A Strategic Public-Private Partnership as a way of Empowering Women?

1. Establish high-level corporate leadership for gender equality.
2. Treat all women and men fairly at work – respect and support human rights and nondiscrimination.
3. Ensure the health, safety and well-being of all women and men workers.
4. Promote education, training and professional development for women.
5. Implement enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practices that empower women.
6. Promote equality through community initiatives and advocacy.
7. Measure and publicly report on progress to achieve gender equality.
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Abstract

The Women’s Empowerment Principles (WEPs) were launched on International Women’s Day in 2010. The ambition of empowering women through strategic corporate behavior signifies the ever tighter embrace between the United Nations and the corporate sector, where public partners are gradually becoming subject to private sector discourses such as efficiency and performance, and corporations are increasingly held accountable for socially irresponsible behavior. This Thesis explores the WEPs as a form of public-private (policy) partnership between two UN agencies and 594 signatory companies and considers the extent to which the WEPs can be used in promoting women’s empowerment. By paring public-private partnership theory with that of Feminism, two theoretical approaches which are seldom aligned, it is the hope to bring about a new perspective on how to facilitate women’s empowerment internationally through a rather strict business rationale. It is argued that the WEPs as a Transformational Partnership have the ability to promote the WEPs agenda. However, it is found that the voluntary nature of the partnership limits the extent to which companies genuinely engages in the ambition of empowering women, and also, despite strong UN commitment WEPs, there remains a certain degree of skepticism amongst the partners. The reporting mechanism of the WEPs is questioned, but it is also illustrated how the message of empowering women seems to have stimulated a more conscious corporate mindset which might benefit business as well as women globally in the future. As a final note, a set of strategic opportunities for the WEPs is offered, and intended as inspiration for interested WEPs signatories and UN partners, but could also serve as part of a potentially wider research agenda.

*Keywords*: Women’s Empowerment Principles, Gender Equality, Public Private Partnerships, Transformational Partnerships, United Nations, Feminism, UN Women and UN Global Compact
Preface

I would like to extend my great appreciation to those who willingly agreed to be interviewed for this Thesis. My research would simply not have been sufficient without these people.

Firstly, I would like to thank the three private sector representatives, Birgitte Kofod Olsen, Head of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) at the insurance company Tryg; Tinna Nielsen, Head of Diversity, Inclusion and Collaboration for the dairy company Arla Foods Amba and Jette Schmidt Lund, Head of CSR in the telecommunications company TDC, for finding time in their busy schedule to share their experiences and challenges with the implementation of the Women’s Empowerment Principles. Also, I would like to thank Associate Professor Lynn Roseberry from Copenhagen Business School, for taking the time to engage in an inspiring conversation on women’s empowerment and provide constructive and much needed feed-back on the Feminist sections of this Thesis. From the United Nations Global Compact Office I would like to thank Lauren Gula, Project Manager for Human Rights and Women’s Empowerment for willingly engage in an interview and answering my following questions and comments. Finally, from the UN Women headquarters I would like to thank Anna Fälth and Carolyn Hardy for inspiration on the research topic and Laraine Mills, Private Sector Partnerships Specialist, for taking the time to engage in longer conversations and willingly clarifying my questions and concerns during the entire research process.
Abbreviations

GII - Gender Inequality Index
GRI - Global Reporting Initiative
HDR - Human Development Report
IMF - International Monetary Fund
IO - International Organizations
NGO - Non Governmental Organizations
NPM - New Public Management
OECD - Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PPP - Public-Private Partnerships
TNCs - Transnational Corporations
TP - Transformational Partnerships
UNDP - United Nations Development Programme
UNGO - United Nations Global Compact
UNGCO - United Nations Global Compact Office
UN Women - United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment
WDR - World Development Report
WEPs - Women’s Empowerment Principles
4P - Public-Private Policy Partnerships

Figures

Figure 1: The Women’s Empowerment Principles

Figure 2: Dimensions of the public-private partnership phenomenon

Figure 3: Spectrum of Transformational Partnerships composed of various partners

Appendixes

Appendix I: The CEO Statement of Support for the Women’s Empowerment Principles

Appendix II: The Women’s Empowerment Principles Booklet
1.0 Introduction

The world is rapidly changing. Globalization has gradually connected regions, societies, institutions and individuals in unforeseen ways, requiring mature responses to the opportunities and encounters associated with this development. Universal challenges nevertheless remain, which calls for solutions and innovative ways of accommodating issues such as peace, security, social, economic and environmental development. The ever-increasing interconnectedness has meant that public as well as private actors progressively engage in shared projects often with common and overlapping objectives. The scope of the corporate sector has increased significantly over the past decades, which has also been acknowledged by international organizations such as the United Nations (UN). Already in 2005, a UN report confirmed the importance of including the private sector in the achievement of UN goals:

“In order to effect change and improve the living conditions of billions of people in a sustainable manner, partnering with civil society and business is more than just an option. In many ways, it has turned into a necessity for the United Nations in order to “get the job done”” (Witte and Reinicke 2005, ix).

These deepening ties between the UN and the corporate sector have led to new opportunities of cooperation, benefiting stakeholders especially through public-private partnerships. Recently, a more narrow focus, on partnering for women’s empowerment, has been placed on the UN agenda, which has also been noted by the UN General Secretary Ban Ki-Moon:

“The private sector contributions will be crucial. We cannot achieve sustainable development without buy-in from business—from leading global corporations to small- and medium-size enterprises, from investors to entrepreneurs. Nor can we achieve sustainability—at a corporate or a global level—without empowering the world’s women.” (Ki-moon 2012)

In the attempt to facilitate women’s participation in the global economy, two UN agencies along with hundreds of private companies, thus set-out in formulating a set of principles addressing gender equality while propelling business operations. The Women’s Empowerment Principles (WEPs) was launched on the international women’s day in 2010, and marked an important shift since no other public-private framework has addressed the issue of gender to the extent of the WEPs. By wrapping a critical UN priority in a strong business case, the corporate sector seems increasingly convinced that investing in women can be ‘smart economics’.
This Thesis will consider the WEPs initiative and will do so by focusing on the principles as a distinct form of public-private (policy) partnership engaging multiple stakeholders in the achievement of a commonly held goal of empowering women through business and defined “as voluntary and collaborative relationships between various parties, both State and non-State, in which all participants agree to work together to achieve a common purpose or undertake a specific task and to share risks, responsibilities, resources, competencies and benefits” (United Nations 2003, 4).

Based on the case of the WEPs presented in the next section, and as a result of the considerations above, this Thesis takes its point of departure in the following research question:

*How can the Women’s Empowerment Principles be explained and understood as a partnership and to what extent can the principles be used in promoting women’s empowerment?*

The research question has been divided into two parts: The first part of the question will be explored through public-private partnership theory explaining how and in what ways the UN and the corporate sector has engaged in the WEPs partnerships. The second part of the question will be investigated through a Feminist perspective focusing on the extent to which the WEPs promote women’s empowerment. To address the nexus between the two parts of the research question, three sub-questions has been developed:

- **What motivates the private sector to engage in the WEPs?**
- **What are the incentives for UN Women and the UNGCO to engage with the private sector?**
- **How can the potentially contrasting interests between the partners of the WEPs be aligned?**

All three sub-questions consider the partners’ motivation for and interests of engaging in the WEPs. Each question accounts for a different partner perspective and each make up a separate section of the analysis, to more fully account for the overall research question.

What makes the case of the WEPs so peculiar is primarily its voluntary nature. The principles separate itself from the majority of partnership literature, especially in the field of public-private partnerships (PPP), since signatories are not required but rather encouraged to live up to the WEPs. This poses an interesting paradox as companies signing the principles and visibly engages in gender equality and women’s empowerment, is not formally obliged to do so. It could be argued that these voluntary efforts can be selected strategically by the companies enabling them to tap into the legitimacy of the UN partnership without actually changing corporate behavior. In
addition, despite its popularity in academia as well as in the ‘real world’ the growing trend of PPPs has only on very few occasions been analyzed through a feminist perspective let alone been subject to scrutiny through a gender lens which is why this Thesis will engage in this very task.
1.1 Structure:

**Chapter 1:** Contains the introduction, the research question and the Women’s Empowerment Case providing some background for the selected area of research.

**Chapter 2:** Includes the Method containing considerations of the Philosophy of Science and theoretical focus, a Literature Review and a further investigation of the Research Question.

**Chapter 3:** Holds the first theoretical section considering Public-Private Partnership Theory as well as the United Nations’ partnership experience and approach. This chapter considers the first part of the research question.

**Chapter 4:** Focus on the theoretical section on Feminism, and considers various Feminist approaches to the WEPs partnership. This chapter looks into the second part of the research question.

**Chapter 5:** Is the analytical chapter which addresses the research sub-questions and through gathered empirical data analyses the WEPs partners’ motivation for engaging with each other, but also considers the challenges of aligning various interests within such a framework.

**Chapter 6:** Contains the discussion and combines the analytical sections considering the sub-questions in the attempt to combine these with the research question of how and to what extent the WEPs partnership can be used to promote women’s empowerment.

**Chapter 7:** Is the conclusion, which briefly wraps up the discussion and provides an answer to the research question.

**Chapter 8:** Offers a brief perspective on some of the challenges that remains for the WEPs, a result of the combined analysis and final discussion, but also as an outcome of conclusion. The considerations are presented as a set of strategic opportunities for WEPs signatories and the UN partners to consider, but can also be seen as part of a further academic research agenda.
1.2 The Case: The Women’s Empowerment Principles

The Women’s Empowerment Principles (WEPs) are a result of a partnership between the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) and the corporate sector, launched in 2010. Prior to this, the partners engaged in formulating a set of seven principles ensuring gender equality and empowerment of women in a corporate context as well as through corporate community engagement (UNGC and UN Women 2013). Founded on the argument that ‘Equality Means Business’ the principles are put in place to ensure women’s full participation in all levels of economic life across all sectors, which is seen as significant for building strong economies, establishing stable and just societies and achieving international goals on human rights, sustainability and development (UN Women 2010a, 1). The principles thus provides a set of considerations attempted to assist the private sector in promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment through the enhancement and inclusion of corporate sector policies at the workplace and in the broader community (UN Women 2012, 1). The private sector has increasingly demonstrated an improved recognition for the business case of advancing women’s position and acknowledged the link between improvements in women’s empowerment and economic performance (UN Women 2010a, 1). Companies sign on to the CEO Statement of Support¹, which as of mid-June 2013 holds 594 signatories, expressing consent to for the WEPs. This signals understandings that convene corporate responsibility and by empowering women the company will enhance competitiveness and reflect a commitment to society. Also, signatory companies are encouraged to provide voluntary contributions depending on the size of the operation (weprinciples.org 2013a). Every year in March, WEPs signatories meet to evaluate the progress and challenges at the WEPs Annual Event in New York.

¹ See Appendix I
The WEPs consists of seven principles each considering various elements of business conduct:

**The Women’s Empowerment Principles**

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<tr>
<th>Principle</th>
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<tr>
<td>Principle 1</td>
<td>Establish high-level corporate leadership for gender equality</td>
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<td>Principle 2</td>
<td>Treat all women and men fairly at work – respect and support human rights and nondiscrimination</td>
</tr>
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<td>Principle 3</td>
<td>Ensure the health, safety and well-being of all women and men workers.</td>
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<td>Principle 4</td>
<td>Promote education, training and professional development for women</td>
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<td>Principle 5</td>
<td>Implement enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practices that empower women</td>
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<td>Principle 6</td>
<td>Promote equality through community initiatives and advocacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principle 7</td>
<td>Measure and publicly report on progress to achieve gender equality</td>
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Figure 1: The Women’s Empowerment Principles (Source: UN Women 2010a)

The first principle, encourage companies to affirm their level of support for gender equality and human rights, especially in terms of direct top-level policies. It further calls for companies to establish company-wide goals, report on progress and ensure that all corporate policies are gender-sensitive (UN Women 2010a, 6). Companies should therefore consider their overall strategy and qualitative goals in terms of women’s empowerment, for instance in order to ensure a certain amount of women at the company board or at management level (UN Women 2012, 7).

The second principle, is particularly concerned with equal pay and other workplace policies designed for removing gender-based discrimination and ensuring women’s participation in general decision making at corporate level. This principle further stresses the importance of flexible work options and access to child care (UN Women 2010a, 6). To achieve these goals, business should for instance look into its policies on maternity and paternity leave as well as recruitment policies and pay transparency (UN Women 2010b, 8).

The third principle, take into account the different impacts various policies can have on employees and encourage companies to provide safe working conditions and provide protection from dangerous materials and potential risks (UN Women 2010a, 7). In ensuring compliance, companies should for example consider whether zero-tolerance towards gender-based harassment are in place and further reflect on possibilities of sex disaggregated data-collection (UN Women 2012, 9).

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2 See Appendix II
The fourth principle, is concerned with workplace policies on the advancement of women across all business areas and at all levels of the company. This principle stresses the importance of equal opportunities for company-supported training, education and mentoring (WEP booklet 2011:7). To ensure this, companies could for instance take employees’ family roles into account when scheduling training or educational programs (UN Women 2012, 10).

The fifth principle, encourage companies to expand their business relationships with women-owned enterprises and support gender-sensitive solutions in terms of barriers to credit and lending (UN Women 2010a, 7). At the operational level companies could implement a supplier diversity program or look into gender-specific issues in supplier selection processes. Similarly, the company should respect the dignity of women in company marketing materials (UN Women 2012, 7).

The sixth principle, encourages companies to lead by example through their commitment to women’s empowerment and gender equality. They should work with community stakeholders and officials in reducing exploitation and discrimination at the local level and use philanthropy as a way to support inclusion, gender equality and human rights (UN Women 2010a, 7).

The seventh principle is seen as a crucial part of implementing the principles thus underscoring the link between reporting and transparency. This principle enables companies to track progress on commitments but also to identify potential gaps in policies and procedures already existing which allow businesses to identify and develop further actions within the scope of the principles. The companies are encouraged to consider business performance in a wider context of gender equality for instance by considering the connection between the country context and business performance. This reporting mechanism also allows business to benchmark performance against competitors but can also ensure brand enhancement by building consumer trust in the company as ‘women or family friendly’ (UN Women 2012, 1–2).

Despite the seventh principle of reporting, very few if any companies have yet reported directly on their achievements on the WEPs (Mills 2013). In fact, signatories are not required to report on progress in implementing the WEPs and no reporting mechanism is attached to the WEPs. Instead, companies are encouraged to report through already existing sustainability reporting guidelines such as the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) or the UN Global Compact Communication on Progress (globalreporting.org 2013; unglobalcompact.org 2013).
The WEPs have experienced great support, not only among the private sector but also in the wider UN system with pronounced advocates such as George Kell Head of UN Global Compact, Michelle Bachelet Executive Director at UN Women. Also the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon has continuously expressed support for UN-business partnerships: “In the 21st century, no institution can solve global challenges on its own. There is no monopoly on good ideas. That is why I believe so deeply in partnerships – strategic partnerships” (Ki-moon 2013).

Remarkably few critical voices have emerged, which could lead to the belief in the principles as an impeccable agreement between an international public organization and the private sector. However, despite the rather substantial amount of signatories and seemingly success of the principles, the WEPs remains somewhat unknown and as a consequence only very limited research has been conducted on the principles.
2.0 Method
This chapter will briefly re-address the research question, and relate this to the theoretical considerations as well as delimitations which have been experienced throughout the research process. Further, the Philosophy of Science will be presented along with a literature review and considerations about empirical data will be presented.

2.1 Research Question
On the background of the WEPs case and as a consequence of the puzzling dynamic between its partners, the research question of this Thesis is the following:

*How can the Women’s Empowerment Principles be explained and understood as a partnership and to what extent can the principles be used in promoting women’s empowerment?*

In order to address the research question thoroughly, the following three sub-questions has been developed:

- **What motivates the private sector to engage in the WEPs?**
- **What are the incentives for UN Women and the UNGCO to engage with the private sector?**
- **How can the potentially contrasting interests between the partners of the WEPs be aligned?**

The Thesis has been structured according to the research question and the sub-questions: Whereas the two theoretical chapters (chapter 3 and 4) lays the foundation for the main research question, the three sub-questions each makes up a separate part of the analytical chapter thus providing a more nuanced answer to the main question which will be accounted for in final part of the analysis as well as the discussion (chapter 5 and 6). By combining two theoretical approaches, which are seldom aligned, it has been the hope that the Thesis will succeed in presenting a new approach, or an alternative understanding of the WEPs. In illustrating how women should not be considered a ‘necessary evil’ linked to quotas and targets in a corporate context, but rather as a strong human capacity that will not only add value but also synergize the strength of a (signatory) company, it is the hope that his minor contribution will illuminating the importance but also highlight some of the challenges of the WEPs.

2.2 Delimitations
The research question contains a few definitional clarifications which will be accounted for in chapter 3. However a main point is how the WEPs have already been defined as a partnership in
the research question. From the outset it was decided that the WEPs should not be interpreted as a CSR mechanism. Had this been the case, much relevant literature would have been available, however, it was estimated that a CSR focus would neglect the importance of the partnership dynamics of the WEPs where UN agencies and companies (as well as academics and governments) all partaking in shaping the principles, which remains a unique framework. Cutler (2008) has provided valuable insights and spurred ideas in the initial research phases of why the partnership focus proved more relevant than a CSR approach.

The Thesis has also been delimited to focus solely on Danish WEPs signatories (an account of the limitations of this choice will be elaborated upon in section 2.6). Moreover, as the Thesis only covers inherent aspects of the WEPs (how the WEPs can be understood as a partnership, and to what extent ensures women’s empowerment), only signatory companies have been interviewed. It could have added an additional dimension to the analysis, had non-signatory companies also been interviewed since reasons for not signing would generate further insights.

The inclusion of partnership theory has been limited to focus solely on politically motivated, often non-contractual forms of partnerships meaning that the inclusion of more ‘traditional’ project based and infrastructural PPP theory has been left out. Although an account of PPP theory seems necessary to ensure a comprehensive understanding of partnerships, this Thesis will relate to the more narrow understanding of Public-Private Policy Partnerships (4P). 4Ps seems to have gained momentum among scholars focusing less on the technical or contractual aspects and more on the political and informal structures of PPPs, and seems highly relevant in analyzing the WEPs (see section 3.3).

Gudrid Weihe provides an intriguing account of partnership theory in her Development Approach which takes account of international (donor) organizations’ engagement in PPP as a way of achieving specific development goals. Despite the relevance of Weihe’s characterization, her Developmental Approach has nevertheless not been resonated in the broader scholarly PPP circles, and therefore serves too limited theoretical validity for the purpose of this Thesis (see Weihe 2009, 33; Weihe 2008, 434).

Finally, an interesting discussion would have been to consider how non-governmental organizations (NGOs) would fit into the WEPs partnership. Gaer (2003) provides a noteworthy account of how NGOs increasingly gain influence in the UN system as a consequence of the minimal staffing and support of various UN bodies (which most certainly seems the case with the
However, due to space limitations it has not been possible to consider the role of NGOs fully. Instead, it is briefly noted how the lack of monitoring mechanisms (a role often fulfilled by NGOs in the UN system), is evidently absent from the WEPs (see section 5.4). Had there been room for a more substantial analysis, it would have provided interesting insights on responsibilities and consequences for the legitimacy of the partnership.

2.2 Philosophy of Science – Critical Realism

According to Greve and Hodge: “PPP may indeed mean different things to different people” (Greve and Hodge 2013, 6). This quote brilliantly illustrates how interpretations might affect understandings of studied concepts. Thus, by acknowledging how “the world is structured, differentiated, stratified and changing” (Danermark et al. 2002, 5), this Thesis takes its point of departure in critical realism.

This Thesis will not engage in a full-blown meta-theoretical discussion considering the ontology and epistemology of this approach, but it seems important to mention how critical realism manage to straddle several methodological schemes, for instance by arguing that “there exists both an external world independently of human consciousness, and at the same time a dimension which includes our socially determined knowledge about reality” (Danermark et al. 2002, 5–6). In other words, critical realists acknowledges the existence of an objectively existing reality (as done by positivism/naturalism), but nevertheless argue that all knowledge is fallible and thus open to adjustment and interpretation (as in interpretivism/constructivism) (Moses and Knutsen 2007, 12–13). Critical realists thus divide reality into various domains: One being where things (reality) and the sensation it conveys exists, and another is the mental progression that the observer engages in after the sensations of the former domain meets the observers senses (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill 2007, 105). Reality thus consists of multiple layers that operates and exists independently but also dependently of the observer and according to critical realists, “the purpose of science is to come as ‘close’ to this reality as possible”, which is done through theories and interpretations of reality (Danermark et al. 2002, 200). In other words, researchers will only be able to understand the social world if they are able to grasp the social structures that precedes the examined phenomena (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill 2007, 105). Social science strives towards finding knowledge about a reality which is socially produced rather than socially defined and in this reality researchers must simply “interpret the interpretations of other people” (Danermark et al. 2002, 200).

Relating this to the case of the WEPs it is important to acknowledge how the principles make up an empirical case, thus placed in the interpretational domain, which allows an investigation of a social phenomenon (the WEPs) which is experienced. The attempt of this Thesis is however also to shed light
on the underlying domains of the case, such as psychological connotations to women’s empowerment, or hierarchies of power within the partnership, things that exists but in some cases are unobservable but nevertheless can be subject to interpretation. By investigating the level of the individual (employees at signatory companies or staff members of the two UN agencies), the partnership (the WEPs) but also the societal (Danish) and organizational (the UN) context, each level has the ability to change the perception and understanding of the subject being studied which is intriguing but also challenging since the research then rises above the empirical level, by allowing a more thorough investigation. In this way, the WEPs become a socially produced phenomenon rather than a pre-defined reality which seems important to acknowledge since other interpretations of the partnership naturally could lead to different understandings and therefore conclusions of the WEPs.

A limitation which could be attached to the critical realist philosophy of science: As a consequence of the very limited academic research conducted prior to this Thesis, it would be tempting to explore whether the WEPs work or not. However, with the realization of the WEPs case’s complexity along with the chosen critical realist approach, the explorative nature of this case study rather looks into how WEPs signatories and UN agencies are working with the principles and what dynamics are causing certain behavior.

2.3 Inference of the Research Strategy

This Thesis takes its explorative point of departure in the WEPs case in an attempt to understand rather than test its validity, and the method of induction has been selected as the main approach for this task, which can also be realized by the formulation of the research question. Unlike deduction, induction permits alternative explanations and the inductive approach is particularly concerned with context which allows a more thorough analysis of the underlying causes driving social behavior, thereby allowing smaller data samples for analytical purposes (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill 2007, 119–120). As a consequence of the philosophy of science as well as the inductive logic, it has become evident how the researcher inevitably becomes part of the research process and (perhaps unconsciously) interprets collected data which limits the ability to generalize findings (Moses and Knutsen 2007, 22–23).

To some extent it could be argued that the inductive method has been combined with the deductive approach in some parts of the Thesis. According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill: “Not only is it perfectly possible to combine deduction and induction within the same piece of research, but also in our experience it is often advantageous to do so” (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill 2007, 119). For instance the application of qualitative data (through interviews) and the application of
this data to ensure validity of other sources of data has been the applied method of research throughout the writings which relates more to a deductive mindset, and further allow a triangulation of the written empirical data. Since this Thesis also makes use of multiple data collecting techniques and explores these data through a multi-method qualitative study (see the next section on Exploratory Study) the combined approaches allows for better answers and more thorough evaluation of the research question (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill 2007, 146–147).

2.3.1 An Exploratory Single Case Study
As described in the section on Research Strategy above, a goal of this Thesis has been to clarify the understanding of (and shedding a new light on) the particular case of the WEPS, and for this an exploratory study has been conducted. The advantage of this approach is that it is flexible and adaptable to alteration, which nevertheless, can also be a challenge since the research might change directions (Moses and Knutsen 2007, 132–133; Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill 2007, 134)

A single case study was selected due to the uniqueness of the WEPS. No other framework as broad and inclusionary has been detected, not prior to nor after the research process was finalized. Also, relating the approach to the critical realist perspective, it is argued that “within a case study, the boundaries between the phenomenon being studied and the context within which it is being studied are not clearly evident” (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill 2007, 139), thus allowing a further investigation of the various domains of the WEPS case.

2.4 Reviewing the Literature
Primary, secondary as well as tertiary sources of literature have been used, combined and triangulated. Since the WEPS case is relatively new, only a limited amount of literature on the subject has been available. It has therefore been necessary to pool information from primary sources through interviews, email correspondences, conference papers, company reports and unpublished organizational material. In addition, the WEPS Annual Event is broadcasted, which has enabled direct observations as a source of data and has heightened the understanding of company practices, sectoral differences and of the general complexity of the case.

Secondary material; journals, books and newspaper articles has mainly been used to account for the theoretical perspectives and for the historical context of the WEPS. The use of tertiary data sources has been very limited, and mostly been used as a research tool to locate other sources of data.
A final source of data is personal experience: Finalizing an internship at the UN Women headquarters in New York, mid-2012, and ongoing communication with several former colleagues has provided substantial insights to organizational practices. By interning in the Economic Empowerment section has allowed partaking in the annual reporting of the WEPs at UN Women level. This work consisted of internal accounts of the development in UN Women-business partnerships as well as budgetary evaluations of partnerships such as the WEPs. Also, the strategic engagement with the private sector was discussed during weekly staff meetings, which allowed thorough insights in the challenges faced by staff attempting to maneuver through the corporate sector resistance, but also the dilemmas faced by a rather young UN agency of maintaining integrity while generating funding from private sector partners.

Only one academic article, authored by Magdalena Bexell, considering the WEPs directly was found. As Bexell notes: “Partnerships with a specific focus on women have not previously been the subject of scholarly attention” (Bexell 2012, 390). The rather critical approach of Bexell’s article has inspired parts of this Thesis. However, as the purpose of this study was to not only provide a critical account but also a solution-oriented approach as to whether - and how - the WEP functions as an alternative mechanism to promote women’s empowerment, the article has only been used to a certain extent.

2.5 Theory Selection
To provide a thorough account of the WEPs, the selection of theory was initially rather challenging, since it proved very difficult to come by a theoretical account covering all aspects necessary to explore the entire scope and significances of the principles. As a result, the Thesis has been divided into two separate theoretical sections, each focusing on a separate part of the research question.

The first section (chapter 3), focus on the first part of the research question: It opens up by focusing broadly on public-private partnerships (PPP), but narrows down to consider public-private policy partnerships (4P) and ends up by considering the UN’s private partnership approach (the Transformational Partnership (TP)) as a way of analyzing the WEPs. These theoretical ‘stages’ of PPP builds on each other, and since all partnerships (and theoretical perspectives) are context specific, it has been important to consider the history and development of PPP to understand the more political aspects of partnership literature, and from this generate an understanding of the international (organizational) element, which is often neglected by more ‘traditional’ PPP theory.
As will be elaborated upon further in the theoretical chapter, Greve and Hodge present various dimensions of PPPs (See Figure 2). The authors advocate the importance of understanding all dimensions to comprehend the scope of PPP fully, which has also been the attempt of this Thesis. However, whereas some of the more traditional approaches to PPP consider a specific product, project or outcome, the case of the WEPs will instead be characterized as a non-contractual policy partnership, driven by a moral rationale rather than an explicit result. The Thesis also aims not to depart in the strong positivist ontology and neo-liberal background of much PPP theory, but rather provide alternative understandings of the concept PPPs/4Ps as illustrated through the WEPs.

The second section (chapter 4) of the theory, which focuses on the second part of the research question, could broadly be defined as Feminism. For this Thesis Feminism should be seen as an ‘umbrella term’ covering a range of theoretical perspectives, rather than one single theory. As Stefanie Woehl has convincingly argued: “because a focus of governmentality studies lies in the construction and contingency of subjectivity, gender is no external category but can always be integrated in the analysis” (Bexell 2012, 92). In a similar way it has also been an attempt to integrate the feminist perspective in a way that does not separate the theoretical account of partnerships from the importance of incorporating women. This is also part of the reason why the feminist section too has been divided into separate sections building on each other, to maintain the critical realist perspective of acknowledging various layers of understanding, consistently. Overall, it remains important to recognize how accounts of women’s role in politics and economics and in partnership theory are neglected. This general lack of concern for feminist theory in the broader academic sphere unfortunately serves as an illustration of how women’s role and importance in the world is considerably ignored, which paradoxically could be part of the initiation of and rationale behind the WEPs.

### 2.6 Interviews - Construction of Empirical Data

As a source of primary data, several elite interviews have been conducted. From the scholarly articles researched, there has been some diffusion over what constitutes ‘an elite’, but for the purpose of this Thesis, the definition will be taken from Beamer: “These individuals may have special insight into the causal processes of politics, and interviewing them permits in-depth exploration of specific policies and political issues” (Beamer 2002, 87). In this way, the ‘elite’ interviewed for this Thesis should not be understood as a societal elite, but rather as individuals with substantial insight or an ability to change the processes of the case in question. According to Richards, the main function of elite interviews is to “provide the political scientist with an insight
into the mind-set of the actors who have played a role in shaping the society in which we live and an interviewee’s subjective analysis of a particular episode or situation” (Richards 1996, 200). Again, the purpose here is not to analyze society in general, but rather exploring a phenomenon as seen and understood by the very actors involved in the formation and implementation of the WEPs. The advantages of elite interviews has for this Thesis been the way interviewees have helped clarify personal ties and connections, but also in understanding the existing hierarchies of power (which to some extent has been kept confidential) and in the interpretation of reports and documents. The drawback of the elite interview is that the reliability of interviewees might be questioned since both UN and corporate sector representatives could be interested in promoting a certain agenda or prove their efforts in promoting the WEPs.

All interviews has been conducted in an in-depth semi-structured (or at times unstructured) way, referring to a non-standardized, qualitative research interview which allows the researcher to prepare various themes and topics from which to discuss among (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill 2007, 312). This structure allows the content and responses to vary from interview to interview given the context of the company and the respondent and also reveals an ability to answer both ‘what’, ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions. In addition, the semi-structured interview heightens the engagement of the interviewee by highlighting their experience, in this case about a particular partnership. Semi-structured interviews further provides an opportunity to probe answers and request further explanations and build on to the interviewees responses (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill 2007, 212–215).

The choice of personal, face to face, semi-structured interviews with the Danish WEPs signatories enables invaluable interaction, not only for the interviewee to receive feedback and personal assurance on how the gathered data will be used onwards, but also to enable further contact and information/data exchange which in this case has ensured access to organizational information that would not otherwise have been accessible (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill 2007, 135, 147). This has, as mentioned, also allowed a triangulation of the data, which ensures greater validity of the research since the personal contact has enabled second-hand observations such as behavior and body language of the interviewees, especially when interviewees has been confronted with contentious company/organizational practices or academic critiques.

From the semi-structured interview it is nevertheless important to keep potential interview bias in mind. This was kept in mind during interview sessions, although it proved difficult to come across
as impartial, abstaining from visible body-language and avoiding leading questions or follow-up comments which could result in alternate replies from interviewees. In addition, it is important to notice how generalizations are not possible through this type of interview (nor from the selected philosophy of science and inductive/deductive research strategy). Also, the sample size has been very limited, constituting only three companies. Although it should be noted that the companies operate in very different industries, the only denominator being their signatory status of the WEPs, all interviewees are nevertheless subject to the same legal framework as well as cultural background and adornment which also complicates generalizations and overall conclusions. Moreover, using semi-structured interviews complicates the reliability of the data collected since the context and questions potentially change from interview to interview and depending on the interviewee’s responses (Saunders et al. 2007:319).

Three out of the four Danish signatories of the WEPs willingly engaged in personal interviews. The interviewees, and therefore the corporate perspective, included: Birgitte Kofod Olsen, Head of CSR at the insurance company Tryg, she partook in a one hour interview in early March 2013 at their headquarters; Tinna Nielsen, Head of Diversity, Inclusion and Collaboration for the dairy company Arla Foods Amba, participated in a two hour interview at Arla’s headquarters in mid-March 2013; Jette Schmidt Lund, Head of CSR in the telecommunications company TDC, took part in a 45 minutes interview at their headquarters in mid-April 2013. Despite numerous attempt and continuous dialogue, it has unfortunately not been possible to attain an interview with the fourth Danish WEPs signatory, the pharmaceutical company Novo Nordisk. The inclusion of this final participant would have contributed with more thorough knowledge of business practices and could have led to a more nuanced understanding of the reasons why business takes part in a partnership such as the WEPs.

The organizational perspective has been constructed from interviews with the two UN partners of the WEPs, the UN Global Compact office (UNGCO) and UN Women respectively. Laraine Mills, Private Sector Partnerships Specialist at UN Women engaged in a two-hour interview via Skype in early May 2013. Lauren Gula, Project Manager of Human Rights and Women’s Empowerment at the UNGCO participated in a 45 minutes telephone interview in early June 2013. As both UN representatives are physically located in New York, it has not been possible to conduct face-to-face interviews. Although Skype provides a valid alternative, electronic interview primarily has the drawback that personal contact and trust is not established, which might limit the interviewee in answering potentially sensitive questions adequately. Also, non-verbal data, as discussed above
might be lost during telephone interviews. However, both UN representatives have been very accommodating and have answered questions in a satisfactory manner and subsequently engaged in follow-up questioning via e-mail. All interview data is available through the following link: https://www.dropbox.com/sh/3r6dm3prsl1t0iq/1pQmQr0sji?n=11906440. Interview data can also be provided electronically upon request.

All interviewees have been offered confidentiality, but have agreed to participate publicly on the condition that quotes used for Thesis purposes have been pre-approved. In some cases, this has led to less controversial statements, which in its original form could have added clearer contours of the discussion, analysis and following conclusion. It has however, not been detrimental to the final findings.

Since the Thesis does not attempt to pinpoint specific company practices but is rather designed to explore the extent to which the WEPs, as a partnership can be used to promote women’s empowerment, no direct references have been added. Rather interviewees are referred to by job title. When referring to the UNGC or UN Women ‘semi-references’ (e.g. the WEPs focal point at UN Women) has been enclosed to clarify the interview data.

It is important to emphasize that this Thesis does not offer a general truth or a perception applicable to various contexts. The answers generated from the analysis should be seen as context-specific and as a result of the chosen methodology, philosophy of science and formulated research question.
3.0 Public-Private Partnerships

This chapter lays the foundation for the first part of the research question, clarifying how the WEPs can be understood as a partnership. The chapter begins by clarifying the definitions of PPPs used for the Thesis. Secondly, a brief historical account of public-private partnerships (PPPs) will be offered, which is followed by a section exploring the various ‘layers’ of the PPP phenomena. Next, since the Thesis case (the WEPs) should be understood as a partnership between the UN and the corporate sector, a final section is dedicated to the UN experience and approach to partnering with business.

3.1 Defining Public-Private Partnerships

This Thesis will look at two distinct definitions of public-private partnerships.

Firstly, by looking into PPPs in general, the understanding used for this study is taken from the official UN’s definition where “partnerships are commonly defined as voluntary and collaborative relationships between various parties, both State and non-State, in which all participants agree to work together to achieve a common purpose or undertake a specific task and to share risks, responsibilities, resources, competencies and benefits” (United Nations 2003, 4). A further account of this definition will be offered in section 3.4.

Since the WEPs in a UN context could also be defined as a Transformational Partnership (TP), a second and alternative definition is also provided: “a Transformational Partnership is a multi-stakeholder engagement that restructures ‘the rules of the game’ to make markets work, improve the enabling environment, and set global norms” (UNGC 2011, 9). Unlike the former official UN definition of partnerships, the TP takes the systemic issues of the UN system into account which seems crucial in evaluating the WEPs. This alternative definition will be discussed in greater detail in section 3.4.2.

3.2 Contextualizing Public-Private Partnerships

As Wettenhall notes, it appears as if many observers on PPPs start out by recognizing the width and scope of this phenomenon, only to engage in a discussion of the conceptual clarification following a determination of one’s own understanding of this ‘enigma’ (Hodge, Greve, and Boardman 2010, 3; Wettenhall 2010, 25). But what other way can there be besides clarifying how, when and why this concept will be suitable in analyzing a chosen case? The Thesis will therefore
briefly immerse on this very path in exploring the historical accounts and conceptual discussion of the contested concept PPP.

Some trace the history and emergence of public-private interference centuries back (Wettenhall 2010, 17–23). But despite convincing and interesting arguments and warnings of not learning from history through such ‘denial’, this brief account takes its point of departure in the late 20th Century. Here the relation between business and the public sector primarily focused on welfare economics where government regulation was often considered the plausible solution in dealing with market powers. From the mid-1980s New Public Management (NPM) promoted an alternative validation for PPPs: Still endorsing the idea of privatization and efficiency in the public sector, NPM also acknowledged the importance of this sector in attending the ‘public interest’ (Bovaird 2010, 54). However, it was not until the 1990s, with the occurrence of Public Governance, that the importance of multiple goals (ensured through multiple stakeholders, with attention to transparency, equality and sustainability) became widely recognized (Bovaird 2010, 60). In addition, the emergence of an international network of ‘public-private sector partnerships’ and the UK being the “world leader in PPPs” ensured an establishment of PPPs as an accepted public policy tool internationally (Hodge, Greve, and Boardman 2010, 4; Wettenhall 2010, 24). For some time, the PPP agenda seemed to be cluttered primarily with accounts of infrastructural partnerships in the UK. Nevertheless, it seems that more scholars now recognize the breadth of the concept and the international scope of this phenomena and its importance in the global economy.

In addition, the recognition of transnational corporations (TNCs) as authoritative partners in the international system has left some states amputated and business is now increasingly active in setting standards in areas such as human rights and environmental matters forming a conclusion that state regulators no longer seem to have monopoly on business regulation (Wettenhall 2010, 26–27). However, whereas some argue that this development merely can be seen as repetition of history (Wettenhall 2010, 35), others argue that what we see today is in fact a move away from the previously dominating ‘zero-sum-approach’, where stretching one sector by shrinking the other no longer applies since the very meaning of these sectors are continuously shifting (Rosenau 2000, 21). Adding to the increasingly converging representation of partners, is the acknowledgement of a third part, namely the non-profit sector (Amirkhanyan and Pettijohn 2013). Although this sector resembles its public counterpart in their socially oriented character, many non-profit organizations today increasingly prioritize improved financial management and
fundraising and to a larger extent invests in marketing strategies in order to attract potential new members and donors which lies closer to a private sector agenda (Amirkhanyan and Pettijohn 2013, 120). Although the primary goal of most for-profit organizations is still to generate an income even from vulnerable populations, many are progressively sharing the more traditional non-profit, moral and ideological values for instance by engaging in substantial charity work (Amirkhanyan and Pettijohn 2013, 118). According to Amirkhanyan and Pettijohn these shared interests are likely to generate synergies between public and private actors, especially when engaging in partnerships and further point out how public sector success thus cannot be isolated from the success of both non-profit and for-profit partners (Amirkhanyan and Pettijohn 2013, 114). Returning to the ‘zero-sum’ discussion above, it becomes clear how the three respective sectors’ engagement in partnerships, not only contributes to individual success, but also create synergies for instance by limiting power imbalances or through value exchange potentially minimizing opportunistic behavior which in the long run could affect the outcome and success of a partnership (Amirkhanyan and Pettijohn 2013, 116).

PPPs should thus not only be seen as a promotion tool for individual success, but also as a contributor to goal alignment and shared accomplishments which might facilitate improved knowledge, profit or legitimacy for all partners involved. It is however also important to notice how partnerships can be limiting as all partners, especially in more loosely structured arrangements, has to reach some form of consensus to ensure viable success (Amirkhanyan and Pettijohn 2013, 124). So, despite some evidence that PPPs have indeed become part of modern day governance it remains important to understand the various ‘layers’ of PPPs (Hodge, Greve, and Boardman 2010, 3).

3.2.1 Understanding Public-Private Partnerships

As scholars before have agreed, classification of various PPP ‘families’ and following definitions, seems a precondition in understanding the complexity of the phenomenon, yet alone comprehend its scope (Weihe 2009, 16). Greve and Hodge provides an interesting account of various ‘levels’ of PPP, ranging from the project based most often infrastructural to the more political ones looking into political associations and motivations for the actors involved. The authors claim that PPPs are found at various levels of decision making ranging from the national to the international political level and even as a policy tool ensuring development in poorer countries and subsequently argue that "perhaps it makes sense to view PPP as being understood at many different levels." (Greve and Hodge 2013, 6).
Adding to this complexity, PPPs can be understood and interpreted from a range of theoretical approaches, all contributing to this wider explanation of the concept. It is nevertheless crucial to understand how, according to Greve and Hodge, the different PPP approaches are inherently bound to the same cultural and historical tradition, as illustrated in Figure 2 (Greve and Hodge 2013, 10, 14). In evaluating the development and understanding of PPPs, Greve and Hodge elaborate on the distinction between ‘established’ and ‘emerging’ partnerships: By explaining how the traditional understanding of PPPs often related to long-term infrastructural contract (often depending on private sector liquidity), the authors present the alternative and ‘emerging’ understanding of the concept as evolving around new public policy issues, crossing organizational as well as geographical borders and as being found at different national and international political levels (Greve and Hodge 2013, 28).

### 3.3 Public-Private Policy Partnership

Although academic literature on the issue of Public-Private Policy Partnerships (4Ps) remains limited, this section looks into the more *politically* motivated partnerships, which can be understood as a policy or a governance tool, a statement or even a symbol of a certain cultural set of assumptions (found in the three outer layers of Figure 2). The 4P approach relates very well to the case of the WEPs and also adds to the first part of the research question of how the principles can be understood as a partnership.
According to Rosenau: “Public-Private Policy Partnership, speaks to a division of labor between governments and the private sector across policy spheres as much as to any specific collaboration between government and the private sector on particular policy projects” (Rosenau 2000, 1). In other words, in defining the concept Rosenau generally refers to the way 4Ps “speaks to the formation of cooperative relationships between governments, profit-making firms, and non-profit private organizations to fulfill a policy function” (Rosenau 2000, 5).

In this way, Rosenau explores the intersectional relationship between public and private organizations in various policy areas, an approach which is echoed by Weihe in her presentation of 4Ps (or Policy Approach in her rhetoric) as a “non-project based and non time delimited public-private relation” which is “directed towards how a specific policy area is organized” (Weihe 2009, 33). According to Weihe 4Ps should therefore be understood as an institutional setup between one or more public and private actors in certain policy areas, which also draws attention to the organization and characteristics of the public-private division of work within that particular area of concern (Weihe 2008, 432). Weihe thus agree with Rosenau that the notion of 4Ps refers to a more general perspective on the relation between public and private actors within a partnership and often contains an analysis of the appropriate role for these actors respectively in a specific political setup or design. According to Weihe, this approach therefore does not necessarily consider specific illustrations of collaboration since the development of a specific product might not always be the expected outcome of the partnership (Weihe 2009, 432-435).

Brinkerhoff and Brinkerhoff add to this point by arguing that 4Ps and public-private policy networks has emerged as essential transnational structures designed to engage national governments in global policy matters. The authors thus consider 4Ps as a way of designing, coordinating, monitoring or advocating various public policies either at sectoral, national or international level. They agree with Rosenau and Weihe that 4Ps should be seen as loose and informal structures but also claim that 4Ps can be structured as more formal committees, task forces and special commissions, the common denominator being the blend of political considerations and state-society relations or interests and as a provider of political responses to particular groups in society (Brinkerhoff and Brinkerhoff 2011, 6).

Finally, Bull and McNeill also include IOs, and the UN in particular, in their writings on partnerships and relates their definition to the UN by regarding 4Ps as “both formal and informal dialogue and knowledge sharing between the UN and the private sector with the aim to have an impact on
policy, be it the policy of international organizations, governments or corporations” (Bull and McNeill 2007, 17). The authors continue by arguing that “in some instances the partners can be seen as largely promoting the same agenda; in others the partnerships are attempts to reconcile ideological differences regarding policies” (Bull and McNeill 2007, 17). In this way, Bull and McNeill manage to incorporate a wider perspective by considering the importance of international organizations in connection to partnerships between the public and the private sector. In addition, the authors describe how one of the main functions of 4Ps is to develop norms and standards, which seem particularly relevant when considering the WEP initiative. By establishing how UN bodies in general provide a ‘neutral platform’ for civil society, government officials and business to engage with each other, the authors signal how the UN as an institution brings a certain degree of authority and expertise when engaging in partnerships from other sectors (Bull 2010, 486; Bull and McNeill 2007, 18). As a result, both partners may benefit from policy changes (at an international, national or corporate level) that otherwise may not have been possible to achieve.

Hence, there seems to be increasing, although limited, consensus in the argument that when considering PPPs as a policy tool at the international level, it is no longer enough to solely take the technical aspects of PPP as a phenomenon into account (Brinkerhoff and Brinkerhoff 2011; Rosenau 2000; Bull and McNeill 2007; Bull and McNeill 2010). Rather, it is crucial to recognize the relational dimension of such partnerships (Weihe 2009, 121). So, what the notion of policy partnerships contribute with is an understanding that 4Ps do not necessarily have to hold fixed contractual or technical elements, but could instead be seen as a way for a public and a private actor to engage in a certain (policy) area of common interest and collaborate on solving a particular issue or set the standards for a specific area of interest at the national level as well as internationally.

For the same reason, 4Ps might hold other criteria in terms of strengths and challenges in achieving an expected outcome. In outlining these assets Rosenau points to the public sector’s orientation towards policy management, regulation, prevention of discrimination and exploitation but also its focus on social responsibility and environmental awareness. In the private sector she notes the creative, innovative and dynamic skills, which are often combined with substantial financial and technical awareness (Rosenau 2000, 218). Amirkhanyan and Pettijohn describes how goal alignment and shared objectives may minimize opportunistic behavior in a partnership context (Amirkhanyan and Pettijohn 2013, 116). Nonetheless, non-profit organizations often are seen as champions in gaining trust and achieving legitimacy by commencing norms, standards or
moral codes (Rosenau 2000, 218). A point, which is echoed by Bull and McNeill who argues that despite growing importance of the private sector, it still gain most of their authority through norms developed in the multilateral system (Bull and McNeill 2010, 33). However, 4Ps are also complex organizations with distinct levels of conflicts, interests and ethical responsibilities shared by for-profit companies and non-profit organizations who attempts to collaborate on shared goals and ambitions. Many 4Ps, unlike more ‘traditional’ PPPs are also complicated by the political, non-profit element through the exhaustion of the social capital requirement or individual motivations in these types of partnerships (Amirkhanyan and Pettijohn 2013, 121; Rosenau 2000, 6). Elements which can be complicated even further when partnership occurs at international organizational level.

Since the WEPs case should be seen as a partnership between an international organization (the UN) and the corporate sector the international level of 4Ps remains the primary area of interest. The following section therefore investigates the UN’s experience and motivations in engaging with the private sector and offers an evaluation of the second definition of partnerships, namely the Transformational Partnership.

3.4 The United Nations’ Experience

Since its founding the UN has primarily been seen as an intergovernmental organization. However, with the end of the Cold War and in the era of globalization the UN has continuously succeeded in adapting to the changes and challenges of its surroundings. The UN has therefore now, to a larger extent started reaching out to civil society and business in search for qualified partners to help overcome the challenges and reshape the political and developmental future of the world (Witte and Reinicke 2005, ix).

Despite accounts of business partaking in shaping the political agenda since the establishment of the UN in 1945, and continuous descriptions of neo-liberal influence on the UN system, it was not until the appointment of Kofi Annan as Secretary General in 1997 that UNs’ engagement with the private sector became determinant (Bexell 2012; Bexell and Morth 2010; Bull 2010; Bull and McNeill 2010; Bull and McNeill 2007). The appointment and following agenda of Kofi Annan has by some been referred to as a “major turning point, from anti-business to pro-business” at the UN (Bull and McNeill 2007, 7). The contextual background of Annan’s appointment must nevertheless be clarified in order to understand the impact that the UN’s shift from anti to pro-business, has had on the organization.
3.4.1 From Anti- to Pro-Business - A Historical Review

Since the 1970s calls for increased regulation and monitoring of the private sector has occurred frequently within the UN system, and accusations that TNCs has contributed to political and democratic underdevelopment in poorer states have repeatedly been expressed (Utting 2000, 2). Despite gradual alignment between the UN and business, there has until the 1990s existed a general consensus that the UN was ‘anti-business’ (Bull 2010, 481). The realization of private sector benefits was embodied with the appointment of (now former) General Secretary Kofi Annan and substantial steps towards closer collaboration between the UN and business were taken in the aftermath of his appointment. For instance, in a press release at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland in 1997, Kofi Annan declared that “there is the new universal understanding that market forces are essential for sustainable development” (Annan 1997, 1). Kofi Annan, having a business background himself, introduced various innovative and groundbreaking ideas on the UN’s relation with the private sector (Bull 2010, 481), and encouraged a number of resolutions on UN commitments to the private sector\(^3\). With the realization of the UN Global Compact (UNGC) initiative and the Millennium Development Goals\(^4\) the interaction between the UN and business has continuously evolved through various World Summits\(^5\) and according to some with a noticeable focus on partnerships (Bull 2010, 481; Bull and McNeill 2007, 8–10).

Through his office, Secretary General Kofi Annan continuously emphasized the importance of the private sector as a way of tackling the challenges of the 21st Century, an approach which has been adopted by his predecessor, Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon claiming that “business is essential to advancing UN goals and issues” (United Nations 2013).

Despite the enhanced inclusion of the private sector throughout the ‘structural adjustment’ period during the 1980s – 1990s it nevertheless seems that the UN has now adopted a more balanced approach granting states and the market a more equal role in the establishments of partnerships (Bull 2010, 482; Bull and McNeill 2007, 8). Critical voices however remain, and arguments have been put forward that “partnerships may also reflect the fact that traditional power relations are

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\(^3\) See for instance: A/56/323, A/58/227, A/60/214, A/62/341 and A/64/337 on enhanced cooperation between the United Nations and all relevant partners, in particular the private sector.

\(^4\) Goal 8 being explicitly dedicated to global partnerships, among others, with the private sector

\(^5\) Bull elaborates on examples from following summits: The UN Conference on Environment and Development (the UNCED or Earth Summit) in Rio de Janeiro, 1992; the International Conference of Financing for Development in Monterrey, Mexico, 2002; the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa, 2002, which has been described as a major breakthrough resulting in more than 20 partnerships between the UN and the private sector (Bull 2010, 482–483).
changing” (Utting 2000, 3). This argument serves as an interesting point of departure when looking into the UN’s current approach to partnerships and how and whether the WEPs function as a valid alternative in the continuous struggle for gender equality. For this reason, it remains important to consider the implementation and current UN approach in dealing with partnerships globally.

According to the UN General Assembly, partnerships in the UN are continuously evolving, and are realized at a range of sites and among many different actors (United Nations 2011, 1). As of 2011, the Assembly has made a wealth of recommendations ensuring more transparent and effective partnership and encouraged more strategic collaborations with a focus on larger scale and impact, for the UN to leverage contributions from the private sector more effectively in achieving development (United Nations 2011, 2). Whereas the UN in its initial ‘PPP phase’, merely a decade ago, embraced more of a ‘learning by doing’ approach, a maturation phase has now emerged where partnering with the private sector has become more accepted and generally seems to be acknowledged as a valid way of achieving UN objectives (United Nations 2011, 4).

This established conjunction between the UN and the private sector reveals an interesting institutionalization of core UN values being integrated into the corporate sector and vise-versa. Nevertheless, it is important to keep in mind some of the issues still separating the ‘partners’, also internally. For instance, it remains crucial to recognize how the UN cannot unquestionably be regarded as a whole. Despite the widely adopted UN approach of ‘Delivering as One6, many specialized agencies still seem to be driven by individual agendas (General Assembly 2005). This is a central aspect in considering how strategic behavior of an agency such as UN Women might differ from that of the UNGC which could have an effect on collaborations and outcomes between the two agencies, for example in the case of the WEPs. This disparity also serves as an important part in considering whether the WEPs are in fact in line with general UN policies or whether alternative approaches should be taken into account in ensuring women’s empowerment and gender equality.

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6 The ‘Delivering as one’ approach is a UN system wide objective agreed by Member States at the World Summit Outcome Document from 2005 and finalized by the Secretary General Office in 2006, that the UN should ‘Deliver as one’ at country level. This would include the adoption of One Leader, One Programme, One Budget and, where appropriate, One Office at national level, to ensure broader coherence in the UN system. In 2012, a General Assembly evaluation of the initiative concluded that the voluntary ‘Delivering as one’ approach should be sustained, but that the method might be maintained only at a moderate level since national coordination mechanisms and evaluation systems would need strong consolidation and expansion (A/66/859 2012)
3.4.2 Transformational Partnerships

Building on previously unproductive and overlapping UN models of partnerships, the UNGC Office (UNGCO) launched a revised approach to UN partnerships in 2011 with a combined focus on Transformational Partnerships (TPs) (UNGC 2011, 8). This approach seeks to bridge the gap between the UN and business, in addition to the assessment above, as a result of continuous mistrust and mismatched or unfulfilled expectations when partnering. According to the UNGCO a general lack of coherence has been detected both at national and global level where some UN entities have prevented other UN agencies in partnering with business. Moreover, an insufficient commitment to governance structures and accountability of results within engaged partnerships has been detected by both partners (UNGC 2011, 7). According to the report, “a Transformational Partnership is a multi-stakeholder engagement that restructures ‘the rules of the game’ to make markets work, improve the enabling environment, and set global norms” (UNGC 2011, 9). In other words, what this form of partnership seeks to mend is not a project based or concrete initiative, but rather an attempt to address systemic issues such as gender equality which, in order to be realized, will require systemic change. This should, according to the UNGCO be realized through enforcement of existing rules, or by instituting new rules, but could also occur through a shift in behavioral norms or a combination of these factors (UNGC 2011, 10). In this way, the TP approach goes in line with the notion of 4Ps, discussed above, but also adds an extra dimension by bringing the international aspect of policy partnerships into account. It nevertheless remains important to recognize how the WEPs are more accurately reflected in the TP approach since the principles origin from a UN context, and for the analytical part of this Thesis, the TP approach will thus be taken more into account than the notion of 4Ps.

According to the UNGCO, there is not just one approach to TPs, rather the structure and arrangements can be designed individually for a specific partnership, and in this way ensuring the most effective and satisfactory outcome. It thus becomes clear that the TP is not a ‘one size fits all’ approach: As seen in Figure 3, in one end of the spectrum a limited number of partners, often formally commit through a contractual arrangement on a specific task is found, whereas the other end signifies a broader more inclusive and rather loosely organized network of partners. These ‘social’ or ‘issue-based movements’ cooperate to solve or illuminate a certain cause or challenge faced by the global community, often on a voluntary basis and without any contractual commitments. (UNGC 2011, 13-14), which seems compatible with the WEPs agenda.
3.4.2.1 The Challenges and Future of the UN Partnership Approach

According to the UNGC, one of the most pressing issues when engaging in a partnership is the continuous mistrust between the UN and business, which has remained an issue during the alignment of UN and private sector goals. Despite wide acceptance and encouragement by the former as well as the current General Secretary, the established UN culture remains skeptical of combining business interest with declared UN development goals (UNGC 2011, 17).

One reason for this is that the UN, as a non-profit, human rights based and developmental IO, face difficulties in ensuring such objectives through market mechanisms which can be detrimental to these very goals (UNGC 2011, 17). Another reason is the lack of assessment tools available in a UN-partnership context which seems highly relevant when considering the WEPs. This might not only contribute to weak partnership management which can generate distrust between partners, but also challenges the ability to learn from past failures and successes or evaluate impact which could improve mutual trust in the long run (Witte and Reinicke 2005, 58). Further, accusations have been made that partnerships within the UN system have come into existence not only due to the prevailing neoliberal ideology but also and perhaps more importantly because business sees the international organizational venue as a way of engaging in profitable commerce while overcoming critique of profit-seeking behavior (Gregoratti 2010, 190). Whilst the UN worry about integrity it seems that business distrust the IO for only engaging in ‘partnerships’ for funding.
purposes, thus expecting the private partner to simply fund fully fledged ideas without the possibility of altering the goal or purpose (UNGC 2011, 17). Another point separating the UN and the private sector is the cultural differences constantly faced by agencies as well as individual agents: Whereas companies, being accountable to shareholders, often face limited time horizons when implementing projects, the UN is neither bound to general business cycles nor direct profit requirements. These contrasting realities causes tension and potentially generates an unfavorable environment for collaboration (UNGC 2011, 18; UNGC LEAD 2011, 3).

Ways of accommodating these disagreements would according to the UNGC be through open and honest recognition of the genuine incentives and motivations realized by both partners. In addition, a long-term business case for sustained partnerships generally seem necessary as pure philanthropic acts often results in unpredictable funding flows. The private sector could also demonstrate thorough commitment by aligning the values of the UN with corporate interests and goals, which seems particularly relevant in loosely structured, non-contractual forms of TPs (UNGC 2011, 17).

The overarching narrative of the ‘grand shift’ in the UNs’ attitude towards the private sector is thus not as clear cut as perhaps first anticipated and has been disputed by some, arguing that the complexity and diversity of partnerships within the UN system remains difficult to grasp (Bull and McNeill 2007, 11).

3.5 Concluding Remarks
From this chapter it has become evident that the notion of PPPs, depending on the area and purpose of research, refers to an umbrella term covering a multitude of perceptions and experiences. By providing a historical account of PPPs, it was found that a political form of partnership, the 4P approach, seemed applicable to the case of the WEPs. Two definitions has been provided; one more general resembling the commonly accepted UN characterization of PPPs taking account of both the international and political perspective, which is often neglected in more ‘traditional’ partnership theory. The other definition was found through the Transformational Partnership (TP) approach addressing the importance of systemic changes which seems crucial in analyzing the WEPs case. The first part of the research question has thus been approached and it has been found that TP approach could be applicable when characterizing the WEPs as a partnership.
Through the description of UN-business partnerships the second sub-research questions considering UN motives for engaging with the private sector was gently addressed: A number of challenges in UN’s engagement with the private sector were found, a primary obstacle being the continuous distrust between partners. This requires ongoing focus and evaluation on how partnerships assist in achieving UN goals such as global, sustainable and equal development. The incessant tightropes for the various specialized UN agencies in engaging with business thus remain. It nevertheless seems that partnerships between the UN and the corporate sector has become an increasingly integrated and institutionalized part of international politics and have to a certain extent become an accepted way of approaching complex governance issues. Business is now expected to take responsibility and is to a larger extent held accountable for their actions in a range of transnational areas.
4.0 A Feminist Perspective

An important part of understanding the WEPs, is clarifying how the underlying dynamics of inequality between sexes and gender discrimination affects the behavior of the corporate world, the UN as well as women globally. This chapter looks into the second part of the research question to explore the extent to which the WEPs can be used to promote women’s empowerment. Firstly, the chapter briefly seeks to clarify some theoretical discrepancies, which are often associated with Feminism. Secondly, a brief historical overview will be presented along with, the Labyrinth approach, a metaphor for contemporary sex-discrimination. This approach will be backed by recent statistical evidence that women continuously experience gender inequality. Thirdly, parts of the foundation for the WEPs case, as expressed through Womenomics will be put forward to account for the business perspective of the WEPs. Finally, a more critical approach to this business rationale is considered.

4.1 Misconceptions of Feminism

Although ‘Feminism’ is often considered a theory in itself, it is important to emphasize how this umbrella term indeed covers a wide variety of methodologies (Charlesworth and Chinkin 2000; Francis 2002; Mohanty 1988). By seeking to riposte whether the basic idea underlying the WEPs indeed supports or perhaps undermines gender equality, as part of the research question, it therefore seems necessary to incorporate feminist arguments covering several perspectives.

4.2 The Development of Women’s Advancement

Despite the importance of contextualizing the gradual development of women’s rights, its relevance for the case of the WEPs seems redundant. As in the historical account of PPPs, this section will therefore take departure in the late 20th Century.

In 1986, the phenomenon of the ‘Glass Ceiling’ was first introduced in the Wall Street Journal. The Glass Ceiling represents the invisible barrier many women face in their attempt to progress career wise, especially for top-leader positions, and has become a widely accepted metaphor for women’s struggles at the job market (Boyd 2012). A report by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) recently confirmed: “The so-called “glass ceiling” exists: women are disadvantaged when it comes to decision-making responsibilities and senior management positions; by the time they get to the boardroom, there is only one of them for every 10 men” (OECD 2012a, 15). A similar account is presented in a recent report in the McKinsey Quarterly: By looking into various companies and women’s experiences respectively, the report
argues that “despite significant corporate commitment to the advancement of women’s careers, progress appears to have stalled” and further argues that “the next frontier is toppling invisible barriers: mind-sets widely held by managers, men and women alike, that are rarely acknowledged but block the way” (Barsh and Yee 2011, 2). According to the McKinsey survey a significant amount of young women are just as eager to move up the ranks as young men unfortunately women are constantly faced by long-held stereotypes or mindsets by employers in unfavorable company cultures being unaware (or uninterested) in existing and continuous gender biases (Barsh and Yee 2011, 4).

Despite the frequent use of the Glass Ceiling metaphor, the concept has nevertheless been discarded by Eagly and Carli, who claim that the concept has “eroded considerably in recent years” (Eagly and Carli 2007, 2). The authors thus critically describe a number of reasons why the notions of the Glass Ceiling is misleading: For instance, they argue how advocates of the Glass Ceiling erroneously imply that women have equal access to entry-level positions, thereby saying that the absolute barrier (the Glass Ceiling) is located at a specific level in a company, which e.g. is argued in the OECD report (OECD 2012a; OECD 2012b). Also, Eagly and Carli suggests that it is incorrect to assume than one single barrier is faced by all women, thereby ignoring the complexity of the hindrances faced by women. Finally, it is argued that the ‘theory’ of the Glass Ceiling ignores the diversity in women’s career strategies and thereby neglect how women in fact do become leaders through innovative problem solving (and some luck) (Eagly and Carli 2007, 7). In this way, the authors are pointing towards a more nuanced discussion of the struggles women face throughout an active and ambitious career.

The ‘Labyrinth’ illuminates this complexity by illustrating the countless barriers, subtle and tangible, making up the impassible and continuously challenging routes for women’s careers. Eagly and Carli acknowledge that the path for women might be more navigable than previously, and also recognize that barriers are no longer absolute. Nonetheless, the authors maintain that women remain underprivileged in the division of labor (Eagly and Carli 2007, 6). The following sections will illuminate this complexity, the Labyrinth, faced by many women in public and private spheres.

4.2.1 The Division of Labor, Leadership and Responsibilities
The most recent World Development Report (WDR) for 2013, prepared by the World Bank identifies how family responsibilities and the division of domestic labor in general slow women’s elevating career. Despite some positive development it is however found that women still allocate
a significantly larger share than men to activities not directly generating income (Rama, Beegle, and Hentschel 2012, 77). This ‘old-fashioned’ but nevertheless dominating perception of the ‘proper’ roles of men and women respectively, enables another dispiriting conclusion that for women to manage family responsibilities, they are simply more likely to interrupt their career, work part-time and taking time off. Consequently, women have fewer active years in the job market, meaning less experience, leading to lower pay and often for equal work (Eagly and Carli 2007, 64; World Bank 2011).

Also, according to the most recent Human Development Report (HDR) prepared by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP): “women continue to earn significantly less than men. And these differences are not fully explained by education, experience, or sector of work” (Malik 2013, 50). This fact is clearly reflected in gender pay gap statistics, most recently with the evidence that women in the US still earns 80.9 percent in salary compared to their male counterparts (Casserly 2013). This trend is echoed in the European Union where the gender pay gap also remains biased with women on average earning 16 percent less than men. Figures however, vary substantially among member states with a gender pay gap of 27 percent in Estonia, (and 16.4 percent in Denmark) as opposed to 2 percent in Slovenia (Eurostat 2011). According to Eurostat, multiple reasons for the division exist: For instance, the statistics are not accountable to the types of jobs held by women, neither is there taken account of consequences of breaks in career as a result of child bearing or decisions in favor of personal and family priorities. Also, Eurostat emphasize institutional differences and cultural attitudes towards accepted work-life balance which strongly affect the choice of career and following pay for women (Eurostat 2011).

These factors has nevertheless been accounted for by Eagly and Carli who through systematic accounts (using material from economy, sociology and psychology) present evidence of how wages is a significant contributor in discriminating against women at work (Eagly and Carli 2007, 67–70). This fact has recently been confirmed by the OECD: “inequalities increase the higher up the pay scale they [women] go” (OECD 2012a, 15). Thus, whereas women on average earns 16% less than men in OECD countries, female top-earners are paid 21% less than their male counterparts which provides visual evidence that women indeed face alternate conditions than men under many circumstances (OECD 2012a, 15). In addition to pay, Eagly and Carli show a gender gap in authority arguing that “even when women have the same job titles as those of men, the female managers often have less decision-making authority than male managers do” (Eagly and Carli 2007, 72). Finally, the authors demonstrates how women often wait longer for
promotion than their male counterparts (Eagly and Carli 2007, 73). Such findings only add to the evidence of a systemic gender bias, starting at the initial career phase and follow women all the way to the top of the organizational hierarchy.

Further evidence is found through the Gender Inequality Index (GII), put forward in the HDR for 2013 which intercepts women’s loss of achievement through gender equality at three distinct levels; reproductive health, empowerment and labor market participation. The higher the GII rate, the more discrimination women face, with complete equality being 0.0: The figures show substantial variations across the 148 countries of the survey; with an average of 0.463, the Netherlands lands on top with 0.045, closely followed by Denmark with 0.057 and Yemen in the bottom with 0.747. The report states that significant gender disparities persist especially in South Asia (0.568), Sub-Saharan Africa (0.577) and the Arab States (0.555), which is also where the least WEPs signatories are located, particularly in terms of female political representation, gender imbalances in educational achievement and low labor force participation (Malik 2013, 31).

4.2.2 Sensitizing Unconscious Discrimination

Although the former section presents statistical evidence of continuous gender discrimination an equally important concern to raise is how most gender related discrimination takes place unconsciously. According to Eagly and Carli, very few people deliberately try to discriminate, in fact, most people are truly genuine when claiming that they favor (or hire) the person who is superiorly qualified regardless of their sex (Eagly and Carli 2007, 83). During Thesis interviews with Danish WEPs signatories, an example of this is provided (section 5.2.1).

By dividing personas into district traits of Communal- (showing compassion and empathy) and Agentic behavior (displaying assertion and control), Eagly and Carli find that whereas the female character is most often associated with the Communal traits, Agentic traits (which are also mostly related to leadership) is often related to the notion of masculinity. Since ‘female behavior’ is considered more closely related to emotions and caregiving, and masculinity is attached to confidence and ambition, these rigidities does not only become attached to other people by outsiders, but will inevitable become part of people’s self-reflection and thus assertiveness of what constitutes a ‘real man’ or a ‘real woman’ (Eagly and Carli 2007, 87). As a consequence, women attempting to become leaders face competing demands: On the one hand women are expected to fulfill their ‘female role’ of being empathetic but on the other, a leadership position often requires predominant ‘ masculine traits’ such as determination and forcefulness. In other
words, for women to be seen as equally competent they often need to outperform men (Eagly and Carli 2007, 101). However, there seems to be no evidence that anyone carries a ‘natural’ leadership skills based solely on their sex: “there’s nothing whatsoever to suggest that this fantasy of better—or even qualitatively different—female leadership might be true” (Eaves 2008. See also Eagly and Carli 2007, 29, 48).

Despite such findings, women nonetheless remains subject to tokenism: “once a woman is chosen for a leadership position, it is important to convey that she was selected on the basis of her demonstrated ability and not on some other basis such as demands to fulfill diversity goals” (Eagly and Carli 2007, 156). Similar accounts have been noted during interviews with the Danish WEPs signatories.

4.2.3 Role Models

As it might be challenging (or at least quite time consuming) to change inherent thought patterns and stereotyping it would be interesting to examine alternative ‘empowerment tools’ for women. One could be the potential effect of female role models. From observatory studies some argue that people, by relatively brief visual exposure to famous ‘authoritarian’ women e.g. former Minister of Foreign Affairs in the United States, Hillary Clinton, reduced gender stereotyping remarkably (Eagly and Carli 2007, 89). The achievements of Hillary Clinton and her like serves as important symbols which helps breaking down barriers and limits unfavorable preconceptions of women following their examples (Eagly and Carli 2007, 191). In this way, exposure to powerful women could be seen as a way of reducing discriminatory practices, which has also been acknowledged at the UN level. At the launch of the WEPs in 2010, the need for female role models as ‘facilitators’ of self-esteem and recognition for young women and girls were called for on several occasions (Bexell 2012, 400).

However, exposure to powerful women might not always be beneficial since not all women can see themselves reflected in aspiring women. For instance, when the CEO of Yahoo! Marissa Meyer recently announced an astonishing two weeks maternity leave, followed by a ban for all employees’ to work from home, she sent a clear signal that employees are expected to balance work/family life through more traditional means, and has been accused of neglecting the concern for young working mothers struggling to poise family planning with a full time job, despite herself being one (Belkin 2013; Corneal 2012).
A similar critique was raised following the recent launch of chief operating officer at Facebook, Sheryl Sandberg’s, book *Lean In*. According to Sandberg, it is the individual woman’s responsibility to ‘lean in’ in their professional life and ‘lean out’ of the personal often family oriented sphere. Some have defended this approach by arguing that Sandberg’s career advice for women is no different from advice given to ambitious men for decades (Welch 2013). Other accuse Sandberg’s approach of being too elitist as it encourages individual ambitions and desires of women higher up the career latter, thus ignoring similar ambitions for example of the domestic helps (often female) enabling these ambitious women’s careers: As one journalists notes; “There’s simply no way for women to lean in without leaning on the backs of other women” (Grant 2013).

4.3 Gender Equality as Smart Economics – ‘Womenomics’

The WEPs are not the first to embrace the ‘business case’ of gender equality as ‘Smart Economics’. Already in 1999 the term *Womenomics* was introduced by Kathy Matusi from the Investment Bank Goldman Sachs. In a series emphasizing the link between women’s inclusion and business’ financial performance primarily in a Japanese context women were for once not only considered a group worth investing in, their purchasing power was also presented as an untapped but easily accessible resource for companies (Matsui, Suzuki, and Ushio 1999). The second Womenomics report was published in 2005 (Matsui et al. 2005), and the approach quickly received more substantial attention. For instance, in 2006 the Economist presented an article stating: “Forget China, India and the Internet: economic growth is driven by women” (The Economist 2006a), thus adding to the general recognition of Womenomics. The approach have been advanced even wider with UN statements such as: “*investing in women is the right thing to do. It is also the smart thing to do*” (United Nations 2008) which has most likely added some legitimacy of the approach (The Economist 2006b). In 2010, Goldman Sachs launched its latest report on the issue; ‘Womenomics 3.0: The Time is Now’, arguing that a shrinking population, low-birth rates and unsustainably high fiscal debt now, *more than ever*, calls on Japan to leverage half its population (women) more fully (Matsui et al. 2010). The general idea of the Womenomics approach is thus that investors and corporations in general should rethink their strategies by replacing investments in currently attractive and booming economies onto women, now making up the new potential growth ‘sector’ and the international community seem to agree: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) recently claimed that “*Empowering Women is Smart Economics*”, a statement which is also promoted through the WEPs (Revenga and Shetty 2012). Also, the WDR from 2012 (the first of its kind to focus on gender), widely promotes the business agenda of gender equality (World Bank 2011).
Finally, a recent and widely quoted McKinsey Report points to three key links between gender equality and better company performance: “First, economically empowered women are potential customers; the more of them there are, the larger the market for selling goods and services. Second, skilled women represent a broad and motivated talent pool from which to hire and promote. Third, investing in making life better for women in developing countries can be an effective way to enhance a company’s reputation and brand” (McKinsey 2010, 14).

From this, the influence of Womenomics on the WEPs seems straightforward: In a recent speech the former Executive Director of UN Women, Michelle Bachelet emphasized how “actions and policies to foster women’s inclusion and equality are also smart business decisions” (Bachelet 2013).

To some extent, the Womenomics approach challenges some of the political structures of Japan, for example by pinpointing the country’s insufficient childcare. For example: 70% of Japanese women leaving the workforce after their first child, compared to one-third of women in the United States (Matsui et al. 2010, 13). Thus, what Goldman Sachs seems to aim for is to find a way of outlining Japan’s demographic challenges by encouraging companies to reap the benefits of educated, unemployed women thereby taking some wider nationally systemic issues into account. It is however, important to acknowledge that the Womenomics approach should be seen more as a business investment strategy, with a (potential) added benefit for women, rather than advocating a corporate policy of being more inclusive towards women. A similar critique can be aimed at the WEPs, which will be the focus of the next section.

4.4 The Women’s “Empowerment” Principles

This final section seeks to critically explore the link between women’s inclusion and enhanced business performance, and investigate whether the current UN-business partnership trend and the WEPs in particular, could undermine the fulfillment of women’s empowerment.

4.4.1 Preserving a Neo-Liberal Discourse

With the subtitle reading Equality Means Business, the WEPs immediately confronts the importance of women’s inclusion and empowerment as a way for business to improve their practices. In this way, the principles connect women’s need for empowerment with private sector’s concerns for profit and reputation thus facilitating a win-win situation. In addition, through the inclusion of wider academic circles, governments and other stakeholders, the WEPs obtain a form of legitimacy which might be more valuable to business than the promised increase
in profits as a consequence of investing in gender equality. This reputational concern is also reflected through the WEP business case highlighting that business’ ability to communicate on progress on the respective principles, creates a competitive advantage (Bexell 2012, 396).

In considering the trend of promoting gender equality as smart economics, Roberts and Soederberg presents a valid critique of the approach which according to them “frames corporate citizenship as a natural, inevitable and rational feature in development, in which market-led initiatives can create equal opportunities (and rewards) for women and businesses alike” (Roberts and Soederberg 2012, 951). In this way, the authors succeed in outlining how gender equality in a business sense, dictated through international organizations, rests on a neo-liberal approach, taking financial concerns more into account than actual human needs. Bexell express a similar point, by arguing that PPPs promoting women’s empowerment and especially the WEPs are not to a necessary extent challenging the gendered structures of the global economy. In this way she echoes Roberts and Soederberg by claiming that the crucial and precarious potential of empowerment is threatened by the boundaries of a neo-liberal discourse favoring short-term economic prosperity over actual gender equality (Bexell 2012, 389). By tapping into such established discourses of market efficiency and profit, the WEPs could according to Bexell, potentially be used to legitimize a (continuous) neo-liberal restructuring of obtaining gender equality through efficiency gains (Bexell 2012, 398).

According to Chant and Sweetman “it is imperative to ask whether the goal of female investment is primarily to promote gender equality and women’s ‘empowerment’, or to facilitate development ‘on the cheap’, and/or to promote further economic liberalization” (Chant and Sweetman 2012, 521). Thus, the authors also note the risk of promoting gender equality through a discourse that does not (usually) resemble women’s empowerment. The authors continue by claiming that the Equality means Business approach “oversimplifies complexity and shifts responsibility” from political process onto that of business investments (Chant and Sweetman 2012, 524). A point also noted by Bexell who argues that “women’s lack of empowerment and companies’ need for profit and societal legitimacy are considered problems linked in their solutions. The solution is then to recode empowerment to make it market-embedded and re-emerging as a business opportunity” (Bexell 2012, 398). In this way, the solution moves empowering processes away from the political sphere onto the private sector, which then places the responsibility on the individual in an attempt

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7 Principle 7: To measure and publicly report on progress to achieve gender equality (UN Women 2012, 5). See also Appendix II; The WEPs Booklet
for both parts to reach (economically) satisfactory goals. In other words, by translating the ‘empowerment vocabulary’ to a mere cost-benefit analysis, the concern for gender equality is being transformed from a goal in itself, to a mean in fulfilling other ends (Bexell 2012, 402).

By using the WEPs as an example, Bexell looks at how the WEP-partnership, although proposed as a mutually beneficial relationship between advocates of women’s empowerment and business, ultimately focus on economic opportunities rather than human rights (Bexell 2012, 389). In this way, for the WEPs to emphasize the responsibility of the individual (woman) and by considering women as mere ‘objects of investment’ the principles somehow equals rights and efficiency. According to Bexell “rights claims are, in the ideal case, to be demanding also in that they trump other claims, such as those of utility or productivity” (Bexell 2012, 403).

The seeming consensus between the partners of the WEPs does not, according to Bexell, take the hierarchical relations between the partners and the potential beneficiaries (women) into account (Bexell 2012, 399). In this way, Bexell maintain that even when including women, the WEPs does not challenge the gendered underpinnings of the ‘masculine’ constitution of economic concepts and she takes the point even further, by challenging the way that the WEPs equals ‘gender’ with ‘women’ or read ‘gender equality’ as ‘women’s empowerment’ (Bexell 2012, 393, 399, 401). This point serves as a reminder that despite the empowerment focus of the WEPs, there might still be a lack of understanding of what *gender* equality refers to. Also, it could be argued that the underlying assumption of the WEPs still rests more on a business case advocating gender equality as a means to obtain a profit rather than clarifying the interpretation and execution of *women’s* empowerment. This is not an uncommon feminist critique, but nevertheless a valid one, as it remains crucial to acknowledge that women, despite facing other challenges than men, should not necessarily be seen as a homogenous group, as their desires and preferences might differ as much amongst women as between women and men (Hooks 1981). Implicit connotations such as these are, according to Bexell ignoring the fact that markets are *not* gender neutral, and that women through the WEPs are generally *not* seen as the heterogeneous and multifaceted group they are (Bexell 2012, 399–401).

### 4.4.2 An International Legal Aspect of the WEPs

The merger between social norms and profit can also be applied to the voluntary nature of the WEPs. A well-known (positivist) international legal critique of the UN system is its lack of enforcement (Cali 2010, 74) which can also be applied to the fact that the UN partners of the
WEPs (UN Women and the UNGC) hold no legal power and are thereby unable to ratify the principles. Cutler argues that “under the rules of public international law, TNCs are legally ‘invisible’, while international institutional efforts to regulate TNCs have failed to achieve meaningful results” and continues; “transnational corporations have not exactly been unhappy with these inadequacies and failures” (Cutler 2008, 199–200). Cutler thus highlight how TNCs might not regret the often limited monitoring taking place in international systems, which is also evident in the WEPs partnership.

The accusation that the international system is a mere reflection of gendered power relations placing private interests above public institutions, thus reproducing a gendered international order, is also evident among feminist international legal scholars (Adamson and Sriram 2010, 41; Cali 2010, 83; Charlesworth and Chinkin 2000, 198). It remains questionable why discriminatory practices and inherent gendered structures seem to be accepted by the international community. Some of the answer might be found in the fact that the very nature of IL makes it difficult to deal with the structural disadvantages of sex and gender, as the realities of most women’s lives does not fit into the categories and concepts of IL. A related concern is expressed by Cutler who argues that “the statist nature of public international law creates a representational gap between transnational corporations and the societies within which they operate” (Cutler 2008, 200). Cutler argues that whereas corporations in general are in favor of some regulation, to ensure stability of operation, too much regulation is disservice and soft-law mechanisms and voluntary frameworks which allow more flexibility are often much more welcomed by the private sector (Cutler 2008, 205). This point taps rights into the paradox of the WEPs: How to ensure a satisfactory standard eliminating inequality while also ensuring cooperation, and thereby signatories, if the principles and criteria for participation are too strict? And how to ensure business assistance in promoting gender equality when the key purpose of most corporations is to ensure a profit as cheap and easily as possible? These and similar questions will feed as the starting point of the analysis, where WEP signatories as well as representatives from UN Women and UNGC will add to the nuanced puzzle of eliminating gender inequality without compromising core business practices.

8 A similar critique can be found when the International Declaration of Human Rights is considered as a form of Jus Cogens (international legal norm). Although not widely accepted in international legal circles, the argumentation is that as a result of the “universal acceptance” of the UDHR, thus making the Declaration binding on all states, some rights, such as the right to equality and non-discrimination has the character of Jus Cogens (Charlesworth and Chinkin 2000, 120; Weiwei 2004, 20)
4.5 Concluding Remarks

This chapter set out to clarify how the underlying dynamics of gender equality and discrimination impacts the behavior of women, business and the UN respectively. Firstly, it was found that women historically have been discriminated against, and evidence was presented that severe inequality remains today, which also serves to justify the need for the WEPs. Next, it was shown how the ‘Womenomics’ approach could be seen as part of developing the business rationale of the WEPs, a rationale which has been broadly accepted in the wider UN system. Finally, a more critical approach was presented, questioning the WEPs ability to ensure women’s empowerment. For instance, it was argued how the business-friendly approach of the WEPs might undermine the human rights aspect of the principles thus containing an inherent risk that profit rather than eliminating discrimination becomes the end-goal.
5.0 Analysis

As the former chapters have been divided into separate sections, focusing on theories concerning partnerships and feminism respectively, this chapter aims at combining the two in analyzing the main questions of the Thesis: *How can the Women’s Empowerment Principles be explained and understood as a partnership and to what extent can the principles be used as a tool in promoting women’s empowerment?*

By drawing on the theoretical foundation as accounted for in previous chapters, this chapter will make use of empirical data and accounts from various Danish WEPs signatories as well as statements from UN Women and UNGCO. By using these empirical sources, the chapter investigates whether and how interests and priorities are aligned among the partners of the WEPs, and in this way elaborate on the research sub-questions. The chapter will be structured as follows.

The first part of the analysis, section 5.1, will focus on the first part of the research question in considering how the benefits and opportunities, but also the drawbacks of Transformational Partnership approach is applicable to the WEPs. The second part of the analysis, focusing on the extent to which the WEPs can be used in promoting women’s empowerment will be considered in section 5.2 and 5.3. In addressing the first two research sub-questions, section 5.4 looks into the motivational factors of engagement for the public as well as the private partners of the WEPs. Section 5.5 considers the third sub-question of the ways partnership interests are aligned but also looks into the consequence when such interests conflicts. Further, section 5.5 seeks to combine the knowledge of previous sections in order to clarify a response to the research question. Finally, section 5.6 places the research question into the current financial context by considering the partnership’s ability to promote women’s empowerment in a constraining financial period which not only has affected the corporate sector but also member state’s financial contributions to the UN.

5.1 The WEPs as a Transformational Public-Private Policy Partnership

As accounted for in the third chapter, and as part of addressing the first part of the research question, the current UN Transformational Partnership (TP) approach to business-partnerships, is based on criteria addressing systemic issues, involving relevant stakeholders, leverage core competencies of all partners and ensure an inbuilt capacity of guaranteeing long lasting impact (UNGC 2011, 11). It was found that the WEPs could indeed be characterized as a TP which has also been emphasized by Kristin Hetle, Director of Strategic Partnerships at UN Women: “this very
strategic partnership – between UN Women and the UN Global Compact Office, business and civil society leaders, academia and UN partners – has spurred action and change around the globe through innovation and collaboration among stakeholders at the national level” (Hetle 2013a). Hetle thus cement how UN Women regard the WEPs as a partnership more than for instance a code of conduct or a CSR strategy.

Despite the acclaimed advocacy of system-wide coherence of the TP, the consistency of the approach can nevertheless be questioned. According to a key employee at UN Women “the objective of the WEPs is to drive intentional change within these companies to position gender equality and women’s empowerment as essential to the company’s core business”. However, the strong business case, along with the voluntary nature of the WEPs might lead the private sector signatories to implement differentiated approaches, thus going against the idea of UN consistency in TPs. Through the various interviews conducted with Danish WEPs signatories, it became clear that some are focusing strictly on implementing the principles directly, others are only guided by the framework and some are not even addressing the issues explicitly anywhere in the organization. Adding to this, the network-structure advocated by the TP approach and evident in the WEPs, contribute to multiple layers of communication not only for businesses internally but also through the wider inclusion of the UN, member state Governments and a range of NGO and civil society actors. For example: The UNGCO has over 100 local networks around the world promoting the Global Compact agenda and raise awareness about special platforms such as the WEPs. As clarified by the UNGCO project manager on the WEPs: “Local Networks are clusters of Global Compact business participants and other non-business participants (governments, academia, NGOs), that work together to promote and implement the ten Principles of the UN Global Compact and special issue-platforms such as the Women’s Empowerment Principles at the local level. Global Compact Local Networks often collaborate with UN Women local offices and other stakeholders including civil society groups to advance the WEPs at the country level”. Also, the focal point for the WEPs at UN Women headquarters work together with UN Women field offices and National Committees both at the country and regional levels, all feeding into the global platform of the WEPs. These networks serve as an important contributor in widening the knowledge of the WEPs. However, there might be a risk that the communication of the principles gets confused since neither UN Women nor the UNGC directly advice e.g. regional offices about specific priorities and or guidelines as to how the offices are supposed to make use of the WEPs. In this way, not only Governments and various regional offices/committees of UN Women and
UNGCO, but also business in particular might face insecurities when implementing the WEPs, especially since the engagement remains strictly voluntary.

5.1.1 Reporting on Practices

UN Women and the UNGCO has sought to accommodate this particular issue by developing the guidance document *Reporting on Progress* published in 2012 (UN Women 2012). According to the UNGCO: “The Reporting Guidance on the WEPs has actually been developed by request from the signatories, as some were in doubt of how to actually show what they were doing, so we thought it would be helpful”. The implementation of a reporting mechanism has nevertheless not progressed rapidly, which has also been acknowledged by key employees at UN Women, for instance, at the WEPs Annual Event 2013, Director of Strategic Partnerships at UN Women, Kristin Hetle conceded that progress has variegated, but argued that the early stages of the WEPs, with signatures and declared intentions is now followed by the next phase of monitoring and showing how companies are moving the agenda forward (Hetle 2013b). The WEPs focal point at UN Women agree: “A key priority for the WEPs partnership in the coming year is encouraging companies to systematically report on/disclose to the WEPs team, what they are doing on implementation” and continues “this will be what we are focusing on from the UN Women side, as an important step towards being able to demonstrate impact”. The importance of demonstrating impact has also been acknowledged by Danish signatory companies; for instance, one interviewee argued that: “Reporting will clearly facilitate the dissemination of the principles! And would obviously help promote various processes in the signatory companies”.

However, despite the effort at UN level and encouragement by companies, none of the Danish WEPs signatories have initiated any direct reporting yet: One interviewee explained how the company’s voluntary sustainability reporting, at the time of the interview, was only subject to internal review and agreed that “we only report very few data”. The representative thus concede that reporting could and should be done more substantially, especially when focusing on the WEPs which nonetheless was not an outspoken priority at the company, nor were there any plans on changing current practices. Another signatory interviewee argued that the IT-system of the company was not yet capable of cross-matching information to provide the desired data, thus making it challenging to report on various WEPs indicators.
Instead of requiring direct reporting (as is a criterion for UNGC signatories), the WEPs has no reporting mechanism attached,\(^9\) challenge which is acknowledged by the UNGCO: “With the WEPs there is no requirement to report. However, Principle Seven emphasizes the importance of reporting, but there is no mandatory reporting requirement associated with signing the CEO Statement of Support for the WEPs”. During an interview, the UN Women representative agreed that reporting initiatives are lagging behind: “Currently, the primary “platform” for companies to report on their progress is really our annual event in New York, where WEPs signatories convene to discuss a variety of WEPs-related issues, including implementation challenges and actions/results”. However, when asked about focusing solely on reporting for the Annual Event 2014 it was argued that: “I’m not sure it would be of much interest to all involved to have an entire day focused on reporting but it’s always part of the discussion!” To some extent, this illustrate that despite reporting being a priority, no substantial efforts on the issue have occurred yet which might fall back on the voluntary, non-contractual partnership that the WEPs are. The WEPs focal point at UN Women explains the reasoning by arguing that: “It was very important to us that the reporting guidance for the WEPs was aligned with other existing reporting frameworks and that it would not be seen as yet another reporting “requirement”, to which companies who were already reporting against other frameworks would have to deal with separately”. This is echoed by the UNGCO: “Introducing a reporting requirement when we first launched the Principles may have proven counterproductive. Few companies were reporting on gender and adding such a requirement would have discouraged companies from engaging”.

The inherent challenge of the WEPs is therefore that since companies are less bound to strict reporting standards since these might there might be a greater chance of them signing on to the principles and report on the (perhaps limited) initiatives that they are actually working on: A similar point was expressed by the head of CSR in a large Danish company as she argued how obligations could dampen new initiatives as these would not be generated internally: “In general, I think most people prefer voluntary efforts rather than being forced into doing something.” However, this might undermine greater efforts in empowering women, stringent reporting requirements might discourage potential signatories, especially if companies feels ‘forced’ to report. In accommodating business interests, there thus might be a reason why the WEPs are as

\(^9\) As noted in chapter 1, clarifying the WEPs case most companies of the WEPs are simply reporting through their own reporting mechanisms (the most common being the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) or the UN Global Compact Communication on Progress). The plan is that companies should be able to upload their progress on the weprinciples.org website.
loosely structured as is currently the case. As explained by a UN Women representative: “The WEPs “work” (and don’t) similarly to any other so-called soft power initiative. I think they are extremely useful as a tool for raising awareness, and for giving companies a general framework around which they can organize their thinking and efforts with respect to gender equality and women’s empowerment in the workplace, etc.”. The importance of raising awareness is thus highlighted, and perhaps it could be argued that the WEPs should rather be considered an UN advocacy tool to encourage improved business behavior than an actual partnership between equals.

The question remaining is whether a different structure would enhance awareness raising or reporting for that matter? Perhaps there would be a greater chance of ensuring implementation if the WEPs somehow were subject to a form of legal requirement rather than ‘just’ a network-based partnership based on moral obligation? This question will be explored in the following section.

5.2 The Issue of (National) Legislation

In considering the second part of the research question, addressing the extent to which the WEPs can be used to promote women’s empowerment, Denmark serves as an appealing example: What is interesting about the Danish WEPs signatories is that a national regulatory framework on gender equality; Women on Boards (Charter for flere kvinder i ledelse) was passed by the Danish Parliament in 2012. The regulatory requirements include that the 1,100 largest Danish private companies and all state enterprises and institutions regardless of size, report on targets and policies for the constellation of sexes in top management (Kvinderiledelse.dk 2013). All three companies, and WEPs signatories, interviewed for the thesis are subject to this legislation, and therefore constitutes relevant cases in exploring whether and how companies respond to legislation on gender issues.

When confronting UN Women and UNGCO staff with this question it was agreed that companies operating in countries with strong national legislation on issues of gender equality face fewer difficulties in implementing the WEPs at company level. At UN Women, it was argued that national legislation creates an enabling environment, but it was also asserted that it remains “critical that Governments also do their part to make it possible for companies to do the right thing and to uphold their commitments to human rights and gender, and holds them accountable for their actions”. In this way, the role of Governments is recognized in ensuring substantial
implementation and effect of the WEPs, which generates yet another question, namely whether the private sector indeed will be capable of eliminating discrimination and empower women, being motivated by profit rather than politics (and human rights).

During interviews, it has been found that the signatories’ approach to the Danish legislation is almost as differentiated as their implementation of the WEPs. For instance, some, more nationally founded Danish companies prefer the Danish legal framework to that of the WEPs whereas others antagonize the limited scope of the legislation: As expressed by the head of CSR at a larger Danish company “it is easier to convince employees internally about a Danish initiative” and goes on, “it will always be more straightforward to relate to national initiatives than an international standard”. This company therefore prioritized the Danish framework although they had signed on to the WEPs, as it was believed that the two initiatives broadly cover the same challenges and issues, or at least supplement each other well. A problem with this approach could however be that whereas the WEPs are focusing more broadly, for instance on supply chain and community initiatives, the Danish legal requirement solely focuses on women on boards, which only covers Principle 1 of the WEPs. Another Danish WEPs signatory expressed a very different viewpoint. This company deliberately chose not to sign the Danish Charter before it was made a legal requirement, based on the reasoning that: “We’re not a Danish company, we’re an international, global company and by not signing the Charter we signaled a conscious internal statement. It was not because we didn’t support the initiative per se, but what has become evident now is that the Charter never became the movement that the WEPs, in my opinion, are”. Yet, another interviewed head of CSR argued that she considered the Danish Charter somewhat unnecessary and advocated for voluntary efforts on the grounds that: “I don’t think companies are doing anymore or any less because of the law” and further argued how “the regulation doesn’t really force anyone to do anything, it simply requires companies to set targets for women’s employment”. However, when questioned further, it was acknowledged that “of course, the law has had the effect that we have scrutinized our efforts, and in that way, it has been beneficial”.

These differentiated rationales thus illustrate how companies’ efforts might not differ substantially regardless of them being subject to regulation\textsuperscript{10} or not. Also, and as noted by the WEPs focal point at UN Women: “While we recognize that voluntary principles such as the WEPs are not a substitute for hard laws and regulations, we have seen that, on the whole, CEOs who sign the Statement of

\textsuperscript{10} Generalizations are not possible due to the sample size. Also, since the Danish regulatory initiative has been provided as an example, it is not possible to contextualize the findings on a larger scale.
Support committing to the Principles take very seriously their commitment”. It thus seem that if CEOs are genuinely committed to women’s empowerment, they will sign (and implement) the WEPs, regardless of existing national legal frameworks or not.

5.2.1 Multiple ways of addressing the WEPs
As an extension of the former section, it also remains questionable why Denmark, a country often considered a frontrunner on women’s empowerment (and legislation on the issue) currently only has four signatory companies whereas Japan have 202 signatories and only a limited legal framework on the matter (Deutsche Welle 2013). When Danish WEPs signatories were asked why no more Danish companies have signed, all interviewed companies had somewhat different views on the matter: One interviewee was surprised and noted how the UNGC platform which is also more binding has several thousand signatories, and claimed: “Unfortunately, it probably has something to do with an underlying fear of addressing the issue of gender”. The same interviewee explained how she sees the WEPs as a natural extension of the UNGC, simply adding the long awaited gender focus. Another interviewee questioned why no more had signed; “in principle, everyone is eligible to sign, so I don’t understand why companies are not getting involved” and continue: “The focus should really be on the companies not signing!” This perception might have some truth to it, but it could nevertheless be argued that when companies actively are committing to something (in this case by signing on to the WEPs) the company takes on more responsibility and are thus obliged to set a good example. Another point of view was more positive, and agreed that the current amount of signatories on a global scale must be seen as quite satisfying, since the initiative was launched as late as in 2010. Also, it was critically echoed by several interviewees that Denmark as a nation embraces a self-image that gender equality and anti-discrimination is a thing of the past, which however might not be the case. According to a number of the interviewees, many Danish employees feel that they employ the best candidates regardless of sex, age, and ethnicity. Unfortunately, this approach often does not take account of unconscious patterns which in fact was illustrated during an interview. A head of CSR claimed that “everyone in this company knows that if you really want, and obviously have the qualifications, then everybody can rise through the ranks” and stressed that “We do not have quotas for upper management. We simply select the most qualified and competent regardless of their sex”. As good as it sounds, this statement to some extent illustrates the lack of attention to the structural barriers many women face throughout a prosperous career, thus cementing the Labyrinth approach accounted for in chapter 4. Despite companies willingness or conviction that they behave unbiased, most people
are unconsciously inclined to select candidates which fits into their own cognitive scheme (Eagly and Carli 2007, 94). Another interviewee raised the point by arguing that despite working in the field for more than 15 years, she was amazed how often she ‘slipped’ for instance in recruiting processes, by unconsciously selecting candidates which might fit her personal cognitive scheme.

Another company has to some extent addressed this particular issue by developing an entire strategy increasing awareness of the unconscious. As Head of Diversity and Inclusion in the company, one interviewee determinedly explained how she analyzed company practices through underlying discourses and perceptions and looked into how verbalization affects the understanding of concepts which again influences behavior, and takes place at an unconscious level. The interviewee emphasized how the company is not focusing on women per se: “...rather, we try to address the issue through the company system and structures and try to remove the invisible barriers there exists, not only for women, but for all employees”. By not only focusing on women, but instead expose employees to diverse staff and inclusive ways of working in their everyday life, the company thus tries to “empower the entire organization, the system, the culture and all the people within the company. We try to influence all our employees to work in new and innovative ways that will promote equal opportunities and leverage diversity for more business opportunities. That’s how we make use of the WEPs”. In this way, the interviewee is looking into the systemic issues, advocated by the TP approach and has to some extent moved beyond the company context in arguing that: “A business leader cannot change the entire capitalist system, on which the world is structured, but what you can do is change the company’s system from within which then might change the behavior of the business leader”. Nevertheless, the same interviewee acknowledged that corporate practices reside regardless of company policies claiming that: “it remains difficult to change moral attitudes, especially for business since their sole purpose is to earn a profit - what else are they supposed to do?”

This statement comes back to the voluntary moral obligation vis-à-vis the effect of national regulatory initiatives: On one side, the voluntary nature of the principles can be seen as a stimulus for companies to sign since they are not (formally) held accountable for their actions. On the other, the voluntary aspect and the general inefficacy of soft-law approaches to private sector regulation could be seen as the WEPs’ main defect. The voluntarism of the WEPs can also lead corporations to adopt their own interpretations which might lead to diverse behavior thus limiting the consistency of the principles (Cutler 2008, 202). In this way, it could be argued that regardless of the WEPs being strictly voluntary (as is the case currently) or whether they would be subject to
international law (IL), would not have any substantial impact on business behavior and thus for the outcome of the WEPs, as IL through this understanding, holds no decision making power regardless of companies are subject to IL or are only accountable to a voluntary set of principles. A different approach to the issue of voluntarism could however, be that such efforts “can lead companies to strive to be better than the law requires and, in this way, move beyond lowest-common-denominator standards or rules” (Latham and Watkins 2009, 1). It can thus be argued that companies are not partaking in voluntary frameworks out of obligation but rather as a result of corporate drivers which might facilitate innovative solutions and integrate sustainable corporate practices (Latham and Watkins 2009, 1). In this way, “voluntarism can foster competition among organizations to be better corporate citizens” (Latham and Watkins 2009, 2).

Thus, returning to the earlier expressed theoretical critique of how the WEPs might encourage concerns for profit rather than advocating a human rights agenda, the following section will address this issue and thereby consider the extent to which the WEPs advance women’s empowerment.

5.3 Women’s Empowerment in a Corporate Context

As noted by critics of the WEPs business case (and as accounted for above), the corporate and profit driven focus might undermine the intended purpose of the principles, namely to ensure gender equality and limit discrimination. By considering women’s empowerment as a means to obtain a profit there is a risk that gender equality becomes a means to an end rather than a goal in itself (See e.g. Brinkerhoff and Brinkerhoff 2011; Chant and Sweetman 2012).

UN Women’s WEPs focal point acknowledges the critique by stating: “It’s a valid point, certainly. It’s critical that we maintain our human rights based approach to these issues. However, from a business perspective, it’s also important to demonstrate that there is a business case to all of this. Our experience has been that this is ultimately what is going to be the most motivating for companies”. Part of the challenge can be found in the limited reporting practices and following challenge of demonstrating impact and effects of the WEPs. Also, the inherent and gendered structures needs to be addressed to ensure new practices which require time and dedication, not only bottom-up, but also top-down. As one corporate interviewee notes: “To some extent, ‘Smart Business’ is nothing but a strategic communication tool. It’s just as important to develop the company structure and business model, to promote the initiative and carry it forward”. But not only is it important to revise the business model according to enhanced inclusion and
empowerment, it remains imperative to consider the gendered structures of the entire system, which has been emphasized by Bexell: “I argue that public–private partnerships for women’s empowerment do not challenge the gendered structures of the global economy, though they may improve individual women’s economic situation in the short term” (Bexell 2012, 289). Regrettably, Bexell does not address how the gendered structures should be taken into account, which has been an unfortunate common denominator for many critics (See: Bexell 2012; Chant and Sweetman 2012; Roberts and Soederberg 2012).

In offering a gentle assessment of the WEPs, perhaps it could be noted that when considering the principles, one thing might not exclude another: According to the project manager of the WEPs at the UNGCO “It [the WEPs] definitely is a human rights issue but I don’t think that has to be counter to there being a business rationale as well. I don’t think the business case to be opposite to the human rights case, there’s a clear connection and I think that’s the strength of it”. It thus appears that one goal does not prevent the other, as the interviewee carries on: “The individuals we speak to within companies are often interested in the business rationale for the Women’s Empowerment Principles. They recognize that women’s empowerment and gender equality is a human rights issue and that implementing the WEPs is the “right thing to do”. However, in order to drive support for the WEPs throughout the company, we are often told that articulating the business case for the WEPs and highlighting how implementing the seven principles can positively impact a company’s bottom-line is key”. This account provides an interesting perspective on how business and women’s empowerment might be two strings to one bow. An interesting example of this is found through one Danish WEPs signatory company, which seems to have managed the balanced act of limiting discriminatory practices while also thinking about the bottom-line: According to the Head of Diversity, Inclusion and Collaboration, the company has “done a lot to avoid making the WEPs simply a women’s issue. By setting targets for women on boards and leadership, the issue will suddenly only involve women”. According to her companies will be better off by focusing more the majority rather than the minority in order to reframe the issues to involve all people: “In essence, it is not only about morality but also about smart business practices. As a company, we are wasting valuable resources which we cannot afford, neither as a company, as a society nor on a global scale”. The interviewee has also expressed this view-point in a blog post, facilitated by the NGO Oxfam the interviewee notes: “All discourses have connotations, and in the corporate world the discourses on gender equality and corporate social responsibility unfortunately imply helping the minority for the good of the minority. Over decades, this approach has not made any appreciable
difference for women or people living in poverty, nor has it changed the mindset and behavior of corporate leaders” (Nielsen 2012). In this way, the company appears to have bridged an important gap in relation to the WEPs: By insuring business leaders (and demonstrating the effects) that gender equality at corporate level, will indeed make the business operate more efficiently and most likely facilitate enhanced job satisfaction, it will also increase revenue and thereby profit, which is a key argument of the Womenomics approach, and also stressed through the business case of the WEPs (see section 4.3 and section 1.2). This approach however, contains various drawbacks, which will be part of the final discussion in chapter 6, considering the WEPs in a broader perspective.

5.3.1 Revising the Importance of Role Models

In chapter 4 it was found that strong women and female role models can both encourage and intimidate other women depending on the context and associations attached to the role model in question (See Belkin 2013; Eagly and Carli 2007; Grant 2013). Perhaps the approach to role models can reveal how and to what extent companies succeeds in promoting the WEPs agenda.

Interestingly, the Danish WEPs signatory interviewees had quite distinct views on the importance of role models: Two companies agreed on the importance and signal of female board members. However, whereas one argued that role models in the company have never been promoted explicitly since “the female board members are not interested in being associated with being females just for the sake of it”. Another company was quite overt about the importance of female role models: “As a role model, our (former) female CEO sent out a very strong signal in the organization, which evidently resulted in a satisfying amount of women in the top levels of the company”. According to the interviewee, and head of CSR, the female CEO clearly acknowledged the importance of female role models, but also the importance of setting targets and goals, which was part of the reason why the WEPs was signed prior to her departure. For instance, the WEPs has helped the company actively retain women in the leadership pipeline. However, according to the interviewee there has been a remarkable shift in female top-level managers with the appointment of a new (male) CEO: “In fact, we have gone from 40% to 34% female managers since the [new CEO] appointment in 2010”. This astonishing figure clearly demonstrates the importance of inspirational women in a company context which has also been confirmed by a McKinsey report arguing that “every time a senior executive leaves or enters an organization, its culture can—and does—shift” (Barsh and Yee 2011, 11). Even though the interviewed company signed the WEPs in 2010, and despite the acknowledgement of female role models, the head of CSR nevertheless
claims that “the principles have shown how the importance of a role model is simply not enough. Target figures are also important!” The interviewee expressed how targets and quotas could help facilitate women’s employment, since internal (perhaps unconscious) resistance to women could advance as a consequence of the realization of women’s skills and work ethics. This argument might put some strength to the former rejection by another interviewee on the importance of the Danish regulation. A contrary argument was presented by another head of CSR who argued that the company has no specific focus on enhancing or promoting women’s employment specifically. Instead she expressed how women are simply a ‘natural’ part of management in the company and emphasized how the company “previously has had some talent networks for women, this initiative has nevertheless been resigned as we evaluated the desired effect was nonexistent. It seemed like the women did not necessarily feel better equipped to become leaders”. It is quite challenging to determine whether women are simply a more ‘natural’ part of the latter company, or whether the company is being inattentive to unconscious selection or unfavorable work environments for women. During the interview it was for instance mentioned how despite a corporate focus on work-life balance, “the meeting culture can be quite demanding for families with smaller children, as most meetings takes place after five o’clock at night”. Thus, there might be a resemblance between the company’s deliberate choice of avoiding explicit promotion of female role models and the fact that the company currently only employs 35% women. It could also be questioned whether such companies would sign on the WEPs if reporting was mandatory.

It remains difficult to make generalizations since the context and industry of the company also affects not only its approach to women but also the pipelines and talent pool from which the company can hire qualified candidates. One interviewee nevertheless explained how her company has accommodated the challenge of a limited recruitment base; by approaching relevant educational institutions and collaborating on enrolling a broader talent pool, e.g. by focusing specifically on women which might not be a traditional segment. In this way, the company expanded the amount of qualified candidates and proactively took responsibility while promoting Principle 4 of the WEPs.

The examples above, illustrates how some companies manage to combine sensible business practice while also empowering women, proves useful in explaining how companies also can appear as role models for other companies. The issue of role models is thus not only relevant internally in companies to promote women, or displaying strong and inspiring individuals, but also highly relevant amongst companies - especially for WEPs signatories seeking inspiration, e.g. at the
annual WEPs event. Such practices are also encouraged by the TP approach. One interviewee explained how she has been contacted by numerous other signatories who were interested in the approach of her company, and how practices has been shared and evaluated upon widely. In this way, the company might be a source of inspiration for other companies (WEPs signatories or not) which has also been mentioned during interviews with various participants. One interviewee explained: “The WEPs are definitely signed by frontrunners, and I don’t think this fact will lead to an imbalance. The UN Global Compact was initially also signed by frontrunners, but this framework has developed into a form of standard where more and more people are interested in joining”. Whether companies are seen as frontrunners or role models might not make a significant difference, as long as e.g. WEPs signatories serve as a positive source of inspiration for other corporations. Such behavior is also encourages by the TP approach where business as well as UN agencies should inspire further individual and collective commitment by partnering. In this way companies engage in a network with equals to utilize the synergies of addressing a determined and shared goal.

5.4 Demographical Traits and Geographical Bias

In evaluating the two research sub-questions considering the partners’ motivation for engaging in the WEPs it remains important to emphasize the complexity of the partnership.

The voluntary aspect as well as the extensive level of communication platforms of the WEPs has resulted in a differentiated number of signatories in the various UN member states\(^\text{11}\), which could also affect signatories’ participatory motivation, as partners might not share cultural nor behavioral backgrounds. For instance, as of mid-June, 2013, out of the 594 signatory companies, 202 Japanese companies had signed on to the WEPs whereas only 8 companies had signed in the entire region of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). This bias could potentially be accounted for by the fact that the Womenomics approach springs from Japan. However, from conversations with former UN colleagues it has occurred that the substantial amount of Japanese signatories might be a result of a Japanese National Committee priority to boost the initiative thereby encouraging companies to sign, rather than an actual reflection of improved business practices\(^\text{12}\). Many regions as well as countries are thus still lacking behind, for instance in Africa, 39 business

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\(^{11}\) As discussed, communication about the WEPs emanate from the UNGCO and UN Women headquarters respectively, UNGC Networks, UN Women regional offices and National Committees

\(^{12}\) However, it remains important to acknowledge the importance of the Japanese Government’s effort in promoting the WEPs to companies through its Gender Equality Bureau of the Cabinet Office, established to identify corporate priorities and support its implementation and reporting efforts.
participants have signed the WEPs, compared to only 15 companies in the United States. However, since 37 of the African signatories are located in South Africa and two in Nigeria, the overall diversion of signatories on the continent is very limited. The same is evident with Brazil which accounts for 57 of the 68 signatory companies in Latin America\textsuperscript{13} (weprinciples.org 2013b). Relating this to a global ‘developed/developing’ country context it could be argued that the amount and geographical location of signatories, could be seen as a reflection how the WEPs has, so far, not managed to connect the ‘developed’ part of the world with the ‘developing’. Or at least, the demographic distribution of signatories illustrates how the location of WEPs signatories has not been equally distributed. Naturally it is difficult to separate developing and developed countries since definitions differ\textsuperscript{14}, but a personal unscientific rough estimation shows that the ‘developed world’ accounts for 451 signatory companies whereas the ‘developing world’ account for the remaining 143 signatories\textsuperscript{15}. In a similar way, WEPs signatories can be divided into industry sectors. On the WEPs website, signatories are divided into 43 separate categories ranging from ‘beverages’ or ‘banks’ onto ‘gas, water and multi-utilities’ to ‘industrial mining’. Although most categories only contain up to 10 signatories, and a small sample of categories contain up to 40 signatories, ‘support services’ remains the dominant industry with 117 signatories\textsuperscript{16}.

From this, it could be argued that the structure and inclusive nature of the principles might promote its dissemination, but if the partnership, despite its rather loose structure remains a limited crowd, randomly scattered around the world, one could question the effectiveness of the advocacy in the network.

This dilemma was mirrored during interviews with representatives of the two UN agencies involved in the partnership: The general sentiment at UN Women seemed to be that “growing the

\textsuperscript{13} Brazil has also accomplished a tremendous effort in promoting a formal alliance on WEPs implementation - the Business Alliance for Strengthening the Role of Women in Society – which is currently focused on establishing a shared action plan and monitoring framework for progress on Principles 1, 4 and 7

\textsuperscript{14} For a further discussion on development and the definitional controversies covering ‘developed’ and ‘developing’ countries, see (Mohanty 1988; Razavi 1997)

\textsuperscript{15} Developing world includes: Europe, Japan, the United States, Canada, Australasia and a category named Global where companies such as Coca-Cola and Deloitte is located. The developed world is made up from the continents of Africa (including South Africa), Asia (excluding Japan), Latin America (including Brazil) and the MENA region. Excluding South Africa and Brazil, signatories in the developing world would only amount to 56 out of the total of 594 signatories

\textsuperscript{16} It would be interesting to broaden the scope of this rather unscientific examination and consider whether more women are employed in this particular sector. It would also be interesting to explore the geographic location these ‘support service’ signatories, but unfortunately the scope of this Thesis remains too limited
number of signatories just for the sake of having a high number to point to is rather not the point - It’s what the companies do after they sign”. Nonetheless, there might also be a point in the argument expressed by the UNGCO claiming: “From a corporate perspective I really think that the number of signatories speaks for themselves. I think we’re close to 600 now, so it really keeps building”. The rapid expansion of the principles might also have a concrete effect since, as noted by the UNGCO: “the WEPs are actually the UNGCs largest platform and will be a priority for the next three years, as a result of that. So there’s been a lot of momentum and the UNGC does see it as a very promising avenue”. And according to the WEPs project manager at UNGCO: “The increasing number of signers helps to build the consensus that business has a key role to play in advancing women’s empowerment and achieving gender equality”. Thus, if the number of signatories is what constitutes success, the WEPs have achieved something, but if success however should be considered through the (in)actions of signatories, the partnership might not have accomplished much, yet.

The statements could perhaps reflect a slight diversion between the two agencies since one agency might be focusing more on effect whereas the other might be more interested in adding up the amount of companies involved. Both approaches have also been expressed during interviews with Danish WEPs signatories. Whereas one advocated extending the amount of companies in order to broaden the scope of the principles, another was more hesitant arguing that the number of signatories might not be as important as getting companies involved in the process: Adding to the complexity of determining the accomplishments of the partnership one WEPs signatory representative noted how the WEPs in some way also have to take account of the diverse contexts that signatory companies are operating in: “When you operate in a Western context you have to take account of different challenges than when your business is located in China or Saudi Arabia”. The interviewee thereby explains how larger companies face multiple contexts as they operate on a broader scale, thus making it challenging to implement all principles to the same extent in every sub-division of the company, and once more complicating the shared partnership goal of empowering women. Not only is there then a risk that the WEPs might be communicated differently depending on country context, from interviews it has become evident how the internal company communication of the WEPs also differs extensively. For instance, one interviewee openly questioned her company’s involvement with the WEPs and asserted that the company is not currently publishing any sex-disaggregated data as such information to her would seem irrelevant and potentially confusing to company stakeholders. At the same time there was
also some confusion about who initiated the signing of the WEPs. According to UN Women, it is nonetheless not the responsibility of the UN agencies to hold companies accountable to their actions: “If there are companies that just sign to sign and then don’t really do much, that’s really up to them. They are the ones that make the commitment, so my personal thinking is that it is they who end up looking silly if for example, anyone ever questioned them on it”. In this way, the responsibility of holding companies accountable for their actions has been ‘handed over’ to other (undefined) stakeholders, which might point to how partners of the WEPs as a network based policy partnership, holds no authority in condemning the behavior of fellow partners but at the same time, holds no risk of being condemned by others in the network.

The broad scope of the WEPs can thus be seen as beneficial but also as contradictory since the wide inclusion of actors on the one hand contributes to a large amount of signatories, which again might lead to a larger extent of advocacy and dissemination of the WEPs agenda. On the other hand, the scope, structure and ambiguity of such wide inclusion might water down the principles as individual interpretations and preferences perhaps outshine the real intention of the WEPs. Adding to this, the divergence in the statements from the main UN agencies of the principles might reflect an imbalance in the preferences or a lack of alignment of interests between the agencies (and other partners and stakeholders). But what then, motivates the partners to engage in the WEPs?

When confronted with the question, the WEPs focal point at UN Women noted: “I think companies are increasingly recognizing the value in frameworks such as the WEPs for advancing their gender equality and women’s empowerment objectives both from an return-of-investment perspective, as more and more research is done in this area showing the measurable benefits to business of paying attention to and making progress on these issues, as well as the benefits of associating themselves with a UN platform” and argued how “this is true not only for the WEPs, but for public private partnerships in general – given the UN’s convening power, global reach and credibility”. It thus becomes clear how both signatories and UN representatives acknowledge how the UN and the WEPs in particular might represent a form of ‘brand value’ which companies and other stakeholders could have an interest in being associated with, or which could facilitate a form of competitive advantage for the signatories. However, there might also be a risk that this ‘brand value’ or authority of the WEPs might be weakened if companies are more interested in being associated with the WEPs (or UN Women and the UNGCO) than actually implementing the
principles. To this, the UN Women private sector specialist claims that: “Our view is that these concerns represent, for the most part, a misconception of what the WEPs are/are not and what they represent. That is, when companies sign the Statement of Support, they are the ones making a commitment to action. If they then don’t do anything after signing, it is they who run the risk of “looking bad”, ultimately”. The UN Women representative once more argues how: “We are careful to be very clear of the direction of the commitment – having their name on the list of signatories does not mean that UN Women/UN Global Compact are granting them some type of stamp of approval”. Thus, according to one UN agency of the partnership, companies are not automatically granted any of “UN’s convening power, global reach and credibility”. However, it could be questioned whether other stakeholders are aware of this fact? Although UN Women are not of this opinion, there remains a chance that signatory companies could still promote their signature regardless of their level of implementation, and especially so if no monitoring mechanism is in place. Seen like this, the ‘WEPs-brand’ could represent a value on its own, and somehow compensate the companies for their efforts since any financial payoff, which is often treasured in more conventional PPP literature, is simply non-existing in the case of the WEPs.

5.5 Aligning Partnership Interests

By taking departure in the third research sub-question, this section will explore the alignment of interests between the partners of the WEPs, but also consider the consequence if partnership interests collide.

Bull and McNeill claims that “UN bodies generally brings with them a degree of authority and expertise to policy debates while providing a ‘neutral platform’ for convening civil society, government officials and business” (Bull and McNeill 2007, 18). By the same token, the UN report on Transformational Partnerships (TPs) describes how: “In forging such partnerships, the UN has unique capacities: no other organization has the same convening power, credibility as a neutral broker, support from member governments, and deep knowledge of social and economic development, not to mention the UN’s unique role as the upholder of shared values” (UNGC 2011, 9). According to Bull and McNeill, the UN ‘neutral platform’ allows various stakeholders in partnering with the UN to promote a similar agenda but also allow partners to “reconcile ideological differences” within the partnership (Bull and McNeill 2007, 17). However, as illustrated in previous sections, there might be some inconsistency in the partners’ perception of the WEPs: Not only has it been shown how signatories vary in their approach and (lack of?) implementation of the principles but also, a slight discrepancy was detected between the two UN agencies.
involved, which prove the complexity of the WEPs. As Rosenau notes: “Partnerships are complex organizations [...] Each involves different levels and types of conflicts of interest and different ethical responsibilities” (Rosenau 2000, 6). Confronting the paradox of the WEPs it thus seems necessary to consider the various interests of the partners, and from this consider the inevitable hierarchies of power underlying any partnership and finally consider whether the WEPs can in fact be seen ‘neutral broker’ upholding shared values as advocated by the TP approach.

According to Bexell: “Hierarchies between partnerships and beneficiaries are hidden in the language of partnering and win–win” (Bexell 2012, 403). Relating this to the WEPs, it could be argued that with a partnership the size of the WEPs, with such diverse partners, there is a great chance of conflicting interests and also it could be expected that at least some partners compromise, even if partners advocate an optimistic approach to the business case. What is interesting however, is whether potential conflicts could damage the credibility of the partnership or dilute the confidence in UN authority, expertise and ‘neutrality’, since the WEPs might not be applied in the way intended.

5.5.1 Institutional Discrepancy

It is difficult to establish the relation between the two UN agencies in the WEPs partnership, but one place to start would be to look at their budgetary planning which might reveal a glimpse of their individual priorities and responsibilities of the WEPs. It has been difficult to obtain substantial information about the UNGCOs budget and funding, since e.g. Salaries of the UNGCO staff is paid through a trust fund where governments and business are making voluntary contributions rather than the agency receiving a fixed annual amount through the general UN budget (globalcompactfoundation.org 2013). To address this issue, a report from 2010 recommended that the UNGCO should work out a robust funding strategy, but also acknowledged that contributions to the agency “have multiplied ten times in five years” (Fall and Zahran 2010, iv). A conference paper from 2010 also noted how many of the larger companies involved in the UNGC “have annual incomes more than a hundred times larger than the UN’s” thus pointing towards the fact that funding of the UNGCO might not be critical as companies easily can afford contributions (Bitanga and Bridwell 2010, 4). As for UN Women, concerns have raised that the mandate of the agency seems too broad for its annual budget of $500 million and it is further emphasized how “gender equality has always been underfunded in the system” (Eagle 2011).
From an internal UN document it has been discovered how the budget as well as the division of responsibility is dominated by the UNGCO in the period from 2012 until 2014 (UNGC and UN Women 2012). Adding to this, with the previous statement from the UNGCO that the WEPs is now the largest platform of the UNGCO and consequently the principles will receive top priority in the next three years, the WEPs must indeed be seen as being prioritized by the agency. On the contrary, the WEPs team at UN Women is extremely limited, both human resource wise and financially. This could reflect a priority or simply a budgetary constraint, perhaps pointing towards the distribution of authority and decision making power between the agencies, which has also been mildly confirmed by a UN representative: “The dynamics of the WEPs partnership (in terms of both institutional working arrangements and planned activities) continue to shift and adapt in response to both internal (organizational) changes and growing demand from external stakeholders”.

Returning to the theoretical discussion of whether the UN operates as a ‘neutral broker’ a connotation of alignment and understanding of shared values, interests and direction emerges. However, it has become clear how this might not be the case with the WEPs. For example, through the TP approach it is argued that the UN must prioritize enhanced business collaboration as a way of addressing various challenges (UNGC 2011, 23). Also, despite the numerous accounts by (former) Executive Director of UN Women, Michelle Bachelet and General Secretary Ban Ki-Moon, prioritizing the WEPs and women’s empowerment such encouragement might not reflect a sincere priority internally at the various organizations. Thus, resistance to closer business sector collaboration remains an issue for the UN partners, which can prove problematic since internal frustration potentially affects the willingness of moving forward on frameworks such as the WEPs. Although it has been the attempt of the TP approach to accommodate these challenges, it can be debated how alignment of interests is even possible as the core WEPs team (composed of staff from both UN Women and UNGCO) is not only physically separated, but also comes from different UN agencies, with different source of funding and (perhaps!) different agendas. It remains important to keep in mind how all UN agencies should be driven by shared UN goals, nevertheless, since the UNGCO is entirely funded through voluntary contributions from signatories and others (as long as the integrity of the agency is not jeopardized), this could lead to a certain ‘goodwill’ from the UNGCO towards it financiers. At least, the anti-business agenda of the UNGCO might not be as vivid as is the case some places at UN Women, who receives direct funding from the UN and is thus not to the same extent dependent on corporate sector ‘sponsorship’.
If these assumptions are correct it could indeed be argued that the UN partners of the WEPs cannot be seen as ‘neutral brokers’ neither amongst themselves nor in them addressing the WEPs to their business partners, and perhaps, even though the two agencies are promoting a shared goal, their path towards it might not be. Whether this will have severe implications of the partnership is nevertheless a different discussion, and it would be interesting to consider whether the potential bias, or at least non-neutral status of the UN agencies could affect the integrity and legitimacy, not only of the agencies, but of the WEPs as a whole. This will be the focus of the following section.

5.5.2 “Partnering” with business – The Struggle between Legitimacy and Reputation

Returning to Bull and McNeill it is argued that “legitimacy of any institution is based on the normative belief held by an actor that the rule of this institution is to be obeyed” (Bull and McNeill 2007, 21). Thus, if institutional legitimacy is a reflection of the degree to which institutional rules are obeyed, the WEPs might provide considerable evidence that the UN (or at least the WEPs partnership) cannot be seen as legitimate. According to Utting, the promotion of UN wide business partnerships reflects a change in traditional power relations, where authority to a larger extent is now reflected through submission or willingness to collaborate. As expressed above, the fact that business is considered an equal partner in the WEPs, this change of power (or influence) could lead to the belief that the UN increasingly submits to an agenda based on the business rationale of ‘profit before people’, thus pointing towards a form of submission. Considering legitimacy as a form of rationale where the ‘governing’ are granted a right to govern the ‘governed’ (as in the quote above), the network approach of TP cannot be addressed as a legitimate form of partnership since the idea of a TP network is based on equal and non-submissive, nor contractual participation. Legitimacy might not be the explicit purpose of the WEPs, but since the corporate sector and the UN are seen as equal partners in the WEPs, and it has been established how the UN agencies cannot be seen as (entirely) ‘neutral brokers’ due to mistrust and misalignment of interests, it would be interesting to consider who then decides the direction and purpose of the WEPs.

There might be various alternative explanations, but one, offered by Bull and McNeill, in particular address how the UN still holds authority and expertise desired by corporations. This is, according to the authors reflected in the fact that the corporate sector still gains most of its authority through norms developed by multilateral institutions. A point which has been echoed during interviews: According to one interviewee the implementation of the WEPs would not have
succeeded had it not been for the “UN stamp” on the principles: “When I address the WEPS at top-management level, they [the WEPS] contribute with a form of ‘authority’ that this is not my personal framework, it’s a UN initiative that the CEO has signed and the company has committed to”. The interviewee continues in acknowledging that “when the initiative came from UN level it reflected a very high level of ambition and the company was eager to be associated with that.” In that way, the WEPS have helped the interviewee placing important issues on the agenda, and promote them in a manner which was edible for senior management. Another interviewee argued how “it has never been necessary to argue with the management or present an argument that the WEPS has been dictated by the UN and therefore needs to be followed.” The interviewee did nonetheless concede that “it would though, be nice to have up the sleeve if anyone resisted”. What is noticeable however is how the former company has succeeded in implementing a comprehensive approach to the WEPS, whereas the latter reference has not and did not seem to prioritize it prospectively.

5.6 The WEPS in Times of Crisis

Considering the implementation, the motivation and the alignment of interests for partners engaging in the WEPS, this final section of the chapter, is dedicated to reframe the WEPS into this current turbulent financial period, which has been particularly rough on the corporate sector.

As Greve and Hodge notes: “The financial crisis has been tough on PPPs” (Greve and Hodge 2013, 215). However, what has been shown in several chapters (chapter 3 and chapter 5) is how the WEPS cannot be regarded as PPP in a ‘traditional’ sense. Rather, the theoretical approach to this partnership has spurred from the notion of 4Ps and from there been framed in an international/UN context and finally established in the UN TP network approach. In this way, Greve and Hodge’s quote above cannot straightforwardly be adapted to the WEPS, and it will therefore be paramount to consider the financial contours and its impact on the principles separately. Quite contrary of the quote above, what has been found during interviews with WEPS signatories and UN representatives is that the WEPS have not been severely affected by the current economic climate. During the launch of the WEPS it was emphasized how the “impact of the recent financial crisis, has demonstrated that markets cannot function adequately without an ethical grounding” and it was added that “the financial crisis has caused people to take note of gender disparities and has given weight to arguments calling for gender equality” (UN Women 2010b, 3).
In considering whether the launch of the WEPs has been unfavorable in terms of companies’ willingness to engage in a voluntary restructuring framework when also being strained by the financial climate the private sector partnerships specialist at UN Women agrees that: “I’m not sure that the economic climate has been a critical factor in whether or not companies sign”. Instead it was noted how the launch date might have been an advantage for women’s empowerment: “Certainly if we had tried to launch these ten or so years ago, I think we would have faced a lot more resistance for other reasons”. According to the interviewee, not only the economic climate, but also the mindset of many business leaders have changed over time: “Companies are already talking about these issues and seeing them as important to a much greater extent than they were a decade ago” in other words, “gender was not the “hot topic” that it is today”. 

A similar account comes from the other UN partner of the WEPs: The project manager of the WEPs at the UNGCO notes how “There are two sides to it: One the one hand, some companies might be under stress in prioritizing and that might not necessarily be the WEPs that are prioritized. But on the other hand, I think the broader support for corporate sustainability and the need for it is definitely there”. The interviewee thus addresses companies’ sense of responsibility and argues that: “The lack of responsibility that caused the financial crisis is definitely something that I hope will positively impact corporate sustainability more broadly as we move forward”. However, the UNGCO also acknowledge that despite positive impacts in the long run “I’m certain that there have been cases where companies have had to prioritize because they have been dealing with all sorts of crisis”.

Although none of the Danish WEPs signatories was specifically questioned about the consequences of the economic climate for their implementation of the WEPs, none of the interviewees seemed to take account of the financial climate as a factor in whether and how the WEPs was addressed and prioritized in the respective companies. This fact goes well in line with Greve and Hodge’s concluding remarks on rethinking PPPs. Although skepticism towards e.g. more traditional large-scale infrastructural PPPs as a consequence of the financial crisis occurs it is not necessarily so for all partnerships; “For other types of PPPs, there seem to be many societal challenges where innovative types of partnerships are in demand” (Greve and Hodge 2013, 220). The authors pinpoint a range of strategies and implication for companies’ responses to the current economy when partnering with public counterparts. But despite a reoccurring and inherent UN mistrust in partnering with the corporate sector, it seems that the WEPs has steered clear of any devastating consequences of contemporary financial landscape, both in terms of funding and
amount of signatories. However, there might still be a few implications of the financial crisis that has to be taken into account in relations to the WEPs. For instance, since the interviewees for this Thesis are all existing partners of the WEPs, there is a chance that companies have deliberately chosen to sign the WEPs regardless of the global financial situation. Nonetheless, it would be interesting to consider non-signatory companies since these might reason their lacking participation with the consequences of the crisis (and therefore the financial climate would have had an effect on the WEPs). Perhaps there could have been even more signatories (and signatories implementing accordingly) had the WEPs been launched in a favorable financial climate. This however remains as speculation as none of the interviewees represents this viewpoint.

On the positive side, and as noted by Greve and Hodge: “There is an increasing awareness of the potential of a more systematic transparency approach for PPPs” (Greve and Hodge 2013, 218). For the WEPs it could be argued that the issue of transparency is rather straightforward as there are no criteria for official reporting or accountability since the principles are strictly voluntary despite encouragement by UN agencies for companies to demonstrate an impact. On the contrary, it would be interesting to consider the consequences of this, because does a voluntary, network based and non-contractual partnership-structure really ensures transparency? And could transparency ensure legitimacy? Greve and Hodge argues that new forms of PPPs needs to evolve since “the legitimacy of old partnership forms is increasingly challenged” (2013, 217), thus on the one hand it could be argued that the WEPs could be seen as a new form of partnership in which the partners engage out of a moral motivation which might result in a greater chance of achieving real and genuine change. On the other hand, it could be claimed that the mere structure of the WEPs conflicts with the goal of being a legitimate partnership since no one is really accountable to others than themselves. In this way, the issue of performance also becomes apparent: To some extent, the doctrine of NPM and its advocacy for efficiency and effectiveness still seem relevant in considering the WEPs. Although no formal obligation for reporting exists, companies are continuously encouraged to demonstrate the impact of the principles. “The performance of PPPs is set to continue to be highly contested because of its inherent political structure” (Greve and Hodge 2013, 217), following this, due to the inherent political structure of the WEPs and the narrow goal of empowering women, the principles will most likely be challenged continuously until real and thorough impact has been displayed, turbulent times or not.
5.7 Concluding Remarks

By examining the research question, this chapter has revealed how the WEPs as a Transformational Partnership can be used in promoting women’s empowerment. The drawbacks of its network based structure however, is that the partners of the WEPs might not be held accountable for practices and implementation, since reporting on the initiative is not required, which has also been confirmed through interviews. It was shown how companies make use of very different implementation strategies, if implementation occurs at all. When considering the first two of the three research sub-questions, it was found that companies engage in the WEPs for multiple reasons, primarily as a consequence of the WEPs’ scope. A common motivation however, seemed to be a genuine desire to limit discrimination at the workplace. Finally, considering the third sub-question, it was noted how priorities among the UN partners and general interests of the private partners might not be perfectly aligned. On one hand, it appeared as if the UN remains skeptical towards private sector engagement, on the other, companies might not be motivated to implement the principles since the WEPs remains strictly voluntary. By contextualizing the WEPs to the current financial climate, it was argued that despite disfavoring financial conditions, the WEPs has been launched in a period where women’s issues could be seen as a trend. This might have contributed positively to the WEPs, since companies now seem more engaged in being associated with women’s empowerment. Therefore, the financial crisis did not seem to have affected the WEPs significantly.
6.0 Discussion

From the outset, this Thesis has been divided into two separate theoretical parts, both covering important aspects of the case in question, namely the WEPs. The previous analytical chapter has provided valuable insights in understanding the dynamics when various and often contrasting partners engages in a shared moral objective, but has also illuminated some of the obstacles when engaging in the rather narrow subject of women’s empowerment.

This chapter will re-address the research question as well as the three research sub-questions to provide a final account of how the WEPs can be understood as a partnership and to what extent the principles can be used in promoting women’s empowerment.

Relating the discussion to the methodological outset, it is the aim of this chapter to tie the critical realist perspective of the Thesis, to the theoretical analysis and empirical focus of the former chapters, and in doing so, revealing the various ‘domains’ of understanding, covering the WEPs. By sustaining the structure of the analysis, this more discursive part will firstly evaluate whether the WEPs can be thoroughly explained and understood through the UN TP approach. Secondly, the debate of whether the WEPs in fact empower women through corporate processes will be re-addressed. Finally, it will be considered how defined interests and thereby potential hierarchies of power within the partnership could detriment the achievement of the WEPs’ objectives. Alternative forms of communication among partners, which could lead to other ways of implementing and achieving the goal of the WEPs, will also be explored.

6.1 A Transformational Agenda

Throughout the analysis, the TP approach, used to consider the first part of the research question, has been valuable in understanding how the UN intents its partnership with the private sector to function. However, the approach has proved insufficient in explaining how various hierarchies of power or lack of implementation of the principles should be dealt with (see Figure 2). So in returning to the critical realist approach of the Thesis, the TP only allows an investigation of the empirical domain, considering the mental projection or interpretation of reality. Although the approach accommodates various forms of partnerships it does not manage to address how the WEPs, for instance can be seen as an organizational system which not only promote internal expectations among partners, but also develops shared commitments in a complex societal and international context. As noted in the analysis, the network-based structure of the WEPs and following lack of contractual obligations has limited the ability for any of the partners to maintain
or develop a shared set of expectations which could push the WEPs forward in obtaining the shared goal since none of the partnership can be held accountable to their actions. With the previously discussed absence of any integrated monitoring mechanisms, it could further be argued that the current partnership construction might not be preferable.

In acknowledging how reality consists of multiple layers of understanding and interpretation, it has though, through the analysis, been argued that the partners of the WEPs might affect each other in improving practices relating to the WEPs (See Andersen 2006). The TP approach could sharpen the partners’ sensitivity to their surrounding environment, but at the same time, the approach is advocating a form ‘dual mandate’ by arguing that companies should implement the WEPs as they have been formulated, but simultaneously encourage companies to be independent and creative while doing it. Thus, partnerships like the WEPs, are not simply placing a task upon partners to implement the principles rather, the partnership becomes a kind of policy formation becoming subject to their own strategic behavior, or conflicting interests as they partake in shaping the agenda of a partnership that will never be static. The WEPs could in this way be created and re-created, which somehow enhance the risk of resolution since interests, understandings and especially implementation continuously needs to be reinforced and aligned to ensure the validity and continued existence of the WEPs.

In the attempt to analyze the WEPs it remains crucial to take these underlying connotations into account since, according to critical realism, reality can only be realized through the social structures preceding an investigated phenomena. Theory will be helpful in achieving this, but the TP approach has nevertheless proven insufficient in addressing how women continue to be disfavored and disadvantaged regardless of the principal attributes of the partnership structure. The approach might thus be useful for practical purposes, but remains limited in providing a substantial or final conclusion of the WEPs.

6.2 Are the WEPs really Empowering Women?

Re-addressing the second point of the research question, the analytical chapter has outlined how the business case of the WEPs advocates empowering women as smart business. Through the seven principles, companies will be able to surge efficiency and increase their profit by engaging and utilizing the female workforce. Despite the obvious advantages of the WEPs business case, it nevertheless remains difficult to ignore the critique that women will only win in the short-run. In addition to the points described in the analysis, it could be argued that, since empowerment
through the WEPs inevitably is linked to efficiency, empowerment could become the responsibility of individual women rather than a company concern. However, criteria for success might not be as straightforward, and although it eventually comes down to ideology, it is questionable whether for instance deprived women are capable of empowering themselves? For instance, from the statistics of Japan’s female workforce, discouraging figures proves how women are still set back on a job market which is simply better suited to accommodate male preferences and behavior (if such a thing even exists). Also, since companies through the WEPs has no formal obligation to implement, the principles somehow holds in them a natural incentive for companies to cut corners and for example only chose to implement the principle(s) that are already in place (which seems common practice for many WEPs signatories). In this way, companies are allowed to display coherence without actually doing anything. It could thus be questioned whether the private sector is in fact ready and willing to empower women since the entire partnership is based on improving business practices with the added benefit of empower women along the way.

It remains difficult to determine the primary motivation for business to engage in the WEPs, especially since the interviewees for this Thesis are all located in Denmark. Nevertheless, by looking beyond the Danish context it is evident that some companies and even countries has adopted the WEPs as a way of ‘giving something back’. For example, the Kenyan based telecommunications company Safaricom has enhanced corporate efforts by offering “Fully equipped day-care facilities staffed by childcare professionals available for mothers at no charge and private, hygienic facilities are provided to allow for a safe and secure breastfeeding environment” (unwomen.org 2013). Such initiatives might not necessarily get women into the board of the company, but there is certainly a possibility that working mothers will be more likely to engage in the workforce for the benefit of women, their children and the company alike. In this way, the WEPs should perhaps not be regarded as much as an either/or arrangement, but rather a partnership gradually developing. The multifaceted company practices and interpretations of the WEPs, should thus not necessarily be seen as a theoretical drawback, rather it seems important to acknowledge how the various ways of implementing the principles only adds to the overall understanding of the empirical case. If all WEPs signatories would implement the principles in a non-discussable or standardized way, there would be no room for improvement or learning, nor would the realization of various ‘truths’ be evident. Signatory companies might thus be operating at different levels and although the WEPs are formulated with a shared goal in mind, there might be a certain rationale in the fact that companies are not held accountable for their actions in a UN
context, as long as they are doing something. It could even be argued that the WEPs hold the potential to reproduce new opportunities for the partners in ways of including and empower women.

In addition, the structure of the WEPs (as well as other voluntary partnerships), is designed in a way where companies’ lack of engagement easily could make the partnership dissolve. Genuine commitment thus seems the main factor keeping the partners together, but also the UNs’ acceptance that companies might not be working in the same pace or share the same priorities and concerns is important. Perhaps it is time to leave behind the skepticism toward private sector motives, and instead embrace the fact that at least some companies expose a candid compassion and acknowledge the importance of women’s empowerment all the way from the individual, through the corporation and to the global level.

6.3 Natural Hierarchies of Power
Considering the research sub-questions, it has been shown how some hierarchies might be inevitable in partnerships such as the WEPs: “partnering is not so straightforward because policy ethics and managerial ethics imply obligations that are not entirely the same” (Rosenau 2000, 218). In the case of the WEPs the partners might seem incompatible, especially considering their conflicting mandates, not only between the UN and business, but also amongst the UN agencies. However, the voluntary aspect of the principles that has been questioned throughout the analysis might in fact be the one thing tying the WEPs together. Since no-one is forced to sign the WEPs (or to implement them for that matter) the voluntary engagement of signatories is likely to generate a form of trust which could enhance the shared commitments among companies of the WEPs. Just as Machiavelli in his considerations of loyalty and trust notes; volunteers are always preferred, since anyone driven by voluntary commitment might set aside personal interests in achieving a societal interest and act out of loyalty to this obligation (Machiavelli 1994, 38). This commitment serves to illustrate how the partners of the WEPs might set aside potential inconsistencies out of loyalty to the shared moral obligation as an extension of their signature and in this way, granting both validity and legitimacy to the partnership.

Also, the chance of success for the WEPs might be furthered by the fact that the partnership does not encourage competition amongst partners, but rather advocate a positive-sum outcome where companies as well as women benefit from the principles. This fact could additionally foster trust amongst WEP signatories since all companies voluntarily engage in the framework despite
potentially conflicting interests. Neglecting the critique of how this win-win rhetoric’s and accounts of how the WEPs confuse individual rights with the ‘right’ to profit, there seems to be a positive correlation between the level of trust within a community and the likelihood of cooperation (Andersen 2006:233). Put differently, for partners to trust each other, and as a precondition for developing and promoting the WEPs agenda, it remains crucial that the company as well as the UN remain candid in the pursuit of empowering women. An important platform for this is the WEPs annual event that forges interpersonal trust among participants by sharing practices and experiences, which could serve as a source of inspiration to others in endorsing the WEPs.

During the research process it has proved increasingly difficult to address the final part of the overall research question, namely to what extent the WEPs can be used in promoting women’s empowerment. Firstly, it has been found that considering the process and terms that affect the WEPs might be more interesting than looking at whether the WEPs ensure women’s empowerment or not. Not only is it extremely complicated to determine what constitutes empowerment, and when it has been realized, also, since companies operate in such diverse ways and under such differentiated conditions generalization are almost impossible. Secondly, although critiques displaying how underlying societal and gendered structures are not addressed through the WEPs, no scholarly suggestions of how to actually address these structures has been put forward.

So, what does the future of the WEPs hold? Since the principles might not thoroughly address the gendered structures of the ‘system’, it is interesting to consider how reflections of the WEPs all emphasize the same thing: When confronting interviewees during the research process most seemed to emphasize the distressing need of the WEPs. However, as clearly noted by the focal point of the WEPs at UN Women: “The ultimate long-term goal would be not to have (to have) a separate set of principles on gender”. And the WEPs project manager of the UNGCO agrees: “You shouldn’t need a separate initiative on the side it should rather be part of it and really be integrated into everything that companies are doing”. These considerations might actually reflect how the WEPs do address or at least do away with the underlying gendered structures framing the principles. By specifying the long-term goal that gender should become a part of the common agenda, and not seen as a separate initiative, neither among businesses nor in the UN, the WEPs might have succeeded in breaking the ground of and getting the attention of a corporate sector which seldom is positively associated with women’s empowerment.
In evaluating the WEPs it has become increasingly evident how processes, conditions and levels of implementation more thoroughly, helps to clarify how the WEPs can be used in promoting women’s empowerment. It is thus not a question of whether the principles facilitate anti-discrimination, because they do. Rather it seems crucial to acknowledge how the composition of UN Women (with their thorough knowledge of women’s rights etc.) and the UNGCO (with a broad corporate sector network) forming a partnership, has a greater chance of realizing the seven principles of the WEPs than if they acted individually or worse, did nothing. From the limited (human as well and financial) resources available, it must be acknowledged how the WEPs have succeeded in drawing attention to a topic which was barely thought of only a decade ago. It could thus be questioned whether the WEPs are initiated with a final goal in mind (e.g. not having a separate set of principles) or whether the goal is actually the process of including an ever increasing number of businesses into the WEPs mindset. These points challenges the definition of the WEPs being successful: If the former is the case, then there could be a long (perhaps indefinite) way, but should the latter be the case, more narrow success criteria could be outlined, and through this, the WEPs has admittedly reached some targets by miles, solely by facilitating corporate discussions of women’s inclusion worldwide.
7.0 Conclusion

This Thesis set out to explore the Women’s Empowerment Principles initiative, launched in 2010, as a form of public-private (policy) partnership between two UN agencies, (UN Women and the UNGCO), and 594 signatory companies. The inductive research strategy has remained open to various interpretations and the critical realist approach has added important nuances in the attempt to answer the research question:

*How can the Women’s Empowerment Principles be explained and understood as a partnership and to what extent can the principles be used in promoting women’s empowerment?*

Also, the sub-questions have been designed to address the research question more thoroughly:

- What motivates the private sector to engage in the WEPs?
- What are the incentives for UN Women and the UNGCO to engage with the private sector?
- How can the potentially contrasting interests between the partners of the WEPs be aligned?

The three sub-questions, has allowed a more comprehensive exploration of the main question, and the importance of processes and more narrow criteria for success has been examined. By including two theoretical approaches, which are seldom aligned, it has been the hope to bring about a new perspective on how to facilitate women’s empowerment through a rather strict business rationale.

The first part of the Thesis, answering the first part of the research question (chapter 3), has focused on public-private partnerships, and it has been described how the boundaries between public and private are increasingly blurring. For instance, whereas public partners have gradually become subject to a private sector discourse of efficiency and performance, corporations are to a greater extent expected to reflect social responsibility and are held accountable for it. By focusing on the UN, it has further found that UN goals are increasingly aligned with this more conscious business behavior. Partnerships between the UN and business are thus thriving, and the WEPs are an example of this. Various definitions has been accounted for but the most suitable was the UN Transformational Partnership approach, advocating a multi-stakeholder, network based structure and focusing on the relational dimensions but also on the systemic challenges which needs to be addressed to ensure women’s empowerment.
The second part of the Thesis, focusing on the latter part of the research question (chapter 4), considered several Feminist theories and has been divided into a critical and a more business friendly approach. Through substantial statistical data and by using the metaphor of a labyrinth it has been illustrated how women continuously face discrimination, especially in the corporate world: By promoting "women as smart economics" the Womenomics approach advocates a business rationale, adopted by the WEPs partnership, which encourage corporations to invest in women as a profit generating strategy. This logic has been criticized and it has been questioned whether the UN’s increasingly business friendly approach might undermine the human rights agenda and potentially distort the objective of empowering women.

Through interviews with three Danish WEPs signatories as well as representatives from the two UN agencies, the analysis, focusing on the entire research question as well as the three sub-questions, has framed the WEPs and problematized the voluntary nature and following alignment of interests and priorities as a result of the partnership structure. It has been found that this, structure promoting moral obligation rather a contractually determined outcome, might strengthen the partnership since signatories willingly engage in the principles. The current reporting mechanism was however criticized as the WEPs signatories are currently not subject to any official scrutiny and the lack any monitoring mechanism, evaluating performance has been noticed. It has therefore been examined whether (national) legislation could ensure more thorough implementation; although some support has been found, the limited sample size impeded generalizations. The issue of role models has been elaborated upon, and it was noticed how individuals as well as companies can serve as a source of inspiration, promoting the WEPs agenda and partnership by motivating others to engage in women’s empowerment. Finally, the financial climate into which the WEPs was launched has been considered and although some companies might be strained by the turbulent times, it was the general belief that the WEPs would have experienced less support had the principles been launched sooner since women’s empowerment only within the past decade has experienced more substantial recognition.

By considering the WEPs as a partnership and in reviewing the extent to which the principles can be used in promoting women’s empowerment, the importance of process rather than an end goal has continuously been emphasized. Although it remains difficult to conclude whether the WEPs so far have succeeded it has been noted how the debate generated through the partnership along with the message of empowering women have spurred a more conscious mindset globally, benefitting women and businesses alike.
8.0 Strategic Opportunities

On a final note, and as an outcome of a six months research process, it would be interesting to gently consider some strategic considerations in furthering the promotion of the WEPs:

- A common denominator in most partnerships is the lack of resources. However, in the case of the WEPs, the rather unstable financing of the UNGCO (which only consists of donations) and the perhaps limited prioritization (which could be reflected in the budgetary concerns) at UN Women, serves as a severe hindrance in promoting the framework more consistently at national level. Increased funding could generate various strategic opportunities, such as enhancing the ‘brand value’ of the WEPs, even for larger companies. As of now, there might be a chance that the WEPs only appeal to frontrunners and also, it might also be easier for smaller companies to implement the WEPs as they are not operating in several often diverse markets.
  - It could be considered whether contributions to the WEPs should be made mandatory (and not just encouraged) for signatory companies. Although this could lead to a higher degree of business domination, it could also result in more genuine engagement, since signing the WEPs would come with a cost. This fact could serve as an incentive for companies to seek the benefits of the WEPs more fully.

- Given the current reporting structure, there might also be alternative ways of encouraging companies to report on their implementation. Since more thorough reporting could demonstrate the impact of the WEPs, funding might also be less of an issue if the effects of the WEPs could be ‘proved’.
  - Although it remains a mutually agreed decision not to develop a separate reporting mechanism it might be useful for companies to create a simple online reporting guidance, perhaps a ‘tick off’ function displaying what principles companies are focusing on and why. Not only would this provide a simple but effective mechanism for WEPs signatories to show their commitment, it would also provide consistency on company behavior which in the long run could demonstrate the overall impact of the WEPs.
  - Another opportunity would be to invite various NGOs to officially join the WEPs as part of an inherent monitoring mechanism. Not only would this add some legitimacy to the partnership, it would also provide much needed human resources without additional costs. Moreover, the inclusion of NGOs could also widen the...
international awareness of the principles, which might ensure more signatories in
the long run.
- It might also be relevant to reconsider the ‘recruiting process’ for potential WEPs
  signatories. The displayed geographical and sectoral division of signatories might signal an
  unintended inherent bias which should be addressed.
    o One idea could be to strategically promote the WEPs in the local network and
      national committees of the UNGCO and UN Women respectively, to ensure
      consistency and push forward a shared agenda. If the WEPs were more strategically
      promoted geographically, there might be a chance that the opportunities offered
      through the WEPs could also spread mouth-to-mouth and in this way include
      smaller, perhaps non-English speaking companies.
    o Also, companies serving as explicit role models could benefit the promotion of the
      WEPs. For instance, ‘Private Sector Champions’ could be selected at the WEPs
      Annual Event. These champions could then share their knowledge, achievements
      and benefits at wider corporate forums or in arenas such as the World Economic
      Forum in Davos (where gender is already part of the agenda).
- A final opportunity would be to integrate the WEPs more fully into the UN.
  o As part of the ‘Deliver as One’ agenda, or through the UN Global Compact, the
    WEPs could be promoted as an inherent part of both. Although this would require
    both human and financial capacity, the final goal of eliminating the WEPs as a
    separate set of principles could be achievable if the priority would consistent.
Literature


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metrics, +Harkness%22+%22for+the+iPad.+Key+features+include:+access+content+from+the+WDR+2012+in+multiple%22+&ots=F9ijM9wj5M&sig=LnZtjejEhd2Ibh6PuNCLEtjKGPeM.
We, business leaders from across the globe, express support for advancing equality between women and men to:

- Bring the broadest pool of talent to our endeavours;
- Further our companies’ competitiveness;
- Meet our corporate responsibility and sustainability commitments;
- Model behaviour within our companies that reflects the society we would like for our employees, fellow citizens and families;
- Encourage economic and social conditions that provide opportunities for women and men, girls and boys; and
- Foster sustainable development in the countries in which we operate.

Therefore, we welcome the provisions of the Women’s Empowerment Principles – Equality Means Business, produced and disseminated by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) and the United Nations Global Compact. The Principles present seven steps that business and other sectors can take to advance and empower women.

Equal treatment of women and men is not just the right thing to do – it is also good for business. The full participation of women in our enterprises and in the larger community makes sound business sense now and in the future. A broad concept of sustainability and corporate responsibility that embraces women’s empowerment as a key goal will benefit us all. The seven steps of the Women’s Empowerment Principles will help us realize these opportunities.

We encourage business leaders to join us and use the Principles as guidance for actions that we can all take in the workplace, marketplace and community to empower women and benefit our companies and societies. We will strive to use sex-disaggregated data in our sustainability reporting to communicate our progress to our own stakeholders.

Please join us.
Women’s Empowerment Principles – *Equality Means Business*

Please complete this form and return it to:
womens-empowerment-principles@unglobalcompact.org

Please let us know if you have any questions:
- Laraine Mills (laraine.mills@unwomen.org; +1.646.781.4467)
- Lauren Gula (gulal@unglobalcompact.org; +1.212.963.1566)

COMPANY

Name
Industry/Sector
Country
City and Province
No. of Employees

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Prefix (Mr.; Ms.; etc)
First/Given Name
Last/Family Name
Full Job Title
Signature

PRIMARY CONTACT PERSON

Prefix (Mr.; Ms.; etc)
First/Given Name
Last/Family Name
Full Job Title
Email
Telephone

*** Please complete the Engaging with the WEPs form on page 3.
The feedback received will inform activities, topics and reflect company priorities.
1. CEO QUOTE (optional)

Please provide a quote from your CEO about the reasons she/he signed the CEO Statement of Support and why women’s empowerment is a company priority. The quote will be included with WEPs materials, both web-based and hard copy, to highlight the company’s commitment.

2. EXAMPLE OF POLICY, PRACTICE OR INITIATIVE (optional)

Please provide an example of, or link to, one or more of your policies, practices or initiatives relevant to gender equality and women’s empowerment. The examples will be included in our publication Companies Leading the Way included with WEPs materials, both web-based and hard copy, to highlight the company’s commitment.

3. AREAS OF INTEREST

Please indicate any areas of particular interest to help us to arrange events and other activities to assist with implementation of the WEPs (e.g. guidance on reporting, equal pay for equal work, value chain, community initiatives etc):
4. VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTION

The WEPs are a tool available to all companies free of charge. Global Compact participants that sign the CEO Statement of Support automatically contribute to the growth and sustainability of the WEPs initiative through their annual contribution to the Global Compact, which provides the Secretariat for the Women's Empowerment Principles. Companies that are not currently participants in the Global Compact are encouraged to consider joining in an effort to broaden their understanding and approach to corporate sustainability. For information on how to participate in the Global Compact, please see here or contact Lauren Gula (gulal@unglobalcompact.org).

Alternatively, companies that are not participants in the Global Compact, but are interested in signing the CEO Statement of Support for the Women's Empowerment Principles, are encouraged to make an annual contribution to help support the activities and efforts of the Women’s Empowerment Principles initiative at the global level. Suggested annual contributions are USD 5,000 for large companies*, USD 2,500 for medium sized companies** and USD 500 for small companies. Annual contributions are payable to the Foundation for the Global Compact. Please indicate if the Foundation may send the indicated contact person an invoice and, if so, for what amount. If your company would like to make an in-kind contribution, please contact Lauren Gula (gulal@unglobalcompact.org).

* A large company has > USD 250 million in annual sales/revenue
** A medium sized company has between USD 50 million and USD 250 million in annual sales/revenue

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Establish high-level corporate leadership for gender equality.

2 Treat all women and men fairly at work – respect and support human rights and nondiscrimination.

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

4 Promote education, training and professional development for women.

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

6 Promote equality through community initiatives and advocacy.

7 Measure and publicly report on progress to achieve gender equality.
Acknowledgements

The Women’s Empowerment Principles — Equality Means Business initiative, launched in March 2010, is grateful to many stakeholders from business, civil society, international organizations and governments for their engagement enabling the effort to take root in many companies and constituencies.

The Women’s Empowerment Principles partnership team consists of:

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WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT PRINCIPLES

EQUALITY MEANS BUSINESS

A Partnership Initiative of UN Women and the UN Global Compact Office

Second Edition 2011
Empowering women to participate fully in economic life across all sectors and throughout all levels of economic activity is essential to:

- Build strong economies;
- Establish more stable and just societies;
- Achieve internationally-agreed goals for development, sustainability and human rights;
- Improve quality of life for women, men, families and communities; and
- Propel businesses’ operations and goals.

Yet, ensuring the inclusion of women’s talents, skills, experience and energies requires intentional actions and deliberate policies. The Women’s Empowerment Principles, a partnership initiative of UN Women and UN Global Compact (UNGC), provide a set of considerations to help the private sector focus on key elements integral to promoting gender equality in the workplace, marketplace and community.

Enhancing openness and inclusion throughout corporate policies and operations requires techniques, tools and practices that bring results. The Women’s Empowerment Principles, forged through an international multi-stakeholder consultative process, provide a “gender lens” through which business can survey and analyze current practices, benchmarks and reporting practices.

Informed by real-life business practices, the Principles help companies tailor existing policies and programmes —or establish needed new ones—to realize women’s empowerment. The Principles also reflect the interests of governments and civil society and support interactions among stakeholders as achieving gender equality requires the participation of all actors. As a leader in gender equality, UN Women brings decades of experience to this partnership effort with the UN Global Compact, the world’s largest corporate citizenship initiative with more than 8,000 business participants and other stakeholders involved in more than 135 countries.

In an increasingly globalized and interconnected world, utilizing all social and economic assets is crucial for success. Yet, despite progress, women continue to confront discrimination, marginalization and exclusion, even though equality between men and women stands as a universal international precept—a fundamental and inviolable human right. Nearly all countries have affirmed this value through their recognition of the standards contained in international human rights treaties, which articulate for states a broad range of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. Distinctive documents highlight a spectrum of state responsibilities and human rights protections for women, indigenous peoples, children, workers and people with disabilities. Additionally, internationally agreed-on documents such as the Beijing Platform for Action adopted by all 189 countries at the UN Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 and the Millennium Declaration adopted by 189 countries in 2000, contribute to the overarching human rights framework.¹

These international standards illuminate our common aspiration for a life where the doors of opportunity are open to all. Where people can live free from violence, exercise legal redress and expect states to live up to their obligations to respect and protect the human rights of women, men and children and provide appropriate government services such as education and health.

These Conventions inform national law and help shape common values adopted by institutions throughout the world. Business leaders, working in close association with their peers, with governments, nongovernmental organizations and the United Nations², seek to apply these international standards that uphold an individual’s rights through their specifically designed policies and programmes. Their corporate commitment, reflected through the company’s mission statement and supported through public reporting on policies and practices, attests to the growing realization of how important these values are to business and their communities.³

While much has been accomplished through the integration of principles and actions on corporate responsibility, diversity and inclusion, the full participation of women throughout the private sector – from the CEO’s office
to the factory floor to the supply chain – remains unfulfilled. Current research demonstrating that gender diversity helps business perform better signals that self interest and common interest can come together. UN Women, the UN Global Compact, other leading UN agencies, the World Bank and the World Economic Forum, reinforce these findings. Governments also recognize that women’s inclusion drives development, and acknowledge that achieving the Millennium Development Goals and national economic and development plans requires rapidly moving towards gender equality.

In a globally interdependent political, social and economic environment, partnerships play an increasingly vital role to:

- Create a vibrant business environment involving a broad spectrum of actors, collaborators, contributors and innovators to open opportunities for women and men; and
- Enable the active and interactive participation of governments, international financial institutions, the private sector, investors, nongovernmental organizations, academia and professional organizations to work together.

In the spirit of partnership, UN Women and the UN Global Compact offer the Women’s Empowerment Principles in the hope that using them as a targeted “gender lens” inspires and intensifies the efforts to bring women in at all levels. 

*Equality does mean business.*
Women’s Empowerment

1. Leadership Promotes Gender Equality
   - 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.

2. Equal Opportunity, Inclusion and Nondiscrimination
   - 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% or greater – in decision-making and governance at all levels and across all business areas.
   - Offer flexible work options, leave and re-entry opportunities to positions of equal pay and status.
   - Support access to child and dependent care by providing services, resources and information to both women and men.

3. Health, Safety and Freedom from Violence
   - Taking into account differential impacts on women and men, provide safe working conditions and protection from exposure to hazardous materials and disclose potential risks, including to reproductive health.
   - Establish a zero-tolerance policy towards 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 counseling for themselves and their dependents.
   - In consultation with employees, identify and address security issues, including the safety of women traveling 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.
Principles

4 Education and Training
- Invest in workplace policies and programmes that open avenues for advancement of women at all levels and across all business areas, and encourage women to enter nontraditional job fields.
- Ensure equal access to all company-supported education and training programmes, including literacy classes, vocational and information technology training.
- Provide equal opportunities for formal and informal networking and mentoring.
- Articulate the company’s business case for women’s empowerment and the positive impact of inclusion for men as well as women.

5 Enterprise Development, Supply Chain and Marketing Practices
- Expand business relationships with women-owned enterprises, including small businesses, and women entrepreneurs.
- Support gender-sensitive solutions to credit and lending barriers.
- Ask business partners and peers to respect the company’s commitment to advancing equality and inclusion.
- Respect the dignity of women in all marketing and other company materials.
- Ensure that company products, services and facilities are not used for human trafficking and/or labour or sexual exploitation.

6 Community Leadership and Engagement
- Lead by example – showcase company commitment to gender equality and women’s empowerment.
- Leverage influence, alone or in partnership, to advocate for gender equality and collaborate with business partners, suppliers and community leaders to promote inclusion.

7 Transparency, Measuring and Reporting
- Make public the company policies and implementation plan for promoting gender equality.
- Establish benchmarks that quantify inclusion of women at all levels.
- Measure and report on progress, both internally and externally, using data disaggregated by sex.
- Incorporate gender markers into ongoing reporting obligations.
Principles into Practice:

Companies from around the world already furnish concrete examples of how they advance women’s empowerment. The examples that follow, matched to each of the seven distinct Women’s Empowerment Principles, showcase actions and policies to learn from and emulate; they derive from the large collection of company-submitted examples titled, Companies Leading the Way: Putting the Principles into Practice.

1 **Leadership Promotes Gender Equality**
   - An international mining group headquartered in the UK, commissioned a resource guide on how to engage women and community groups as a major policy directive of its business operations.
   - A company assessment at the highest level by a global accounting and consulting firm determined that the company was losing out on business by failing to attract and retain highly skilled female professionals and, on the basis of these findings, worked to change company culture and policies through leadership and board involvement.
   - The leadership of an East Asian apparel manufacturer implemented an integrated, comprehensive approach to women’s empowerment through programmes recognizing female employees’ accomplishments and supporting women’s advancement in the company through wide-ranging education, training and safety initiatives.

2 **Equal Opportunity, Inclusion and Nondiscrimination**
   - To retain and attract more qualified women, an Eastern European microfinance group initiated a broad-based data collection and analysis exercise, followed up with recommendations on the treatment of its female employees.
   - In an effort to close gender-based pay gaps, a global insurance group dedicated 1.25 million euros over three years.
   - A large financial services company in Australia offers a parental leave policy that provides a total of two years parental leave for the primary care giver, which can be taken flexibly, rather than on a full-time basis.
   - To support diversity and inclusion, a multinational steel company established a special committee comprised of management and women workers that identifies concerns of female employees and in response organizes trainings and programmes.

3 **Health, Safety and Freedom from Violence**
   - Building on a company-initiated study to determine the economic benefits to companies of employee health awareness, a large apparel company partners with health education professionals to offer trainings to employees on reproductive and maternal health, disease prevention and access to care.
   - Recognizing the need to support working parents, a Kenyan communications company offers free on-site day care and an in-house physician, in addition to comprehensive medical coverage that includes pre- and post-natal care.
   - Two Spanish companies offer victims of domestic violence job placement services specifically tailored to their needs to ease transition to the workplace.
   - A Sri Lankan apparel manufacturer demonstrates its commitment to creating and maintaining a safe and healthy work environment – and recognition of the differential needs of its female and male employees – through a range of targeted policies and programmes, including special care for pregnant employees, and systematic risk assessments and monitoring of its plants, processes and equipment.
Company Examples

4 Education and Training

■ To open opportunities for women’s career advancement in IT fields, a US-based multinational technology company maintains strategic partnerships with women’s organizations in many of the countries where it operates, to promote education and training and recognize women’s accomplishments in IT.

■ A large European airline company reaches out to youth through education projects to break down the barriers that traditionally limit women to certain jobs in the industry and men to others.

■ A large financial services company in Australia offers numerous initiatives aimed at supporting women in business, including an online platform to help Australian women connect with other women in business internationally to share information, research and career advice.

■ A Chinese international transport company established special employee committees to identify and design programmes and information tailored to the distinct needs and interests of female workers.

5 Enterprise Development, Supply Chain and Marketing Practices

■ Recognizing the expanding role of women entrepreneurs, a large UK-based bank launched specialized financial services, microfinance opportunities and business loans and also provides an online resource center for women entrepreneurs running small and medium-sized enterprises.

■ A Swedish manufacturer helps women producers of raw materials in developing countries to trade directly with the manufacturer, thus improving their income by reducing the number of intermediaries in the supply chain.

■ To make the scope of violence against women visible to an international public, a global advertising company partnered with a UN organization to develop a public awareness campaign using television and the internet.

6 Community Leadership and Engagement

■ A large international cosmetics company launched and sold products to raise funds for community-based organizations working to end domestic violence around the world.

■ A multinational mining company with operations in Ghana implemented a gender mainstreaming programme to encourage female employees to assume greater responsibility within the mine and connect to the local community.

■ A US-based multinational apparel manufacturer awards grants to community-based organizations working to empower women in localities where it does business.

7 Transparency, Measuring and Reporting

■ A mid-sized Israeli fashion company became the first of its size in Israel to voluntarily publicize a Social and Environmental Responsibility Report reflecting its commitment to gender equality.

■ A Spanish financial institution publicizes its commitment to equal opportunity and inclusion on its website and regularly undergoes external equality diagnostics validated by an autonomous government body.

■ A South African mining company includes a detailed breakdown of employment by gender and race per occupational level in its sustainability reporting.

■ Two Australian companies—one banking, one consulting—use the seven Women’s Empowerment Principles as a gender equality report guide.
The following suggestions align with each of the seven Women’s Empowerment Principles and indicate approaches on how to make and measure progress. However, the most powerful assessment tools derive from an organization’s own culture and objectives, matched with a clear measurement framework. While we share common goals, the routes to get there will, by necessity, be diverse.

### 1 Leadership Promotes Gender Equality

Define clearly company’s strategic case for advancing gender equality within the organization and its field.

Establish a high-level task force to identify priority areas, establish benchmarks and monitor company progress.

Include company-wide goals for progress towards gender equality in job descriptions and performance reviews.

**THINGS TO CONSIDER...**

- Is the stated commitment to advancing equality and promoting nondiscrimination and fairness prominently featured on the company’s website, in company recruiting materials and corporate sustainability reports?
- Is there a designated board-level individual who champions the organization’s gender equality policies and plans?
- Are there trainings, including for male leaders, on the importance of women’s participation and inclusion?
- Does the company’s annual report or sustainability report include leadership statements on reaching gender equality goals?

### 2 Equal Opportunity, Inclusion and Nondiscrimination

Prominently publicize an explicit company statement that prohibits gender-based discrimination in hiring, retention policies, promotion, salaries and benefits.

Design recruitment initiatives that reach out to more women.

Review and analyze remuneration of all employees by gender, employee category and job title.

Ensure equal opportunities for women to lead on important assignments and task forces.

Survey employees to elicit the views of women and men towards company policies on equal opportunity, inclusion, nondiscrimination and retention.

**THINGS TO CONSIDER...**

- Are sufficient numbers of women – 30 percent or greater – being recruited and interviewed? Do interview panels have sufficient numbers of women participating?
- What is the retention rate for female employees by employee category and job title compared to male employees?
- Has the company designed flexible work options that incorporate the specific and different needs of women and men?
- Are there accessible channels for filing grievances on gender-based discrimination, harassment and violence?

### 3 Health, Safety and Freedom from Violence

Prominently publicize the company’s zero tolerance policy and provide ongoing training.

Undertake a gender-sensitive inventory of health and safety conditions.

Survey employees to elicit the views of women and men on health, safety and security issues.

Tailor company health and safety policies to serve the distinctive concerns and needs of women and men, including pregnant women, people with HIV/AIDS, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups and provide the resources to implement them.

**THINGS TO CONSIDER...**

- Are safety and other equipment the appropriate size for both women and men?
- Are there separate toilets and, if necessary, changing facilities for both women and men?
4 Education and Training

Train and educate employees, particularly male staff, on the company’s business case for women’s empowerment.

Offer career clinics and mentoring programmes for women’s career development at all stages.

Promote training programmes tailored for women.

**THINGS TO CONSIDER...**
- What is the distribution between women and men of training and professional development opportunities?
- How many hours of training do women and men participate in annually, analyzed by job category and title?
- Are the demands of employees’ family roles considered when scheduling trainings and education programmes?

5 Enterprise Development, Supply Chain and Marketing Practices

Prominently publicize an executive level policy statement on the organization’s support for gender equality practices in its supply chain.

Identify a ‘women’s enterprise champion’ within the organization to target women-owned enterprises and help develop their capacity to become quality suppliers.

Request information from current and potential suppliers on their gender and diversity policies and include these in criteria for business selection.

**THINGS TO CONSIDER...**
- Does the company perform analyses of its existing supply chain to establish the baseline number of suppliers that are women-owned enterprises?
- How many of the company’s suppliers have gender equality policies and programmes?
- What is the ratio of women-owned enterprises compared to other suppliers?
- How does the company record complaints regarding its portrayal of women and girls in marketing and other public materials, and how does it act on these concerns?

6 Community Leadership and Engagement

Define company community engagement initiatives that empower women and girls.

Encourage company executives to undertake community consultations with local leaders—women and men—to establish strong ties and programmes that benefit all community members.

Craft a community impact analysis that marks the specific impacts on women and girls when establishing or expanding presence in a community.

**THINGS TO CONSIDER...**
- What initiatives are supported by the company to promote equality in the community and how many women and girls, men and boys do they reach?
- Does the company survey participants through focus groups or written comments for feedback?
- Does the company review its criteria and policies that determine community engagement activities against results and community feedback?
- Are women’s contributions to their communities recognized and publicized?

7 Transparency, Measuring and Reporting

Report annually, by department, on company gender equality plans and policies, using established benchmarks.

Publicize findings on company efforts towards inclusion and advancing women through all appropriate channels and pre-existing reporting obligations.

Include monitoring and evaluation of company gender equality goals into ongoing performance indicators.

**THINGS TO CONSIDER...**
- Does tracking along the benchmarks for advancing women demonstrate that the company is moving positively?
- What opportunities exist throughout the company for review, analysis and discussion of performance?
Between 40% and 50% of women in the European Union reported some form of sexual harassment in the workplace.8

■ The cost of intimate partner violence in the United States alone exceeds US$5.8 billion per year: US$4.1 billion is for direct medical and health care services, while productivity losses account for nearly US$1.8 billion.9

■ In Canada, a 1995 study estimated the annual direct costs of violence against women to be approximately Can$1.17 billion a year. A 2004 study in the United Kingdom estimated the total direct and indirect costs of domestic violence, including pain and suffering, to be £23 billion per year or £440 per person.10

■ A 2011 report from the International Labour Organization (ILO) and Asian Development Bank (ADB) revealed that a gender equality gap in employment rates for women as compared to men cost Asia $47 billion annually – fully 45% of women remained outside the workplace compared to 19% of men.14

■ In 2007, Goldman Sachs reported that different countries and regions of the world could dramatically increase GDP simply by reducing the gap in employment rates between men and women: the Eurozone could increase GDP by 13%; Japan by 16%; the US by 9%.15

Women and Education

■ About two-thirds of the estimated 776 million adults – or 16% of the world’s adult population – who lack basic literacy skill are women.16 In developing countries, nearly 1 out of 5 girls who enroll in primary school does not complete her primary education.

■ The Women’s Learning Partnership (WLP) estimates that worldwide, for every year beyond fourth grade that girls attend school, wages rise 20%, child deaths drop 10% and family size drops 20%.17
Gender Terms

Empowerment
Empowerment means that people - both women and men – can take control over their lives: set their own agendas, gain skills (or have their own skills and knowledge recognized), increase self-confidence, solve problems, and develop self-reliance. It is both a process and an outcome.

Gender
Gender refers to the array of socially constructed roles and relationships, personality traits, attitudes, behaviours, values, relative power and influence that society ascribes to the two sexes on a differential basis. Whereas biological sex is determined by genetic and anatomical characteristics, gender is an acquired identity that is learned, changes over time, and varies widely within and across cultures. Gender is relational and refers not simply to women or men but to the relationship between them.

Sex
Sex refers to the biological characteristics that define humans as female or male. These sets of biological characteristics are not mutually exclusive as there are individuals who possess both, but these characteristics generally differentiate humans as females and males.

Gender Equality
Gender equality describes the concept that all human beings, both women and men, are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations set by stereotypes, rigid gender roles, or prejudices. Gender equality means that the different behaviours, aspirations and needs of women and men are considered, valued and favoured equally. It does not mean that women and men have to become the same, but that their rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born female or male.

Gender Equity
Gender equity means that women and men are treated fairly according to their respective needs. This may include equal treatment or treatment that is different but considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities. In the development context, a gender equity goal often requires built-in measures to compensate for the historical and social disadvantages of women.

Gender Perspective/“Gender Lens”
A gender perspective/“gender lens” can be defined as a focus that brings a framework of analysis in order to assess how women and men affect and are affected differently by policies, programmes, projects and activities. It enables recognition that relationships between women and men can vary depending on the context. A gender perspective takes into account gender roles, social and economic relationships and needs, access to resources, and other constraints and opportunities imposed by society or culture, age, religion, and/or ethnicity on both women and men.

Gender Analysis
Gender analysis is a systematic examination of the different impacts of development, policies, programmes and legislation on women and men that entails, first and foremost, collecting sex-disaggregated data and gender-sensitive information about the population concerned. Gender analysis can also include the examination of the multiple ways in which women and men, as social actors, engage in strategies to transform existing roles, relationships, and processes in their own interest and in the interest of others.

Gender-Sensitive Indicator
An indicator is a pointer. It can be a measurement, a number, a fact, an opinion or a perception that focuses on a specific condition or situation, and measures changes in that condition or situation over time. The difference between an indicator and a statistic is that indicators should involve comparison with a norm. Gender-sensitive indicators measure gender-related changes in society over time; they provide a close look at the results of targeted gender-based initiatives and actions.

Sex-Disaggregated Data
Sex-disaggregated data can be defined as data that is collected and presented separately on women and men. It is quantitative statistical information on the differences and inequalities between women and men. There is widespread confusion over, and misuse of, the terms “gender-disaggregated data” and “sex-disaggregated data”. Data should necessarily be sex-disaggregated but not gender-disaggregated since females and males are counted according to their biological difference and not according to their social behaviours. The term gender-disaggregated data is frequently used, but it should be understood as sex-disaggregated data.

Gender Mainstreaming
Gender mainstreaming is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in any area and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women’s as well as men’s concerns and experiences an integral dimension in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and social spheres, such that inequality between women and men is not perpetuated.

Sources:
United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), 2004; UNESCO GENIA Toolkit for Promoting Gender Equality in Education; and ITC-ILO Training Module: Introduction to Gender Analysis and Gender-Sensitive Indicators Gender Campus, 2009
and the ILO library online Resource guide – genera variety of mechanisms. one example is the responsibility and sustainability reporting through global sustainability reporting communications on Progress (see: http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/-wrap/rapportages/).

Importantly, governments at the 1995 Fourth UN World Conference on Women in Beijing, laid out specific actions to attain the equality and empowerment standards set by CEDAW, in the Beijing Platform for Action. For more information on legal instruments and other relevant international standards of particular importance to women’s human rights and gender equality, including CEDAW and other treaty bodies, see: http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/plat1.htm.

Employees’ and workers’ rights are addressed by numerous international standards, conventions and recommendations of the International Labour Organization (ILO). While ILO instruments are applicable to both women and men, there are a number which are of specific interest for women workers. See the ILO Bureau for Gender Equality and the ILO Library online Resource Guide – Gender Equality in the World of Work: http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/library/resource/subject/gender.htm.

Founded in 2000, the UN Global Compact is a strategic policy initiative for businesses that are committed to aligning their operations and strategies with ten universally accepted principles in the areas of human rights, labour, environment and anti-corruption. See: www.unglobalcompact.org.

In 2005 the United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan appointed Professor John Ruggie as Special Representative on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises. The mandate includes identifying and clarifying standards of corporate responsibility and accountability with regard to human rights. https://www.un.org/.

Over the past 10 years, there has been an increase in business’ attention to corporate responsibility, and sustainability reporting through a variety of mechanisms. One example is the UN Global Compact requirement on annual Communications on Progress (see: http://www.unglobalcompact.org/CP/index.html). Another example is the global sustainability reporting framework developed by the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), which sets out principles and indicators that organizations can use to measure and report their economic, environmental and social performance. In 2008-09, the GRI worked with the International Finance Corporation (IFC) and the Asian Development Bank to develop the Sustainability Reporting, a practitioner’s guide to help organizations worldwide create opportunities for women, adopt best practices in sustainability reporting, and improve companies’ bottom lines. See: http://www.globalreporting.org/CurrentPri-orties/GenderandReporting/.

A recent report (January 2010) by McKinsey & Company, ‘The Business of Empowering Women’, presents a case for why and how the private sector can intensify its engagement in the economic empowerment of women in developing countries and emerging markets. The report draws on insights from interviews with more than 50 leaders and experts in the private and public sectors who focus on women’s empowerment, as well as findings from a global survey of nearly 2,300 senior private sector executives, among others. See: http://www.mckinsey.com/clientservice/Social_Sector/Our_practices/Economic_Development/.


Additional examples supporting the business case for gender equality include two recent studies on gender diversity and corporate performance by McKinsey and Company, conducted in partnership with the Women’s Forum for the Economy & Society. Their research demonstrated the link between the presence of women in corporate management teams and companies’ organizational and financial performance, suggesting that the companies where women are most strongly represented at board or top-management level are also the companies that perform best. Further research on female leadership showed that behaviors more often applied by women reinforce a company’s organizational performance on several dimensions, and will be critical to meet the expected challenges companies will face over the coming years. See ‘Women Matter: Gender diversity, a corporate performance driver’ (2007) and ‘Women Matter 2: Female leadership, a competitive edge for the future’ (2008).


The “multiplier effect” of gender equality has been increasingly acknowledged. Studies continue to show that lowering the social, economic and political barriers faced by women and girls extends education, decreases child mortality and vulnerability to HIV and AIDS. Women’s greater labour force participation reduces poverty through increased productivity and earnings. Conversely, systematic discrimination against women and girls makes it impossible for many to meet the poverty and other targets of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Millennium Development Goal 3 is to promote gender equality and empower women, and is one of eight MDGs drawn from the Millennium Declaration, which was adopted by 189 Governments in 2000. The MDGs address the world’s main development challenges, and have time-bound and measurable targets accompanied by indicators for monitoring progress, with a timeline for achievement by 2015. Growing concern that the MDGs will not be met is accompanied by growing recognition that achievement of gender equality is critical to achievement of all other MDGs. See: http://www.undg.org/unsd/mdg/Resources/Static/Products/Prog-ress2008/MDG_GenderProgress_Chart_2008 15.pdf. See also ‘The Importance of Sex’, The Economist, April 2006; and ‘Financing Gender Equality is Financing Development’, UNIFEM Discussion Paper, 2008.

WHERE WOMEN STAND: FACTS AND FIGURES


3 Goldman Sachs Group, Inc. 2007. ‘Gender Inequality, Growth and Global Aging’

The Women's Empowerment Principles’ CEO Statement of Support (see below) enables business leaders to commit publicly to align company policies to advance gender equality. By signing, CEOs signal their intention to integrate and implement the Women’s Empowerment Principles from the board room, to the workplace, along the supply chain to the community.

We, business leaders from across the globe, express support for advancing equality between women and men to:

- Bring the broadest pool of talent to our endeavours;
- Further our companies’ competitiveness;
- Meet our corporate responsibility and sustainability commitments;
- Model behaviour within our companies that reflects the society we would like for our employees, fellow citizens and families;
- Encourage economic and social conditions that provide opportunities for women and men, girls and boys; and
- Foster sustainable development in the countries in which we operate.

Therefore, we welcome the provisions of the Women’s Empowerment Principles – Equality Means Business, produced and disseminated by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) and the United Nations Global Compact. The Principles present seven steps that business and other sectors can take to advance and empower women.

Equal treatment of women and men is not just the right thing to do – it is also good for business. The full participation of women in our enterprises and in the larger community makes sound business sense now and in the future. A broad concept of sustainability and corporate responsibility that embraces women’s empowerment as a key goal will benefit us all. The seven steps of the Women’s Empowerment Principles will help us realize these opportunities.

We encourage business leaders to join us and use the Principles as guidance for actions that we can all take in the workplace, marketplace and community to empower women and benefit our companies and societies. We will strive to use sex-disaggregated data in our sustainability reporting to communicate our progress to our own stakeholders.

Please join us.

The seven steps of the Women’s Empowerment Principles will help you:

1. Do business with companies that treat women fairly.
2. Provide opportunities for women and men, girls and boys.
3. Promote women’s leadership.
4. Model behaviour within your companies that reflects society.
5. Encourage social and economic conditions that support women.
6. Foster sustainable development in the countries where you operate.
7. Prove commitment to these Principles.

Please join us.

The number of WEPs signing companies continues to grow. The frequently updated list is available at: http://goo.gl/dbv08.

Continued growth is the frequently updated list is available at: http://www.unwomen.org. www.unglobalcompact.org

The number of WEPs signing companies continues to grow. The frequently updated list is available at: http://www.womenempowerment-principles.org
“We need all stakeholders, and in particular, we need solid linkages with the private sector, as drivers of innovation, providers of essential capital, job creators and employers. UN Women together with the UN Global Compact launched the Women’s Empowerment Principles to do just that — providing a seven-step blueprint to empower women in the workplace, the marketplace and the community. They offer a tool for a results-based partnership with the global and national business community, and they align with the evidence that empowering women is a strategy for a healthier bottom line.”

MICHICLE BACHELET, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, UN WOMEN

“The Women’s Empowerment Principles are subtitled Equality Means Business because the full participation of women benefits business, and indeed, all of us. Informed by leading businesses’ policies and practices from different sectors and around the world, the Principles offer a practical approach to advance women, and point the way to a future that is both more prosperous and more fair for everyone.”

GEORG KELL, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, UN GLOBAL COMPACT OFFICE

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. www.unwomen.org

Launched in 2000, the United Nations Global Compact is both a policy platform and a practical framework for companies that are committed to sustainability and responsible business practices. As a multi-stakeholder leadership initiative, it seeks to align business operations and strategies with ten universally accepted principles in the areas of human rights, labour, environment and anti-corruption and to catalyze actions in support of broader UN goals. With over 7,000 signatories in more than 135 countries, it is the world’s largest voluntary corporate responsibility initiative. www.unglobalcompact.org

The Women’s Empowerment Principles, the product of a partnership between UN Women and the UN Global Compact informed by an international multi-stakeholder consultation, are adapted from the Calvert Women’s Principles®. The Calvert Women’s Principles were originally developed in partnership with UNIFEM (now a part of UN Women) and launched in 2004 as the first global corporate code of conduct focused exclusively on empowering, advancing and investing in women worldwide.