



The Gender Equity Model

Overview

The World Bank's Gender Equity Model (GEM) aims to promote gender equity in the private sector by building on a series of good practices in four key areas: recruitment, career development, family-work balance, and sexual harassment policies. By facilitating greater diversity and higher worker motivation, the model has had the added bonus of increasing the productivity and reputations of participating firms, for example in Mexico, where 90 percent of participating organizations reported that workers' performance and productivity have increased.

Full Brief—3 pages

[Setting International Standards for Gender Equality in the Private Sector The Gender Equity Model—PDF, May 2012](#)

Challenge

Despite laws that prohibit sex-based discrimination, women continue to be at a disadvantage in the workplace. In Latin America, for example, sexist language is still widely used; women remain absent from some sectors; and the presence of female workers is often neglected in designing facilities (for example many establishments lack separate restrooms for men and women). Globally, women earn less than their male counterparts in the same positions in almost all countries and face unique obstacles in their ascent to decision-making positions. To address this situation, the World Bank has developed a model that encourages gender equity in private and public firms.

Approach

Since 2001, the World Bank has supported the Gender Equity Model (GEM), a firm certification process for gender equity that promotes quality standards in key areas of industrial relations, such as selection and hiring processes, training policies, professional development, family-work balance and the prevention, handling, and follow-up of cases of sexual harassment. This public-private partnership initiative was designed and tested in Mexico in 2003 and replicated or adapted in Argentina, Chile, Egypt, Colombia, Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, and Turkey. The results have been extremely positive, not only on gender equality at the workplace, but also on business productivity thanks to enhanced gender diversity and a more motivated workforce.

Implementation of GEM involves a partnership between the government and the participating company/organization. The government provides training and technical assistance to facilitate the implementation of GEM; the company commits to implement specific changes based on

More Results 

MORE INFORMATION

- » [Gender Equity Model in Egypt](#)
- » [Gender Equity Model in Argentina](#)
- » [Gender Equity Model in Mexico \(PDF\)](#)
- » [A Model for Promoting Gender Equity in Private Companies and in Government Agencies \(PDF\)](#)
- » [Gender Action Plan](#)
- » [Gender and Development](#)

the model guidelines. Before a certification firm conducts the assessment process, the government conducts a preliminary audit to ensure that the company is ready for certification. The World Bank provides technical assistance to the executing government agency aimed at incorporating best practices based on international experience.

Firms adopt the model voluntarily during a four stage certification process comprising:

1. self-assessment to identify cultural barriers and gender gaps;
2. action plan design and implementation;
3. pre-auditing, auditing, and certification (Gender Equity Seal).

Results

In **Mexico**, the GEM Initiative, run by the National Institute for Women (Inmujeres), has now been in place for nine years. As of December 2010, some 300 Mexican organizations had been certified as gender equitable and an average of 63 firms per annum continue to adopt the program. The program has benefitted 300,000 employees, 55 percent from the private sector, 44 percent from the public sector, and 1 percent from nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Some results from the pilot in Mexico include:

- Participating firms have eliminated pregnancy discrimination from recruitment practices.
- Ninety 90 percent of participating organizations reported that workers' performance and productivity have increased.
- Firms have reported 50 percent reduced gender gaps, and the increased promotion of women to managerial positions.
- Measures have also been taken to improve the work-life balance of men and women alike. These measures include flexible hours, and the engagement of families in the company's gender equity activities.

In **Egypt**, 10 firms based in the Greater Cairo area participated in GEM. As a result of GEM, companies have institutionalized gender equality training, developed gender-sensitive human resources policies and codes of conduct, and advertised their commitment to the program on their websites and in other marketing materials. The impact evaluation points to the program's positive effect on some aspects of employee satisfaction as well as on employees' perception of their firm's commitment to gender equity.

In **Argentina**, the GEM principles have been adopted to develop the Argentinean Gender Equity Model (MEGA 2009), tested in a pilot program led by the Argentinean National Anti-Discrimination Institute (Instituto Nacional contra la Discriminación, INADI). The pilot ended successfully with the certification of nine companies, both multinational and domestic; it benefitted 21,000 workers, among men and women. Results from the pilot in Argentina include:

- Commitment to gender equity is explicit in the companies' policies (human resource management).
- Elimination of discriminatory practices in personnel selection and hiring practices.
- Training programs specifically targeting men and women are linked to existing opportunities in the workplace.
- Adoption of special strategies for promoting female access to management positions and encouraging female leadership in general.
- Benefits for work-family balance for both men and women.
- Incorporation of mechanisms for addressing cases of sexual harassment and promoting a respectful working environment.

Bank Contribution

The Bank has provided:

- Mexico GEM: US\$3,070,000 (IBRD Learning and Innovation Loan)

- Egypt GEM: US\$250,000 (Development Grant Facility)
- Argentina GEM: US\$57,000 (Technical Assistance-Non-lending)
- Chile GEM: US\$52,000 (Technical Assistance-Non-lending)

Partners

The Bank has worked with partners such as the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (formerly UNIFEM), the International Center for Research on Women, and various government agencies including Instituto Nacional por la Xenofobia, la Discriminación y el Racismo (INADI) (Argentina); Servicio Nacional de la Mujer (SERNAM) (Chile); Comité de Equidad de Género (Colombia); Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres (Inmujeres) (Mexico); and the General Authority for Investment and Free Zones (GAFI) (Egypt).

Moving Forward

Gender certification is becoming a recognized instrument to promote gender equity in the private sector. Other countries have adopted the World Bank's GEM and adaptations of the model are in place in Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Dominican Republic, and Turkey. Chile has followed Mexico's lead in adopting the GEM as public policy.

One potential area of work to move this type of model forward is the standardization of gender equity seals that would allow for international comparisons and would benefit international firms in particular. Proponents of such a measure cite the series of International Organization for Standardization (ISO) quality standards as an example of how this might work. In addition, the model needs to be strengthened at the post-certification stage, focusing on areas where changes are more difficult to achieve, such as salary equalization and affirmative action to promote women's access to managerial positions.