard times of COVID-19, Georgian Audit Company provided pro-bono support to a total of 29 women. Depending on each woman's needs, the support included free accounting services, consultations and mentoring on accounting and taxation issues and support in completing tax declaration forms.
- In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, terabank explored the needs of its banking clients – entrepreneurs – and, so far, has already provided trainings in e-commerce and branding, marketing and strategic communications services to 50 companies, of which 42 per cent are owned or managed by women.
- As an education platform working with Georgia's youth since 2015 to enrich their emotional intellect and critical thinking, Kant's Academy rapidly responded to the COVID-19 pandemic by starting pro-bono work with adolescent groups on stress management and personal and professional development. In total, 1,500 young people were trained throughout Georgia. The academy has also launched a training course on stress management techniques with school-age kids and their parents in response to pandemic-related problems. Kant's Academy continues implementing a parental coaching programme to improve communication between parents and their children and to help them cope with stressful environments and manage their emotions.
- During the COVID-19 lockdown, Mtavari Channel addressed the increased threat of family-based violence by producing a PSA on violence against women during primetime, which included contact information for various support services available for victims.

CHAPTER VI.

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

This chapter summarizes the analysis derived from the various data sources, including the online survey, in-depth interviews and case study materials.

Any company, irrespective of size, can be successful in implementing the WEPs. There are no clear differentiating criteria regarding company engagement that are based on size. Success is very individual to each company and very much depends on company leadership (including the personalities of the leaders), overall intent and specific motivations. Taking an individual approach to companies, their structure and their motivating factors is important to ensure the full engagement of signatory companies.

Understanding an individual company's level of knowledge regarding the WEPs is crucial at the initial stage. There are various reasons companies join the WEPs. Some companies fully understand the benefits of gender equality in their companies, while others join for publicity. Companies require significant assistance from UN Women and its partners during the WEPs implementation process. Thus, it is important to screen for companies that sign the WEPs without a proper understanding of the goals and a full commitment to their implementation.

Securing the initial commitment to sign the WEPs is less challenging as companies are more enthusiastic about the broad principle of gender equality in the beginning. The implementation process, especially the allocation of adequate resources, has proved to be more problematic, especially with regard to Principles 2, 3, 5 and 7.

There are various benefits that the private sector gains by undertaking WEPs work. The top three benefits outlined by the respondents were (1) a stronger corporate reputation; (2) a contribution to women's empowerment that will also help the economy of Georgia; and (3) the positive effect that WEPs work has on female employee productivity.

Respondent WEPs companies spent a total GEL 1 million on WEPs work and contributed 2,451 hours of managers' and employees' time on women's empowerment work. The pro-bono activities provided by respondents included training women outside of their companies, promoting and branding of products produced by female entrepreneurs, and providing external mentoring and coaching to women in the communities, among other types of activities.

Businesses are eager to hear about the Georgian examples of how greater gender parity and women's empowerment within companies has led to increased profits for those companies. Although hearing about international examples has been appreciated, there is great demand for learning about Georgia-specific experiences. It would help in receiving buy-in on the need for more measures to advance gender equality as well as greater, more ambitious commitments under the WEPs action plans.

The private sector has the potential to become a champion of the WEPs in Georgia with further support from UN Women. Those companies that understand the benefits of the WEPs demonstrate a full commitment to the implementation and further advancement of these principles. The majority of signatories have expressed readiness to take over UN Women's initiatives and have invested time and financial resources to that end. Stakeholders highlighted the importance of peer-to-peer learning and have had WEPs champions become examples for other companies in the sector to follow. In order to continue the implementation and sustainable application of the principles, the private sector needs further consultations and guidance from UN Women.

While most of the companies do collect sex-disaggregated data, large and medium-sized companies tend to fall behind. At the same time,

the need for collecting and analysing such data is even more acute in large and medium-sized companies since such enterprises have a higher share in overall employment and since their actions and policies affect a larger share of the population. In addition, large and medium-sized companies have more resources to collect sex-disaggregated data and use the analysis to design policies to facilitate greater gender parity within the workplace.

Companies appreciated the technical expertise and assistance provided by UN Women throughout WEPs implementation. They acknowledged the quality of assistance received and have voiced their preference for ensuring the receipt of such high-quality expertise in a consistent manner.

Business cases for enhanced gender diversity

Over the past decade, the business case for gender equality has expanded and deepened. Gender-diverse workforces also help to attract talent and reduce turnover and can contribute to building trust with clients and consumers. On a macro level, achieving gender equality could add upwards of USD 12 trillion to the world's economy. At the same time, we have seen increasing evidence highlighting the deeply entrenched and systemic barriers that women face in workplaces around the world, from violence and harassment to the unequal share of unpaid care and domestic work.

In Georgia, while corporate support for gender equality is strong, businesses have yet to introduce specific policies, measurable targets and robust accountability mechanisms to ensure progress. We can see the disconnect between commitment and implementation when we take a closer look at specific corporate practices. The baseline study revealed that implementation, especially the allocation of adequate resources, has proved to be more problematic, especially with regard to Principles 2, 3, 5 and 7.

Nevertheless, companies that undertook the survey and interviews showed positive trends regarding

gender equality, setting a business case for continued and targeted investments for gender diversity. Some examples include the following:

- Steady increase in the number of women-managed companies among WEPs signatories in Georgia
- Increase in the procurement of goods/services from women entrepreneurs and women-owned businesses
- Increase in pro-bono activities, especially online trainings for women entrepreneurs that have benefited women in business and in communities outside of their companies (across 2,451 hours of external WEPs work, equivalent in value to between GEL 122,550 and GEL 208,335)
- Introduction of new policies like recruitment policies and policies on anti-sexual harassment and other forms of discrimination (which was relatively challenging, given the culturally sensitive environment of the country)

With 2021 underway, this decade will be decisive towards achieving the ambitious 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. However, the World Economic Forum currently estimates that it will take 257 years to achieve women's economic empowerment and close gender gaps in the economy. Business should continue to play a critical role in achieving gender equality and empowerment for all women and girls by implementing the WEPs, by supporting new international frameworks and guidance like the ILO Convention on Violence and Harassment in the World of Work (No. 190) and the gender dimensions of the UN Guiding Principles on Responsible Business, and by participating in the Generation Equality Forum, which aims to build on this momentum to turn commitments into concrete actions.

However, it is critical to gather more evidence and enhance reporting to further strengthen the business case.

CHAPTER VII.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE PROGRAMMATIC INTERVENTIONS

This chapter offers the recommendations for future programmatic interventions, based on the results of the analysis presented in this report.

Improve strategic targeting and outreach

The study results indicate that the characteristics of a company (e.g. size, sector) do not impact the company's effectiveness in implementing the WEPs. However, it is clear there are certain sectors that have experienced relatively better engagement. Hence, a strategy to focus on certain sectors for outreach and induction may be planned. The strategy can focus on (but not be limited to) the following elements:

- Showcase benefits more specifically in commercial terms, including the financial results of the WEPs for companies (in relation to specific sectors/size). Since most of the companies value PR and marketing activities and this motivates them to act, it is important to maintain such public activities.
- Provide real examples of Georgian cases (not foreign) on how gender parity initiatives within companies and women's empowerment increases the profit of companies, as presented by current WEPs signatory companies. Domestic examples are more relatable to potential

signatory companies and can motivate them to act as well as give them examples on actions to take.

- Use digital media to campaign and encourage new companies to join the WEPs by showcasing industry-specific benefits, results and/or impacts.

Formalize the process for induction, participatory planning and categorization of organizations

A formal induction process can be established for companies that are new signatories to the WEPs. The induction process can be contextualized based on the interest and levels of interest reflected by the signatory companies. This can include (but not be limited to) the following elements:

- Organize planning collectives for companies using similar approaches for WEPs inclusion. Small groups of like-minded companies can be brought together for a participatory planning exercise where they indicate their status and position regarding each principle.
- Promote peer-to-peer learning opportunities for new WEPs signatory companies from older WEPs companies/champions according to sector, size of company and level of engagement.

Promote implementation driven by evidence

Data gathering, analysis, review and sharing should be a continuous process and should be applied when designing all implementation activities and interventions with regard to WEPS implementation. Some enhancements towards implementation activities can include the following:

- Design approaches targeting the management team only, given how important their engagement and will is for WEPS implementation.
- Introduce more mechanisms for independent verification of WEPS implementation since the only way to do so at the moment is via company interviews.
- Ensure the quality control of the ongoing technical assistance provided to the WEPS signatory companies.
- Collect the data from companies on the actual usage of maternity and paternity leaves.
- Work with companies to encourage male employees to take paternity leave.
- Encourage companies to consider more diversity-focused activities under the WEPS action plans to increase the diversity within companies and target more vulnerable groups, not only women.
- Increase the network with external agencies such as NGOs, academia and the private sector for better synergy in implementation.
- Encourage companies to adopt more family-friendly policies, such as childcare facilities and flexible working hours.
- Encourage companies to take specific actions to implement their sexual harassment policies.
- Encourage companies to adopt special health insurance packages for single parents.
- Promote women vendors and suppliers by the services offered, and help companies understand that choosing women suppliers does not mean reduced quality. This includes conducting

training on the access to finance and resources and gender gaps to help build an understanding as to why targeting women suppliers is important. Not only theoretical explanations but also practical examples are very useful to that end. Moreover, in some cases, companies do not know where to find women suppliers, so creating and continually updating databases with such information is important and should be shared with companies.

Encourage sustainability and scalability

It is imperative to ensure sustainability of the changes and interventions made by companies after signing on to the WEPS. It was observed that many companies were unable to sustain the introduced changes due to COVID-19, while some chose to adapt to the new normal. As a result, it is essential to capitalize on such pioneers and change agents and to encourage the sustainability and scalability of company activities pertaining to the WEPS. Some activities that companies can incorporate in this regard can include (but not be limited to) the following:

- Continue recognizing and awarding those companies that have performed well with WEPS implementation, so-called gender champions.
- Encourage the companies to conduct an internal analysis and collection of data to understand the status of the gender wage gap within the company, if any.
- Adopt an outreach campaign targeting recruiting companies operating in the regions.
- Incentivize companies to cooperate fully with UN Women regarding data collection and other activities related to the project assessment. Incentives can include being given awards and being showcased in UN Women articles, blogs, websites, etc.
- Work with the Government of Georgia along with industries on certain policy gaps in order to encourage women's presence in industries and women's economic empowerment in general.

APPENDIX 1.

ONLINE SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

SECTION 1		
1	What is your full name?	Text
2	What is the name of your company?	Text
3	What is your position in the company?	Text
4	What is the size of your company? Micro - employing up to 9 people Small - employing between 10 and 49 people Medium - employing between 50 and 249 people Large - employing more than 250 people	Single
5	Where is your company mostly conducting its economic activity (largest part of revenue generation)? Tbilisi Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia Autonomous Republic of Adjara Guria Region Imereti Region Kakheti Region Mtskheta-Mtianeti Region Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti Region Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti Region Samtskhe-Javakheti Region Kvemo Kartli Region Shida Kartli Region	Single
6	Which sector does your company mainly operate in? Wholesale and retail trade Construction Agriculture, forestry and fishing Accommodation and food service activities (hotels, restaurants and others) Information and communication Transportation and storage	Single

Manufacturing Financial and insurance activities Real estate activities Professional, scientific and technical activities Administrative and support service activities Education Human health and social work activities Arts, entertainment and recreation Mining and quarrying Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply Water supply, sewerage, waste management and remediation activities Other service activities (gym, beauty salon, repair of motor vehicles, etc.) Other (please, specify)	
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SECTION 2: General Questions														
7	In which year did your company sign up to WEP? 2017 2018 2019 2020	Single												
8	Can you provide the split of your employees by gender during the year when you joined WEP (if no employees on such positions, indicate 0)? Overall employees Below manager Manager and above Director and above Board	<table> <tr> <th>Female</th> <th>Male</th> </tr> <tr> <td>text</td> <td>text</td> </tr> <tr> <td>text</td> <td>text</td> </tr> <tr> <td>text</td> <td>text</td> </tr> <tr> <td>text</td> <td>text</td> </tr> <tr> <td>text</td> <td>text</td> </tr> </table>	Female	Male	text	text	text	text	text	text	text	text	text	text
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9	Can you provide the recent split of your employees by gender (if cannot estimate write N/A)? Overall employees Below manager Manager and above Director and above Board	<table> <tr> <th>Female</th> <th>Male</th> </tr> <tr> <td>text</td> <td>text</td> </tr> <tr> <td>text</td> <td>text</td> </tr> <tr> <td>text</td> <td>text</td> </tr> <tr> <td>text</td> <td>text</td> </tr> <tr> <td>text</td> <td>text</td> </tr> </table>	Female	Male	text	text	text	text	text	text	text	text	text	text
Female	Male													
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10	What motivated your company to join WEPs and what actual benefits did you receive? (please select only relevant options for your company) Our contribution to SDGs Company's increased access to capital/financing An increase in interested investors who have substantial confidence in the company Our female employees are motivated and more productive	Matrix												

	<p>There is better retention of female staff</p> <p>An increase in the recruitment of and better retention of talented individuals</p> <p>An improvement in internal communication, better commitment from colleagues and a promotion of a culture of shared values</p> <p>A stronger corporate reputation</p> <p>An increase in loyal customers</p> <p>Less violence and reducing company costs by addressing violence</p> <p>Improved competitiveness on the market</p> <p>Contributing to women's empowerment will also help the economy</p> <p>Attracting more female customers/clients</p> <p>Other (please, specify)</p>	
11	Please indicate, whom did you get financing from (IFI, donor, local bank, other) and what was the amount?	Text
12	Has COVID-19 affected your WEPS' goals/plans? Yes No	Single
13	How did COVID-19 affect your WEP goals/plans? Delayed Cancelled No longer relevant Other (please, specify)	Text
14	Has COVID-19 inspired/forced you to take any new WEPS related actions? Yes (please, specify) No	Single Text

SECTION 3: Qualitative Questions

15	What is the total amount (GEL) spent on the WEPS work internally in your company, since joining WEPS?	
16	What is the total amount (GEL) spent on the WEPS work outside of your company (community organisations, grants for communities), since joining WEPS?	
17	What is the amount (GEL) spent in 2020 on procuring goods/services from women entrepreneurs/women owned businesses?	
18	Please indicate the number of women/girls/employees who received WEPS related support for different activities (indicate number for each year) and the amount (GEL) that was spent on each activity (since joining WEPS) - if not relevant, indicate N/A:	Multiple

	<p>Women/girls received scholarships from the company</p> <p>Women/girls received grants from the company</p> <p>Women/girls received internships at the company (e.g. salary pay during internship)</p> <p>Women employees received professional development</p> <p>Women employees engaged in workplace mentorship programme</p> <p>Employees trained on gender equality issues (e.g. cost of training facility, etc.)</p> <p>Employees completed online course on I Know Gender (e.g. cost of developing online course, etc.)</p> <p>Employees completed online course on the prevention of sexual harassment (e.g. cost of developing online course, etc.)</p> <p>Women employees benefitted from your company's other WEPs activities implemented during 2020 (please do not double-count the same women mentioned above)</p> <p>Women entrepreneurs / representatives of women's associations trained by your company (e.g. cost of rented facilities, etc.)</p> <p>Women outside the company who benefitted from your company's other WEPs activities implemented (please do not double-count the same women mentioned above)</p> <p>Women external mentees of your company</p>	
19	<p>What is the total amount of time (hours) spent by your employees on external WEPs work per year? (starting from the year joining WEPs, if not relevant, indicate N/A)</p> <p>Branding (e.g. branding for women entrepreneurs)</p> <p>Training (e.g. training of women entrepreneurs)</p> <p>Mentorship/coaching (e.g. providing external mentoring to women in the communities)</p> <p>Promotion (e.g. shooting a video on women entrepreneurs, or posting a story on women within the community)</p> <p>Other (please, specify)</p>	Multiple

SECTION 4: Qualitative Questions

20	<p>Did your company make a public WEPs commitment statement? (e.g. via company website, social media)</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>No</p>	Single
21	<p>Did your company assign a person in charge of WEPs and/or gender equality issues?</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>No</p>	Single
22	<p>Was WEPs and/or gender equality tasks incorporated into the tasks of company's managers and company units/departments?</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>No</p>	Single

	<p>Internal communication plan</p> <p>Welcome mail draft</p> <p>Recruitment policy</p> <p>Bonus systems</p> <p>Job description draft</p> <p>CSR strategy</p>	
29	<p>Did your company start to provide more favorable working conditions for female employees who are pregnant or employees who have children?</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>No</p>	Single
30	<p>Please provide details regarding provision of more favorable working conditions for female employees who are pregnant or employees who have children:</p> <p>Flexible working hours to employees with minors</p> <p>An extra hour-long break to breastfeeding mothers</p> <p>Breastfeeding facilities</p> <p>Tailored insurance package</p> <p>Temporary flexible working arrangements (e.g. to visit a doctor)?</p> <p>Other (please, specify)</p>	Multiple Text
31	<p>Did your company improve recruitment practices to avoid discrimination?</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>No</p>	Single
32	<p>Please provide details regarding improved recruitment practices to avoid discrimination:</p> <p>Modifying vacancy announcement templates</p> <p>Promoting transparent hiring processes</p> <p>Prohibiting discriminatory questions at interviews</p> <p>Encouraging female candidates to apply for non-traditional jobs in recruitment advertisements</p> <p>Other (please, specify)</p>	Multiple Text
33	<p>How did you collect data or use other measures to eliminate gender wage gap:</p> <p>No, our company does not have gender wage gap</p> <p>By taking a diagnosis of equal remuneration tool</p> <p>By collecting remuneration data regarding gender wage gap</p> <p>By fixing the wages for the same positions</p> <p>Other (please, specify)</p>	Multiple Text
34	<p>Did your company take steps to accommodate work-life balance of employees?</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>No</p>	Single

35	<p>Please provide details regarding taken steps to accommodate work-life balance of employees:</p> <p>Flexible hours</p> <p>Paid maternity/paternity leave</p> <p>Sick and holiday leave provisions</p> <p>Childcare facilities at work</p> <p>Flexible working arrangements to undertake family-care responsibilities (e.g. family member is ill, etc.)</p> <p>Other (please, specify)</p>	Multiple
36	<p>Did the company establish or revise its sexual harassment policy?</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Our company already had sexual harassment policy</p> <p>No</p>	Text
37	<p>Did your company receive a complaint regarding sexual harassment issues after establishment or revision of the policy?</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>No</p>	Single
38	<p>How many complaints did your company receive regarding establishment or revision of its sexual harassment policy?</p>	Text
39	<p>Did your company revise health insurance packages to better address women's needs?</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>No</p>	Single
40	<p>Please provide details regarding revision of health insurance packages to better address women's needs:</p> <p>Added pregnancy option</p> <p>Added insurance package for children</p> <p>Added endocrinological services</p> <p>Added special packages for single parents</p> <p>Added gynecological services</p> <p>Other (please, specify)</p>	Multiple
41	<p>Did your company take measures to improve in women employees' health?</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>No</p>	Single

42	Please provide details regarding taken measures to improve in women employee's health:	Text
43	Did your company support female victims of sexual harassment or abuse? Yes No	Single
44	Please provide details regarding supporting female victims of sexual harassment or abuse: Internal Grievance mechanism Counselling/Legal advice Paying for psychological services Housing services Other (please, specify)	Multiple Text
45	Does your company offer maternity leave to the employees?	Single
46	Is the maternity leave paid? Yes No	Single
47	How many months are covered for paid maternity leave? 1 month 2 months 3 months 4 months 5 months 6 months Other (please/specify)	Single Text
48	Does your company offer paternity leave to the employees? Yes No	Single
49	Is the paternity leave paid? Yes No	Single

50	How many months are covered for paid paternity leave? 1 month 2 months 3 months 4 months 5 months 6 months Other (please/specify)	Single
51	Did your company promote women's participation in non-traditional fields? Yes No	Text Single
52	How did your company promote women's participation in non-traditional fields?	Text
53	In which sectors did you company promote women's participation in male dominated fields: IT Sector Construction sector Maritime sector Transport/Automotive sector Other (please, specify)	Multiple
54	Did your company examine marketing and advertising materials against gender stereotypes? Yes No	
55	Did your company produce marketing or advertising items that promote gender equality and non-traditional gender roles? Yes No	Single
56	Does your company ask its business partners/suppliers to include anti-trafficking and anti-exploitation clauses in their contracts? Yes No	Single
57	Did your company establish business contacts with women-owned businesses as part of WEPs? Yes No	Single

58	Please provide details regarding establishing business contacts with women-owned businesses as part of WEPs:	Text
59	Did your company introduce new products or services that specifically target women? Yes No	Single
60	Please provide details regarding introducing new products or services that specifically target women:	Text
61	Did your company organize/support community development activities that support women? Yes No	Single
62	Did your company publicly advocate for gender equality? Yes No	Single
63	Please provide details regarding advocating publicly for gender equality:	Text
64	Did your company organize consultations/other meetings with women outside the workplace? Yes No	Single

SECTION 5		
65	Are there any additional WEPs related initiatives that your company has implemented (not mentioned in the questions above)? You are also encouraged to share any online links to your WEPs activities.	Text
66	Was UN Women's and its partners' support in WEPs implementation important for your company? Yes No	Single
67	What type of WEP related support will your company need in future?	Text

APPENDIX 2.

CASE STUDIES

Case studies from the UN Women reports “Women’s Empowerment Principles in Georgia: Promising Practices 2019”³⁵ and “Women’s Empowerment Principles in Georgia: Stories of Change, Stories of Success, Stories of Inspiration, 2020”.

1. M2 REAL ESTATE – CHANGING THE FACE OF THE REAL ESTATE BUSINESS

m2 Real Estate joined the WEPs in 2016. Following the development of the company’s first WEPs Action Plan, the company increasingly started promoting women in male-dominated occupations as part of their strategy to fully utilize internal talent and contribute to the sustainability of the business. The change has been remarkable. While in 2016 only 20 per cent of site managers were women, as of December 2018, women constitute the absolute majority of site managers in residential complexes – a position that previously was considered a “job for a man”.

In 2018, the company developed its second WEPs Action Plan for the period from 2018 to 2020 and celebrated achieving gender balance among its top management. The proportion of women in senior management increased from 20 per cent in 2016 to 50 per cent in 2018. Now, of the 10 top managerial positions, five are occupied by women. As a result of several internal changes in the company’s human resources policy and practices, more women have been promoted to other managerial positions as well.

2. EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY – PROMOTING WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP TO FOSTER GENDER EQUALITY

Thirty-seven women CEOs lead Fortune 500 companies today, compared to only one in 1998. But this is a mere 7.4 per cent of all CEOs on the list.³⁶ Only in the past four years has the growth of women in these roles showed a general upward trend.

If one is asking how women assuming positions of leadership and decision-making can influence gender equality, including by setting the right priorities and allocating resources, European University based in Tbilisi can share its own experience. Women’s high-level leadership helps European University build better brand loyalty and sends strong signals that the company is progressive, recognizes merit

and provides equal opportunities for women’s career advancement.

As many of the university’s employees and students have small children, it became obvious that providing healthier work-life benefits could be highly valued by the vast majority of the university community. The idea of creating a space for small kids in the university was very well received and is aligned with Principle 2. “Our Kids’ Space is a colourful and picturesque area arranged in the university for the children of our employees and students. From now on, while mothers and fathers are studying and working, their kids can have a great time

³⁵ See <https://georgia.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2019/11/womens-empowerment-principles-in-georgia>.

³⁶ See <https://fortune.com/2020/05/18/women-ceos-fortune-500-2020/>.

here,” explains Tamar Kerdzaia, Rector of European University. This initiative is expected to, among others, reduce the rate of absenteeism, reduce students’ and employees’ stress levels and increase overall satisfaction. The initiative may also increase the university’s productivity and reduce turnover: Many studies provide evidence that people who are happy with their work-life benefits actually work 21 per cent harder and are 33 per cent more likely to stay at the organization.³⁷

COVID-related school closures required the transition towards using digital technologies, particularly by teachers. European University responded to the emerging need of equipping educators with new pedagogical technologies and digital skills by providing training to teachers, tutors and lecturers on digital teaching and learning methods, allowing academic personnel to progress smoothly and uninterrupted in academic processes. Initially 10 trainers were trained with the purpose of further providing training to 100 women educators of different age groups and backgrounds to help them master various digital resources and online platforms, including how to upload and download educational resources.

During the pandemic period, the Innovative Education and Research Institute of European University also responded to the needs of women entrepreneurs and trained them in establishing organizational structures, developing effective business strategies, managing risks and using digital technologies in organization management, among other skills. Women farmers and entrepreneurs were also provided with the opportunity to obtain pro-bono consulting and coaching in legal aspects of business management, such as dealing with contractual obligations during a force majeure event.

The university systematically carries out information campaigns for women and recruitment campaigns of upper-secondary schoolgirls about the prospects of education, women’s rights, gender equality and the importance of women’s empowerment.

The WEPs helped the company understand that the university can be more than a space in which people work or study. In many ways, it is a home away from home for many employees and students where they spend most hours of the day. For people to do their best work, the space should provide areas that can meet various needs and encourage inspiration, creativity and productivity.

3. MICRO BUSINESS CAPITAL – CLOSING THE GAP IN WOMEN’S FINANCIAL LITERACY AND RESETTling EMPLOYEES’ CONCEPT OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Sentiments around “work-life balance” have always been divided. A financial service organization, Micro Business Capital (MBC), started contributing to the well-being of its employees by teaching them how to master a work-life balance and prioritize the various aspects of their lives, whether professional or personal, by **notifying the employees of the end of business at 6:30 p.m. sharp every day**. “We are operating in an unimaginably competitive and demanding work environment, so how well we balance aspects of our work and lives determines our

success and productivity,” notes Eter Chachibaia, Director of Operations at MBC.

As COVID-19 widened gender gaps and even increased cases of family-based violence, MBC started taking actions to support victims of violence. The company launched a new support programme/initiative to provide help to victims of violence to recover from trauma. The first such assistance was offered to a woman from a shelter; she received financial support needed to rent an apartment when leaving the temporary housing.

37 Katherine Lewis, “Research About How Work-Life Benefits Improve Productivity”, The Balance Careers, 14 October 2019. Available at <https://www.thebalancecareers.com/work-life-benefits-improve-productivity-3545181>.

During the pandemic-induced lockdown, MBC surveyed employees' well-being and inquired about their specific needs. This time, another support mechanism, the "Special Financial Support Fund", was established exclusively for MBC employees and their family members. The first seven families supported by the company were from the regions.

In line with Principle 6 and through its "Financial Advisor" initiative, MBC trained women residing in the villages of Jgali and Muzhava in Samegrelo's highlands (western Georgia) and beneficiaries of the TASO Foundation in financial literacy and business plan writing in 2019. The Financial Advisor service is a fully funded social project initiated by MBC to increase the level of financial literacy of the population, mainly in rural areas.

As a member of the Pro-Bono Network of Georgia, MBC is actively supporting women entrepreneurs in dealing with communications and branding. Through

its "MBC Friend" initiative, female entrepreneurs are assisted in branding and content boosting. In addition, women probationers and former prisoners working at the social enterprise Poteria received trainings in communications strategies and social media presence.

The company fully acknowledges the importance of the commitments undertaken by signing the WEPs as well as the role it has to play in promoting gender equality among the private sector and stakeholders. By sharing information about gender equality work and making regular statements about the importance of women's participation in the economy, MBC encourages other companies to join the WEPs community. According to Gia Petriashvili, company CEO, "Women entrepreneurs are enhancing the living standards of their households and contributing to the development of the country's economy."

4. ACCORHOTELS – SUPPORTING EMPLOYEES THROUGH TRAININGS AND INITIATIVES

AccorHotels joined the WEPs movement in Georgia in 2017. In 2018, the company developed their WEPs Action Plan and started mainstreaming gender into the company's policies, which also included revising their People Policy document. In 2018, the company also started gathering sex-disaggregated data, for example, on the received applications for their vacancy announcements to map and analyse gender gaps in the workplace.

Under the WEPs, the company developed the initiative "Future Planning for Women on Maternity Leave". Under the initiative, a month before the end of maternity leave, the company arranges a meeting with the employee to discuss her plans and develop

a convenient schedule for her. After returning from maternity leave, employees are asked whether they would like to undertake any specific training to support their reintegration in the working environment.

During the course of 2018, the company arranged around 40 trainings for their employees on various topics, including health, well-being and security at work. The total number of trained employees was 175, of whom 94 were women (54 per cent) and 81 were men (46 per cent). Furthermore, the company started building a cohort of trained and qualified mentors within the company by enrolling two of their employees in a mentor training programme.

5. GEPRA – USING TRAINING AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP TO EMPOWER WOMEN AND REDUCE INEQUALITIES

Companies that signed the WEPs are making commitments to foster business practices that empower women and carry out meaningful and responsible communication. They can play an important role in advocating for gender equality, challenging stereotypes and changing attitudes and beliefs through gender-sensitive communication.

Gepra was one of the pioneer companies that joined the WEPs movement as early as 2016. After signing on to the WEPs, the company developed its WEPs implementation action plan, trained the staff in gender equality and prevention of sexual harassment, and launched a mentoring programme to promote women's education and professional development. Specializing in PR, marketing communications and strategic communications, Gepra facilitated women's empowerment by providing training in establishing personal business models, marketing, communications and various other services they required.

Gepra's employees undertook an online training course in preventing sexual harassment in the workplace, and the company adopted a sexual harassment complaints mechanism. Gepra is also continuously categorizing the suppliers according to gender in order to support women producers and service providers.

In 2020, Gepra was also actively engaged in the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence and assisted UN Women Georgia in designing visual materials for use during the campaign that were dedicated to ending violence against women.

During the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown period, Gepra took a step towards promoting women's economic empowerment in the world of entrepreneurship and business by launching online webinars in various areas of expertise. The first COVID-19-relevant initiative was the training of women farmers and women entrepreneurs in post-crisis communications that aimed at equipping participants with the necessary skills of promoting their businesses by branding and communicating via various media channels. The training was delivered to the beneficiaries of the TASO Foundation and the Georgian Farmers' Association.

As branding and marketing were found to be the most needed services for women in business, Gepra provided such services to three women entrepreneurs identified by the TASO Foundation from the pool of project beneficiaries. The services included the creation of a brand name, logo and other visual designs.

6. APM TERMINALS POTI – PROMOTING THE POWER OF DIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE

Success is possible when women are full partners in the workplace. Indeed, multiple research studies find that leaders who embrace a more holistic view of diversity, equity and inclusion can build a more innovative and collaborative workforce, which is associated with increased productivity, better business results and a balanced work environment.

As the workforce continues to diversify and widen across the globe, this challenge has become an imperative for APM Terminals Poti, one of the biggest

operators and employers at the Black Sea port and a WEPs signee since 2018. With their goal of increasing diversity in the workplace, which is 90 per cent male-dominated, the company formed partnerships with six technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions to support women's economic empowerment and education. This joint venture allowed APM Terminals Poti to implement Principle 4 and identify the required female workforce through the TVET centres for jobs that are

traditionally occupied by men: crane operation, information technologies, health and safety, welding, electrical engineering and mechanical engineering. The company then provided the identified women with paid internships and on-the-job training. Since spring 2019, four young women have received internships, one of whom is now employed as a crane operator after completing her internship with the company. By specifically recruiting women, this partnership enables them to enter traditionally male-dominated professions, master professional skills in a safe environment, confront stereotypes and gain access to employment opportunities.

In 2019, the company also worked on gender equality with their current employees. The company designed and implemented a workplace environment survey to get feedback from their employees and used the findings in their training programme. Following UN Women's Training-of-Trainers training on the WEPs, the company also provided internal trainings on the WEPs to employees as well as revised policy documents and established a complaints mechanism for reporting incidents of sexual harassment. WEPs work has been implemented by the company since 2018.

7. MERCURE AND IBIS STYLES TBILISI HOTELS – DOING MORE THAN JUST GIVING WOMEN THEIR FAIR SHARE

The hotels Mercure and ibis Styles Tbilisi signed on to the WEPs in 2018. The company is committed to corporate values of equality between men and women, diversity in the workplace and sharing knowledge on solidarity and combating stereotypes. The company launched the internal project "RiiSE", where the double "i" symbolizes men and women. Tamuna Chkhikvadze, SD Quality and Project Manager, explains: "At Mercure, we strongly believe in our core values. No progress can be made without gender equality and diversity, [which are] key drivers for collective performance. In 2019, we were extremely busy with activities: all employees were enrolled in the RiiSE network and received training on diversity, inclusion and equality in the workplace. In addition to gender equality, the RiiSE diversity concept also aims at encouraging the emergence of mixed teams in terms of generations and cultures. We are an international company that is present all over the world with thousands of employees who rise together with RiiSE."

In partnership with UN Women and the Creative Development Center, the company's employees

undertook training in mentorship, which resulted in 10 mentor-mentee pairs in the company. Other projects implemented by Mercure include the following: strategic leaders' development training; implementation of Inclusion and Diversity Week; and the deployment of People Policy, an internal document based on principles of equality and diversity. Since March 2019, every employee has been introduced to and signed on to the policy. Recently, the company signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Atipfund Georgia (Agency for State Care and Assistance for the (Statutory) Victims of Human Trafficking) to arrange certified internships for women residing in shelters, aligned with Principle 4. By starting its implementation of Principle 5, Mercure has learned that gender-responsive procurement can be a smart and cost-effective practice to promote women's empowerment in the country. In 2019, the company added a special stand in the restaurant to expose and sell women-produced wines and honey from "Baia's Wine"³⁸ and "Eka's Honey"³⁹ respectively.

38 Produced by a women-run family winery in the village of Obcha in the Imereti region of western Georgia.

39 Produced by Eka Gogatishvili in the village of Perevi in the Imereti region of western Georgia.

8. CRYSTAL – SUPPORTING FEMALE ENTREPRENEURS AND EMPLOYEES

Increasing women's access to financial services remains a strong business opportunity. Globally, women are less likely than men to have access to financial institutions or have a bank account. While 65 per cent of men report having an account at a formal financial institution, only 58 per cent of women report the same.⁴⁰ Not only does a lack of access limit these women's economic potential, but it hampers the well-being of their families and communities as well. Research shows that small and medium-sized enterprises run by women are better at reinvesting profits in the business, investing in their families' health and education, and strengthening local communities.⁴¹

Crystal, a financial inclusion organization, was one of the first companies that joined the WEPs movement in Georgia in 2016. It has been taking several steps to promote gender equality ever since. "There is more than enough evidence that promoting gender equality and women's empowerment is not just the right thing to do, but it is also a smart business decision, and at Crystal we deeply believe in it," notes CEO Ilia Revia.

Aligned with the implementation of Principle 5 and to support women's access to finance, the company announced the issuance of Women's Corporate Bonds worth GEL 15 million (more than USD 5 million) for the economic development of thousands of female customers, providing them with financial products and equal access to capital in order to grow their small businesses. So far, that meant developing special proposals for female entrepreneurs and reducing their credit service fees by 5 per cent. As a result, more than 2,300 women received loans that amounted to a total of GEL 4.7 million (more than USD 1.5 million).

Crystal has raised the bar on getting the best value from financial donations to women's communities and achieving greater social impact. Through a partnership with the TASO Foundation, Crystal implemented three community projects: potable water was provided to 25 households in Tsageri Municipality; a medical ambulatory was opened in the village of Guliani in Lanchkhuti, Guria; and a public library in the village of Pipileti in Oni, Racha saw the light of day.

Companies have been struggling to embrace employee well-being in the workplace for a long time now. Historically, well-being initiatives were not considered so important, nor were they a priority for many employers. However, things are changing. The COVID-19 pandemic and the related restrictions are having a significant impact on employees' well-being.

Maya Kobalia, Head of the Environmental and Social Division at Crystal, explains what the company gained from caring about and responding to employees' happiness, engagement and expectations, from the corporate responsibility and sustainability point of view: "It's valuable that during the crisis, many companies are getting a better understanding that employee well-being encompasses much more than just physical health. Even though it may not be easy to become an employee-centric company and put your people first, these unprecedented times have shown us that this approach is an absolute must! When people have a positive sense of well-being at work, they are able to develop their potential, be productive and creative, build positive relationships, better cope with stress, make meaningful contributions and take better care of their customers."

40 Asli Demircuc-Kunt and others, "The Global Findex Database 2014: Measuring Financial Inclusion around the World", Policy Research Working Paper, No. 7255 (Washington, D.C., World Bank, 2015). Available at <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/187761468179367706/pdf/WPS7255.pdf>.

41 UN Women, Progress of the World's Women 2015-2016: Transforming Economies, Realizing Rights (2015). Available at http://progress.unwomen.org/en/2015/pdf/UNW_progressreport.pdf.

Within the framework of the U.S. Women's Global Development and Prosperity Initiative and with the financial support of USAID/Georgia, the School for Young Entrepreneurs programme has been extended until 2024. Through YES-Georgia (the Supporting Youth and Women Entrepreneurship in Georgia programme),⁴² in 2020, Crystal was able to promote personal growth, social-economic empowerment, business/finance management and awareness-raising activities for 794 women. Moreover, 69 top business projects of the USAID YES-Georgia programme were provided with full funding to implement their start-ups, and 64 female participants were trained in the School for Young Entrepreneurs. Buzz Georgia, a new solely

women-oriented component of USAID YES-Georgia, provided virtual training to more than 400 women from all over Georgia in personal growth, the importance of self-esteem and entrepreneurship.

After receiving training in mentorship from UN Women's partner Creative Development Center in 2019, Crystal took steps to implement Principle 4 and initiated a workplace mentorship programme for women employees.⁴³ The programme is considered a valuable tool in improving employee retention and productivity as well as advancing workplace diversity and inclusion and increasing performance. A total of 107 female employees were promoted in the company in 2020.

9. KANT'S ACADEMY – STRENGTHENING WOMEN'S VOICES THROUGH EDUCATION

The Education 2030 Agenda recognizes that gender equality requires an approach that ensures equal access to complete education cycles. Poverty, geographical isolation, minority status, disability, early marriage, gender-based violence and other traditional attitudes about the status and role of women are among the many obstacles that Kant's Academy assumes prevent women and girls from fully exercising their right to participate in, complete and benefit from education.

"The academy is becoming more and more sensitive to women's issues," states Marekhi Gvaramadze, co-founder of Kant's Academy. "Female empowerment is now a priority direction for us. As an educational institution, we believe we can make transformational changes in girls' and women's lives."

As an education platform working with Georgia's youth since 2015 to enrich their emotional intellect and critical thinking, Kant's Academy rapidly responded to the COVID-19 pandemic by starting pro-bono work with adolescent groups on stress management and personal and professional development. In total, 1,500 young people were trained throughout Georgia. The work with youth in the

regions included promoting strategies of resilience, empowerment, personal growth and peer-to-peer education. Female participation prevailed, comprising up to 70 per cent.

Kant's Academy also marked the 75th anniversary of the United Nations with a campaign that included talks on gender equality and women's rights. In addition, a series of coaching and capacity-building sessions on personal growth was delivered to almost 200 women from the regions of Kakheti and Kvemo Kartli.

The academy has also launched a training course on stress management techniques with school-age kids and their parents in response to pandemic-related problems. Kant's Academy continues implementing a parental coaching programme to improve communication between parents and their children and to help them cope with stressful environments and manage their emotions.

For the women from the Samtskhe-Javakheti villages of Sviri and Toloshi, the company carried out several workshops on motivation, target setting, career development and professional orientation, including CV writing and job interview techniques. Workshops

⁴² See <https://crystalfund.ge/2020/01/31/usaid-program-yes-georgia-to-support-youth-women-entrepreneurship-2/>.

⁴³ For a video about the programme, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nF-1haalH2g>.

and meetings with rural women included the topics of leadership, women leaders, self-empowerment and the importance of brand marketing and effective communication.

Kant's Academy is also making an effort to empower and support the skills development of employees inside the company through a mentoring programme, with a set of six mentor-mentee pairs. The aim is to help the employees build skills in organization management and support their personal development. The implemented activities are mostly aligned with

Principle 4 and are aimed at empowering women employees.

After joining the WEPS family, the popular education platform started promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. Along with actions taken inside the company, such as adapting policy documents

and conducting an internal gender audit, the academy started practicing gender-sensitive procurement, starting with signing three contracts with women-owned vendors and service providers.

10. MTAVARI TV – ASPIRING TO BECOME A GENDER-SENSITIVE BROADCASTER

Mtavari Channel is the first broadcaster in Georgia that has decided, with the help of the WEPS, to empower and sensitize both men and women producers, content developers and journalists on gender equality. The aim is to make quality programmes that systematically take gender into account.

“The way that women and men are presented and represented in broadcasts can either break prevailing societal stereotypes or reinforce them. Compared to other businesses, TV can reach the widest audience possible,” notes Tamta Muradashvili, Director of Mtavari Channel. “We are proud to be a pioneer broadcaster that plays a very important role in advocating for gender equality, challenging stereotypes and changing attitudes and perceptions. The content we produce can really contribute to social transformation.”

Since joining the WEPS, the company has been very enthusiastic about revealing gender inequalities in the professional practice of staff both during production and in programming, with respect to the choice of content and people interviewed. Often, broadcasts are designed based on the premise that the intended audience is uniform. But as audiences are diverse, programmes should therefore be responsive to their varying expectations.

UN Women supported the company by advising on its internal policy documents, establishing

preventive measures against sexual harassment and training staff in gender equality and women's empowerment. During the COVID-19 lockdown in early 2020, the company wanted to contribute by addressing the increased threat of family-based violence. Mtavari produced and showed during primetime a PSA on violence against women, which included contact information for various support services available.

After hiring women on operator and driver positions, Mtavari also initiated a campaign to promote gender equality by printing T-shirts featuring boys as journalists and girls as camera operators to break the stereotypes associated with the jobs appropriate for men and women. A new broadcast, “Her Story”, was also made to familiarize the audience with feminism and promote positive messages on women's empowerment. Also, a major part of the broadcast “Other Nanuka” is devoted to women's stories.

Mtavari Channel dedicated its social network and morning broadcast to the new project “Toloba”, which was launched by three women, Sopho Liluashvili, Tamta Muradashvili and Teona Chemia. The aim of the project is to present strong women to the audience and to raise issues such as feminism, gender equality and women's empowerment for public discussion.

APPENDIX 3.

KEY STAKEHOLDERS

In-depth interviews during the study were conducted with:

- UN Women Georgia
- Consultant – Ketia Maminaishvili
- Partners – W4T and the GCCI
- WEPs signatory companies in Georgia

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UN Women Georgia Country Office
87 Paliashvili Street
Tbilisi 0179, Georgia

Tel: (+995 32) 222 06 04
(+995 32) 222 08 70
www.unwomen.org
georgia.unwomen.org