**UNDP TURKEY POLICY SHEET 3**

**Women in the Private Sector**

**Global Trends**

In addition to the GREVIO Report and CEDAW Recommendations on Turkey, which consistently point to the urgent need to develop an integrated perspective and effective national machinery on GEWE, the 11th Development Plan places significant emphasis on the global context marked by increasing political, economic and financial risks, and the need to promote a strategic approach to the management of economic growth, to develop new partnerships and to increase competences in **innovative technologies**. It adopts a perspective prioritizing sustainability and stability in the economy, as well as increasing welfare in human, social and spatial development, on the basis of the rule of law and fundamental rights and freedoms.

The Plan highlights the priorities of the global context, including **new business, product and services models** brought about new technologies, including bio-technology, digital technologies, advanced material technologies and layered production technologies, and points to the **transformation in the production structure and value chains** that will be entailed by those. In this respect, it places a particular emphasis on smaller, more flexible and innovative enterprises, which would gain an increasing significance in the global economy.

It furthermore underlines the socio-demographic transformation, i.e., international migration and ageing processes, which lead to the emergence of new needs for sectors in terms of elderly care and lifelong learning opportunities, new education policies in order to increase productivity, and qualified job opportunities. The Plan emphasizes the global transformation in the labour market and social structure, implying crucial changes induced by technological transformation in current and future jobs, by demographic and migration aspects in the supply of labour, by changes in quality of work in employment relations; and by the division of income in the social contract. It underlines that technology-induced changes in production increases the demand for **qualified labour force**; and new forms of flexible work are emerging due to developments in digital technologies.

Women gain particular importance in this respect since, despite these developments, women’s labour force participation still remains low compared to countries with similar levels of economic development (i.e. EU and OECD countries), while they constitute the majority in low-quality, informal jobs, as well as unpaid family labour. The Plan emphasizes that global economic developments imply particular challenges for the employability of vulnerable sections of society, which necessitates efforts to empower women to enable them to better respond to the labour market needs. In this respect, it is underlined that **vocational training** and institutional structure in line with the qualifications and ways of work **required by technological transformation** gains particular significance.

The Strategy Document and Action Plan for Women’s Empowerment (2018-2023) emphasizes the need for collaboration with the **private sector** in order to encourage work environments and institutional practices offering equal opportunities to women, in line with international standards promoting women’s economic empowerment (i.e., UN Global Compact, WEPs, etc.). Accordingly, activities implemented by private sector companies aiming to empower women are closely monitored, and companies are invited to support women’s participation and role in working life and promotion of equal opportunities.

**Experience in Turkey**

The National Employment Strategy (2014-2023) starts from the observation that the labour force participation of women in Turkey is significantly low, and that women are primarily employed in the services sector, followed by agriculture. Accordingly, agricultural disengagement and migration from rural to urban areas resulted in women previously working in agriculture withdrawing from the labour force, becoming unemployed or working in low-paid, low-skilled jobs, with no social security. Also, jobs and occupations are clearly divided and socially accepted as ‘women’s jobs’ and ‘men’s jobs’, whereby women’s employment concentrates in jobs that are traditionally accepted to be in line with women’s roles. This prevents women to access other fields which are relatively better paid and have social security. Main problems for women to participate in the labour force are listed as low levels of education and skills, traditional gender roles, and insufficient work-life balance mechanisms.

The 11th Development Plan stipulates that while the share of industry and services in the GDP has been gradually increasing between 2014-2018, that of agricultural sector has declined, with a share of 22.2%, 61.5% and 5.8%, respectively. It particularly emphasizes the need for the development of the industry sector due to its driving role in increasing productivity.

The Turkish economy continues to have an SME-dominated structure, with approximately 3.09 million SMEs as of 2017, constituting 99.8% of enterprises, 74.2% of employment, 54.1% of added value, 56.2% of exports, and 19.6% of R&D expenditures. Still, the needs of SMEs for productivity increase, growth and institutionalization persist in terms of increasing competitiveness, expanding entrepreneurship and creating employment.

The Development Plan gives priority to a growth model based on productivity and a major role to be played by the industrial sector. It focuses on the need to promote technological transformation in industry, and aims to develop the necessary human and physical capital for this purpose. In this respect, the importance of quality vocational and targeted training in order to promote the skills and labour market integration of the labour force, with the aim to direct the latter to more productive sectors and encourage women to participate in the labour market, is highlighted.

In terms of increasing women’s labour force participation, emphasis is made on the need to promote the flexibility of the labour market, to increase child care services, as well as to develop education opportunities and employment-oriented policies. The need for policies promoting decent job opportunities for all sections of society, particularly women, the youth and persons with disabilities, taking into account digital and technological transformations in the labour market, is highlighted throughout the Plan. The development of training courses and programmes aiming to address new occupational fields revealed by the digital transformation, as well as measures to encourage women’s labour force participation, particularly in technology production fields such as coding and software, are assigned priority in this respect.

Furthermore, women entrepreneurs will be given priority in terms of guidance and counselling support to be provided in business development processes, and mechanisms to promote women’s economic activity in digital settings, including web sites, portals and applications will be developed, along with programmes and seminars to empower women entrepreneurs in e-commerce.

In line with the new occupational fields developed in the context of the changing needs of the labour market, efforts will focus on increasing the participation of girls in STEM fields. Measures to encourage women’s participation in management and decision-making mechanisms in the private sector will be developed through awareness-raising activities and incentives.

The Strategy Document and Action Plan on Women’s Empowerment (2018-2023) emphasizes that a wide-range of work is ongoing in order to promote women’s labour force participation and improvement of their status in the labour force, through effective collaboration among public bodies, private sector, CSOs and other relevant stakeholders. These include KOSGEB support for training, consultancy and credits in women’s entrepreneurship, İŞKUR active labour force services, micro-credit programmes, Public Education Centers’ (HEM) vocational training courses, Ministry of Economy’s activities promoting women entrepreneurship, supports provided by Ministry of Interior’s Department for Associations, vocational training courses offered by municipalities, as well as services provided for rural women by the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock.

The Action Plan sets the target of training 200.000 women for the IT sector by 2023, along with the following targets: to step up efforts to combat women’s informal employment; to promote the role of the private sector in increasing women’s full and effective participation in work life; to expand accessible and quality care services for children, elderly and persons with disabilities; to increase the number of women employers and self-employed women by supporting women’s entrepreneurship.

The strategies defined to achieve these targets include legislative arrangements, promotion of vocational training and skills development, combatting informal employment, developing public-private partnerships, support to women’s entrepreneurship, and measures targeting women with special needs (i.e. seasonal agricultural workers, empowerment of rural women, women with disabilities, refugee women, women victims of violence, etc.).

In terms of vocational training and skills development, the objective is to increase qualified women’s employment, primarily in sectors where women are under-represented, including IT, tourism, health and construction. In terms of women’s entrepreneurship, main activities include work towards women entrepreneurs in Technology Development Zones, support to women in IT fields, training and seminar programmes for women in e-commerce, as well as guidance and consultancy to women in business development.

It is important to note that one of the major strategies proposed for these targets also includes stepping up efforts for the preparation of the infrastructure for the certification of companies on equal opportunities for women and men, through strong collaboration with the private sector. There is a set of activities planned for this purpose, including (1) to support private sector projects aiming to empower women in the labour market; (2) to develop and enact a certification system aiming to assess the gender-sensitivity of the private sector; (3) to organize career days and events targeting women and girls.

**Recommendations for UNDP’s Role**

UNDP has been actively involved and is in a position to effectively respond to most of the priorities outlined above, as the main UN Agency praised for its strong and structured partnership with the private sector. It has significant expertise and experience in most of the areas highlighted in the above documents, including partnership with the private sector on gender equality, women in industry, business development for women, vocational training targeting women, work with OIZs and SMEs on gender issues, as well as the assessment and delivery of services needed by women to increase their presence in non-traditional fields. Having a dedicated office, the UNDP Istanbul International Center for Private Sector in Development (IICPSD), which also has a global mission, also gives the UNDP a cutting edge and places a large responsibility on its shoulders to share this capacity, experience and relations with all stakeholders, and convene and lead the private sector initiatives on gender equality.

Particularly the ISG Portfolio and Private Sector Programme, having a successful record on the introduction of GES with the private sector, encouraging women in non-traditional areas, as well as developing business models for women; but also the various initiatives of the SRR Programme focusing on the provision of training in non-traditional areas such as ICT and encouraging micro investments and incubation centers for women, prove crucial in terms of developing the synergies established in this area further in the next CP. Promoting innovations on gender equality through partnerships with the private sector, therefore, appears as a major area that should be pursued in the upcoming CP. This area should mainly build on the synergies between the three portfolios, and their distinct but complementary experiences with the private sector, as well as integrating the work of other UN Agencies in a systematic manner.

Four inter-related pillars can be identified in this respect, including: (1) leading the establishment of a model for joint action among UN Agencies in the area of women in the private sector; (2) scaling up and expanding the GES for the private sector, particularly with the aim to reach all levels of the supply chain and to turn this into an award mechanism; (3) launching a consolidated initiative to increase women’s participation in the industry through support in non-traditional areas of work for women, which are in line with today’s labour market demands; and (4) strengthening the link between education and employment policies in this field.

1. Under the first pillar, UNDP has been working on developing ways to promote joint action in the private sector, mainly with UN Women and other relevant Agencies including ILO and UNFPA, which have related activities with the private sector. It would be important to consolidate this as a UN joint initiative, where all main actors can contribute through their own technical know-how and particular experience, in order to promote a model for partnership with the private sector in GEWE. While UN Women has been working on gender mainstreaming in the private sector, and ILO has experience with SMEs in looking for ways to promote women’s employment in OIZs, UNDP can take a leading role through its access to the private sector, its experience in inter-institutional relations, as well as its successful record in implementing the GES as a transformative process. It is crucial that the UNDP has a more upscale and encompassing tool at hand in the form of GES, which could be used to mainstream all other initiatives of UN Agencies in the field. **A Gender Equality in the Private Sector Joint Initiative or Programme** would be key in terms of coordinating and mainstreaming the different Agencies’ activities (i.e. GES by UNDP, WEPs by UN Women, MIG Score by ILO etc.), and would be important to consolidate the efforts made so far and to project the tangible steps of such coordination through the One-UN perspective, by coding the GES as the major tool of this mechanism.
2. Under the second pillar, it would be important to expand the GES process with the private sector towards other large companies, particularly **aiming to reach out to the SMEs in their supply chain**, therefore adapting the GES as a more focused and specialized tool geared to the specific needs of SMEs. In this respect, and in order to distinguish its activities from those of other Agencies working in related areas, UNDP could work to develop the GES as an award – rather than certification – mechanism to be implemented with SMEs, which constitute the great majority of economic activity and employment in Turkey. While GES might be too costly or difficult to adopt for individual SMEs, a smaller-scale and easily applicable scheme might be developed for them, in order to facilitate their integration into the process through small but significant steps. It would be feasible to introduce an **award mechanism that contains only one focused item per year for SMEs** to declare their commitment to, i.e. about observing gender parity in their organization; adopting zero-tolerance for sexual harassment; hiring and advancing women in non-traditional fields; establishing gender-friendly work practices, etc., which would then be acknowledged through an **SME Award for Gender Equality**. This would serve not only to institutionalize the GES efforts in Turkey and to constitute an effective communication and visibility tool for UNDP, but also to provide an enabling environment by triggering peer pressure and mutual learning among SMEs. This would also complement and reinforce the work towards planning a system to bring together all the tools of UN Agencies mentioned under the first pillar, by reflecting the gender mainstreaming work within the private sector to SMEs in the supply chain. This way, the GES mechanism would be locally owned and institutionalized in Turkey as a model to be followed in other country contexts. It is therefore a crucial measure to be considered for the next CP. This can be also incorporated into the agenda of Business for Goals, which has integrated gender equality as a principle, as an effective way of raising awareness and encouraging joint action.
3. As regards the third pillar, UNDP has already ongoing work on women in industry, which also has an emphasis on creating employment for women and supporting women’s entrepreneurship. This is a significant initiative as it entails a Portfolio-wide cooperation in ISG, bringing together the experiences of the CEG and PSPS components. This is also supported by the SCRR Programme, which has current initiatives focusing on promoting vocational training for women in non-traditional areas such as ICT and encouraging micro investments and incubation centers for women. What is needed in the current context is a more structured focus on the integration of women in industry, including refugee women, mapping out the factors that lead to their exclusion and concrete problems that they face, as well as establishing the necessary conditions for their participation, particularly in non-traditional areas. The UNDP has recently taken steps to address development challenges through a new approach, through its worldwide Accelerator Labs, which aim to increase the pace at which the SDGs are attained on the basis of locally-sourced solutions, promoting collective knowledge, and accelerating progress by bringing expertise, creativity and collective intelligence together. In Turkey, UNDP launched an SDG Impact Accelerator Programme, aiming to catalyze innovative and market-based solutions, initially for the livelihood challenges faced by ever-increasing number of displaced people, building on a multi-stakeholder platform focusing on empowering entrepreneurs and innovators providing impact at scale. It therefore provides an important opportunity as an entry point for the Agency to incorporate gender into this agenda and promote its accelerator role in this respect, by highlighting the importance of gender as a cross-cutting issue for all SDGs, not only SDG 5.

In line with the government’s emphasis on a growth model based on productivity and human capital development needed for the technological transformation in the industrial sector, UNDP’s role in the provision of quality vocational training and skills development initiatives, an emphasis on new work environments, requiring new skills and new types of occupations, induced by technological transformation and opening new pathways for women in productive sectors, would be essential. Moreover, these initiatives should consider establishing partnerships with local governments, chambers and civil society organizations, as well as İŞKUR, which have significant difficulties in reaching out to women in an integrated perspective and in encouraging their employment in non-traditional, innovative areas. This would constitute a significant step, bringing together the two main components of ISG and integrating the work being conducted by the SCRR into one single **initiative to empower women in industry**. It would, therefore, be crucial to continue with the **emphasis on women’s entrepreneurship and employment in industry**, particularly taking into account the **technological transformation and emergence of new sectors** where women can be encouraged to participate through qualified jobs, including e-commerce, coding and software, eco-tourism, health, construction, etc, and involving local stakeholders. This should provide a **more structured and integrated support for women’s entrepreneurship**, including vocational training in non-traditional and innovative sectors, mentorship, role models, as well as grant schemes to be developed with local actors, on the basis of the specific local needs for qualified labour force in specific, particularly high-technology and innovative, industries.

1. The fourth pillar, which is closely related to the ones mentioned above, concerns strengthening the link between education and employment policies, with a view to enhancing women’s participation in the technological transformation process. As underlined in most official documents, new education policies are needed to increase productivity and to respond to new challenges triggered by socio-demographic transformation. UNDP is already playing an important role in this respect, particularly through the TEG project which constitutes a firm baseline for further initiatives to respond to new skills needs induced by technological and digital transformation. It would be important to develop this further in the upcoming CP, by new initiatives to match the needs of the labour market to education and training activities, investing in new skills for women to enable them to take their place in this transformation. This would also provide the grounds for UNDP to provide input for larger education policies on the basis of its close partnership with industry and the private sector for GEWE, in line with its mandate and unique strength to shape and influence national level policies. For this purpose, supplementary education and skills development initiatives could be developed with public and private sector partners and implemented in high schools and/or universities, particularly targeting female students.

**Best Practices**

A good practice of supplementary education by the private sector is provided by Samsung Electronics in Russia, which developed a year-long IT and programming course for high school students, in cooperation with one of the best technical universities in Russia, the Moscow Institute of Physics and Technology, and implemented with the Ministry of Education and Science across 20 cities with the aim to reach more than 5.000 students in 5 years. The course focused on Java language and mobile application development on the Android platform, with the aim to train the skilled IT and engineering professionals of the future.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Another example comes from India, where the government established the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) to engage with private sector partners to develop strategic approaches in skills development through public-private partnerships with companies involved in skills training. A ‘skills business ecosystem’ is thus created to enable all relevant stakeholders to interact for establishing a positive and productive system to develop the needed skills, particularly among the youth.[[2]](#footnote-2) Various training programmes have thus been initiated nationwide, targeting students, school dropouts and unemployed and/or disadvantaged youth, especially in ICT areas, in collaboration with major technology firms. This can be a good practice to target particularly young women in Turkey.

ILO has developed a ‘Women in STEM Workforce Readiness and Development Programme’ for 2017-2020 implemented in Indonesia, Philippines and Thailand, aiming to provide women with critical soft and technical STEM-related skills, employability and leadership training coupled with targeted mentorship to help women obtain quality employment and advancement opportunities in STEM-related jobs. The programme focuses on three industries in three countries, identified as high-growth industries with significant skills gaps and growth opportunities for women, i.e., the automotive and ICT industry in Indonesia, IT-BPO industry in Philippines, and the electrical and electronics industry in Thailand, with a view to strengthening the links between the private sector firms, social partners and vocational training centers in terms of increasing productivity in these sectors and improve the living conditions of women.[[3]](#footnote-3)

The Business Development Bank of Canada (BDC) initiated a Women in Technology (WIT) Venture Fund, aiming to invest in women-led technology companies, to support women leaders in technology, and to help build a robust ecosystem to support women in technology. They have identified three ways to do this, (i) direct investment, i.e., BDC directly invests in women-led technology companies; (ii) indirect investment, i.e. BDC invests in emerging venture funds with at least one woman partner, also commited to investing in women-led technology companies, and (iii) ecosystem development, i.e., BDC works with partners to develop and support a self-sustaining ecosystem for women that provides mentorship, networking and tools.[[4]](#footnote-4)

The Girls Innovation Camp (GIC) initiated by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) on behalf of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), in cooperation with the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture and Intel Indonesia, addresses the need for improving gender equality in the workplace by raising the digital skill levels of women. The GIC offers hands-on training in design thinking for innovation, career guidance, as well as the basics of teamwork, leadership, and gender mainstreaming to female students and teachers. The initiative aims to foster innovation among students and teachers using technology in order to prepare them for jobs in the digital economy. In addition to Intel, other IT companies such as IBM, Axioo and the local developer hub, Dicoding also take part in the programme, with the aim to better match workforce supply and demand, as well as expose students to the latest technology, real work environments, and personal skills required by the 21st century world of work. In addition to the innovation camp, two films on gender were produced in cooperation with the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture as well as the private sector to promote and encourage women to study and work in the field of STEM and to address the importance of gender equality in companies.[[5]](#footnote-5)

McKinsey collaborated with Pivotal Ventures (an investment and incubation company) to help more women prepare for careers in the tech industry, on a comprehensive study to examine how tech-company philanthropy and corporate social responsibility investments can improve gender diversity in the technology sector. The best practices emerging out of the research include: (i) focus on women and girls by supporting girls-only programmes or co-educational programmes aiming at achieving 40% representation of women in recruitment and retention; (ii) focus on women who face multiple barriers (race, ethnicity, poverty, etc.); (iii) consider multiple on-ramps, including in higher education, as girls are less likely than boys to have exposure to computing and technology; (iv) connect programmes to each other, to support the transition of women smoothly from one experience to the next (i.e., not only beginner level); and (v) measure impact by collecting regular data and establishing indicators.[[6]](#footnote-6)

What is important, as all these initiatives show, is to establish a core budget for these activities, supported by fundraising with the private sector. Another crucial step is to support childcare initiatives with the private sector. In addition to many companies providing on-site childcare facilities, there are good examples of how childcare can be supported through private sector initiatives. Intel, for example, invests in a network of childcare providers that might be near the employees’ homes and offer training, mentoring and support to providers in exchange for giving Intel employees priority admission. Microsoft offers employees discounts at many childcare development centers, while some companies in the US pool resources with other organizations to form consortia to build or support childcare centers or family care homes. Another way is to use philanthropy, community partnerships and local governments to invest in high-quality childcare.[[7]](#footnote-7)

1. Details available at <https://crimsonecl.com/job/515/samsung-s-it-school/> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. For more information, see <https://www.iicpsd.undp.org/content/istanbul/en/home/library/Private-Sector-Skills-Lessons-from-India.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. For details, see <https://www.ilo.org/asia/projects/WCMS_619723/lang--en/index.htm> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. More information available at <https://www.bdc.ca/en/bdc-capital/venture-capital/strategic-approach/pages/women-tech-fund.aspx> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. More information can be found at <https://www.eskills4girls.org/girls-innovation-camps-sustainable-economic-development-through-technical-and-vocational-education-and-training/> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. For details, see <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/technology-media-and-telecommunications/our-insights/closing-the-tech-gender-gap-through-philanthropy-and-corporate-social-responsibility> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. For more information, see <https://slate.com/human-interest/2018/02/the-corporate-case-for-childcare.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)