



Making Progress: Sri Lankan Businesses Advance Gender Equality at the Workplace

A SHEWORKS SRI LANKA PRIVATE SECTOR PARTNERSHIP

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ARPICO	Richard Pieris & Company PLC
CBL	Ceylon Biscuits Limited
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CMC	Colombo Municipal Council
COO	Chief Operating Officer
CSE	Colombo Stock Exchange
CSR	Corporate social responsibility
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs
DIMO	Diesel & Motor Engineering PLC
EDGE	Economic Dividends for Gender Equality
ERGs	Employee Resource Groups
FMCGs	Fast-Moving Consumer Goods
GBAW	Global Banking Alliance for Women
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ICTA	Information and Communication Technology Agency
IDEVAW	Elimination of Violence Against Women
IFC	International Finance Corporation
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IT	Information Technology
JKH	John Keells Holdings PLC
LSEG	London Stock Exchange Group
MSME	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
NDB	National Development Bank PLC
SAGT	South Asia Gateway Terminals
SC	Standard Chartered Bank
SDB	SANASA Development Bank
SLASSCOM	The Sri Lanka Association of Software and Services Companies
SLPHC	Population and Housing Census
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprises
SSE	Sustainable Stock Exchanges
SUN	Scaling Up Nutrition
WAVE	Working Against Violence through Education
WEF	World Economic Forum
WHO	World Health Organization
WiW	Women in Work

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Overview of SheWorks Sri Lanka Partnership

While the private sector is increasingly recognizing that advancing gender equality means better talent, higher productivity, more customers, and a stronger bottom line, progress remains slow. Sri Lanka could raise its gross domestic product (GDP) by as much as 20 percent in the long run by closing the gender gap in the workforce.² For Sri Lanka's economy to grow, it needs to maximize the potential of its workforce. Despite improved educational and health outcomes, women's participation in Sri Lanka's labor force remains stubbornly low at only 36 percent, only half that of male participation at 76 percent.³

A recent World Bank report suggests the following main factors as impediments to women's participation in Sri Lanka's paid workforce: marriage, childrearing, and related household chores that fall disproportionately on women.⁴ According to the findings of this research, marriage drastically lowers women's odds of becoming a paid employee by 26 percent, while for men it slightly increases the odds, by 2.5 percent. In addition to this, having a child under the age of 5 in the household makes women 7.4 percent less likely to join the labor force than women without young children.⁵

The intervention of the private sector is essential for meeting this pressing employment challenge. Companies across a range of sectors, including projected growth sectors such as Tourism and Information Technology have noted that they need greater access to skilled labor. This exemplifies a case for business and markets to accelerate the pace of reforms towards gender parity. The key is to identify gender-smart solutions that generate opportunities for women and men while also contributing to companies' bottom lines, productivity, and growth.

The IFC-led *SheWorks* Sri Lanka partnership is a collaboration of 18 leading employers across different industries, sharing their experiences and good practices to boost women's private sector participation by identifying and implementing gender-smart solutions that are good for business, employees and communities. Priority sectors such as Banking, Finance & Insurance, Garments and Apparel, Tourism, Information Technology were included, as their vital importance to the economy influences markets, and would lead to a demonstration effect within the country.

The *SheWorks* Sri Lanka Secretariat (housed in IFC) helps member companies further establish, operationalize and measure the business case for gender-smart workplace solutions by providing knowledge, methodologies and frameworks. This technical expertise is based on IFC's ongoing global projects and research on employer-supported women's employment strategies. IFC coordinates this commitment and hosts periodic face-to-face or online seminars (once in two months), provides communications opportunities for members, and offers a local and global platform to share and celebrate progress. Every *SheWorks* Sri Lanka seminar is held at a different member company's office (a request that came from the members themselves) where the members not only learn from each other, but are also exposed to a variety of organizational cultures.

As a prerequisite to join the *SheWorks* Sri Lanka partnership, each of the members was requested to make a minimum of three gender-smart commitments and to stretch themselves to do more to support their employees. In Sri Lanka, the enthusiasm was abundant, with companies having chosen to go beyond the requirement and having on average chosen about 5 commitments per company. These Commitments to Action recognize that companies are at different stages of their journey to support women employees, and that all steps taken to advance a company's diversity agenda have been immensely valuable.

There are six commitment categories in total, including sub-commitments, listed in detail below:

COMMITMENT 01



Increase Women's Business Leadership

- Offering a company-wide mentorship/sponsorship or leadership program
- Strengthening/building an effective Employee Resource Group/Women's Network

**22 COMMITMENTS
MADE BY 16 COMPANIES**

**ACHIEVED 40%
IN PROGRESS 32%**

COMMITMENT 02



Ensure Recruitment and Retention of (Female) Talent in the Workplace

- Identifying and implementing gender-smart solutions around flexible working
- Increasing the number of women employees in non-traditional job roles

**26 COMMITMENTS
MADE BY 17 COMPANIES**

**ACHIEVED 8%
IN PROGRESS 62%**

COMMITMENT 03



Explore Employer-supported Childcare

- Conducting a childcare needs assessment to explore whether supporting employees' childcare needs is feasible and relevant to the business
- Putting employer-supported childcare into action

**11 COMMITMENTS
MADE BY 09 COMPANIES**

**ACHIEVED 72%
IN PROGRESS 9%**

COMMITMENT 04



Promote Effective Anti-Sexual Harassment Mechanisms

- Supporting the development and implementation of a more effective anti-sexual harassment mechanism

**14 COMMITMENTS
MADE BY 13 COMPANIES**

**ACHIEVED 21%
IN PROGRESS 57%**

COMMITMENT 05



Support Women in the Value Chain as Employees and Entrepreneurs

- Identifying and implementing business case research for gender diversity in value chains
- Promoting women's employment opportunities in businesses that the company is sourcing from

**11 COMMITMENTS
MADE BY 09 COMPANIES**

**ACHIEVED 20%
IN PROGRESS 30%**

COMMITMENT 06



Foster the Company's Leadership and Commitment to Women's Employment as a Smart Business Strategy

- Pursuing a firm-level workplace gender equality workplace assessment/certification
- Committing senior management (C-suite members) to speak about the importance of women's employment as a smart business strategy and showcase respective companies' efforts on public stage (media/event/conference) at least twice per year

**15 COMMITMENTS
MADE BY 11 COMPANIES**

**ACHIEVED 20%
IN PROGRESS 30%**

It is apparent that most SheWorks members viewed recruitment and retention of female talent as the most crucial commitment to undertake, with 17 companies making 26 commitments under the umbrella of Commitment 2. As of March 2019, 70 percent of commitments in this category have already been achieved or are in progress. This is followed closely by 22 sub-commitments made by 16 companies under Commitment 1, "Increase Women's Business Leadership", with 72 percent achieved or in progress. This report summarizes the accomplishments of the *SheWorks* Sri Lanka partnership from March 2018 to March 2019.

Executive Summary

The *SheWorks* Sri Lanka partnership was established in March 2018. As the partnership completes its first year, this report captures group-level progress towards realizing *SheWorks* commitments. *SheWorks* members are spread across Sri Lanka's different priority sectors, such as Garments and Apparel, Tourism, Information Technology, Banking and Finance. The companies include conglomerates who can more easily transfer learned knowledge from one sector to the other, and includes female-dominated sector companies such as Garments and Apparel as well as traditionally male-dominated industries such as Automobile, Port and Manufacturing. In this report, sectors are bifurcated into four categories (to ensure a minimum of three companies are represented in each category): Garments and Apparel, Banking, Finance and Insurance, Conglomerates and Others.

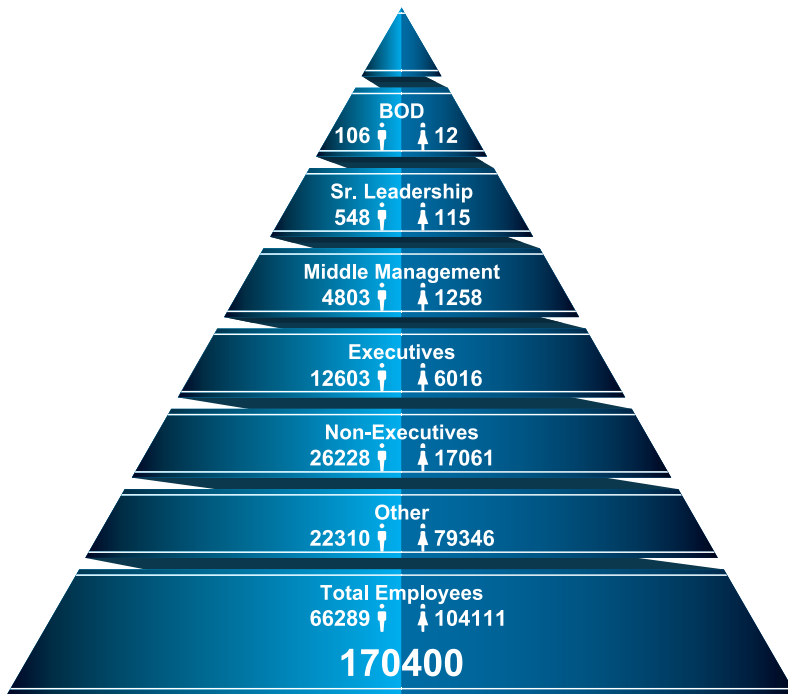
The first year of the partnership has seen a symbiosis of shared knowledge and learning between partners that goes beyond structured meetings and IFC-led events. This dynamic collaboration has also led to several companies undertaking additional commitments, leading to an additional 10 commitments since the beginning of the partnership. To date, **99 commitments have been made by 18 companies, out of which 72 percent have been realized or are ongoing with expected completion by mid-2020.**

In the process of setting up the measurement framework, a severe dearth of Sri Lanka-specific data on women's employment was recognized. Thus, in order to support the measurement of current HR realities, a baseline survey was established in mid 2018 as of December 31, 2017, to collate important benchmarking data. **Data from 16 out of 18 companies is analyzed in this report.**

Women make up **61 percent** of the overall workforce of **16 *SheWorks* Sri Lanka companies**. Over the year, women's representation remains unchanged at 61 percent despite an additional 3500 women having been hired. The presence of women in senior leadership has increased from 15 to 17 percent; middle management has increased from 20 to 21 percent; and the executive cadre has increased from 31 to 32 percent. There has been a reduction of women on boards from 11 to 10 percent; and a further reduction of women in the non-executive cadre from 43 to 39 percent.

Without the inclusion of *SheWorks* Sri Lanka members from female-dominated textile sectors, women comprise 28 percent of 13 *SheWorks* Sri Lanka companies overall. Over the past year, there has been an increase from 28 to 30 percent. The presence of women in senior leadership has increased from 19 to 23 percent; middle management has increased from 20 to 21 percent; the executive cadre has increased from 30 to 32 percent; and the non-executive cadre also has increased from 28 to 30 percent.

The table below summarizes the details:



Percentage of women's representation

Textile	Banking and Finance	Conglomerates	Other	SheWorks Total	SheWorks Total (Without Textile)
12% (-1%) ↓	11% (-4%) ↓	11% (+2%) ↑	7% (-2%) ↓	10% (-1%) ↓	10% (0%)
13% (+1%) ↑	27% (-2%) ↓	22% (+4%) ↑	19% (-5%) ↓	17% (+2%) ↑	23% (+4%) ↑
20% (0%)	33% (+7%) ↑	19% (+3%) ↑	16% (+1%) ↑	21% (+1%) ↑	21% (+1%) ↑
33% (0%)	50% (+10%) ↑	32% (+4%) ↑	20% (-1%) ↓	32% (+1%) ↑	32% (+2%) ↑
52% (-8%) ↓	45% (+5%) ↑	52% (-8%) ↓	34% (+1%) ↑	39% (-4%) ↓	30% (+2%) ↑
78% (+1%) ↑	43% (-9%) ↓	0%	30% (-10%) ↓	78% (+1%) ↑	31% (-12%) ↓
70%+2 (0%)	43% (0%)	27% (+3%) ↑	30% (0%)	61% (0%)	30% (+2%) ↑

This report consolidates 18 members' learnings and best practices around the recruitment, retention, and promotion of employees. *SheWorks* members have contributed their knowledge and expertise to this report. This report highlights a few experiences of *SheWorks* members, draws on the lessons the members have learnt from the seminars, and connects the dots in advancing women's employment.

The aim of this report is to help companies across regions and sectors identify and implement gender-smart recruitment, retention, and promotion policies that work best for their employees and the business. The six commitments of the report reflect the *SheWorks* members' self-reported commitment measures.

Each commitment is divided into four sections: The business case, key highlights, one-year outcomes, and best practices. The report concludes with suggestions for future research and partnerships, and highlights areas which can be further actioned through the *SheWorks* Sri Lanka partnership and are also vital to advancing women's employment.



INCREASE WOMEN'S BUSINESS LEADERSHIP

22 COMMITMENTS
MADE BY 16 COMPANIES

ACHIEVED 40% | IN PROGRESS 32%

9 ACHIEVED

7 IN PROGRESS

6 NOT STARTED

1 NEW COMMITMENT

Business Case:

The business case is clear: gender diversity in business leadership has a significant impact on corporate culture and performance. A recent IFC-led report shows a clear and positive correlation between increased gender diversity at top levels of corporate leadership and better company performance.⁶ The top 30 companies listed on the Colombo Stock Exchange (CSE) find that companies with higher board gender diversity exhibit better financial returns than those with lower gender diversity in terms of return on equity, return on assets and price-to-earnings ratio.⁷

Another IFC-led March 2019 publication, “*Women on Boards of Companies Listed on the CSE*”, shows an increase in the percentage of female directors over the past year: 8.5 percent compared to last year’s 8.14 percent. This is a marginal change, which is encouraging, but still trails behind global trends. In comparison, the percentage of women occupying board seats in Asia is 7.8 percent and whilst Sri Lanka is positioned slightly better, there is much to be done to address barriers to entry, retention and promotion that many women face.

Global research shows that 45 percent of men surveyed thought that women were well represented in leadership when 1 in 10 senior leaders in their company was a woman.⁸ By comparison, just 28 percent of women thought this was adequate representation. The current and pressing business case for more women on boards and in senior leadership positions is clear and measurable: reduced risk, inclusive decision-making, increased collaboration and broader market perspective, among many other potential benefits.⁹



IFC organized a knowledge sharing session on “**The Business Case for Gender Diversity in Sri Lankan Boards**” presented by the IFC Corporate Governance Team. A few takeaways from the session:

- IFC research on the top 30 companies listed on the Colombo Stock Exchange (CSE) finds that companies with higher board gender diversity exhibit better financial returns than those with lower gender diversity in terms of return on equity, return on assets and price-to-earnings ratio.
- A qualitative survey of 100 board members in Sri Lanka indicated that the only aspect of diversity they found lacking on the boards they served on was gender (they found age, educational, skills diversity etc. all adequate).
- Respondents identify the key reasons for a lack of gender parity on boards to be a lack of diversity strategies in companies, insufficient numbers of qualified women, a lack of diverse networking opportunities, gender stereotypes, and a lack of statutory requirements.

Key Highlights:

Participating *SheWorks* companies had the opportunity to gain a better understanding of the business case for diverse leadership in their own organizations. Since the beginning of the *SheWorks* Sri Lanka program in March 2018, member companies’ women senior leadership representation has increased from 15 to 17 percent. The women on boards share dropped one percent and stands at 10 percent (though higher than the national benchmark of 8.5 percent). Within the *SheWorks* Sri Lanka member companies, the conglomerate sector has witnessed an increase in women on boards from 9 to 11 percent and women senior leadership from 18 to 22 percent since March 2018.

To increase women’s leadership, this commitment focuses on building effective Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) in order to identify and access female talent, and more effectively apply tools such as succession planning, mentorship and sponsorship etc. to increase women’s leadership in their organization.

Participating in the “Ring the Bell for Gender Equality” event: Marking International Women’s Day, IFC and DFAT partnered with the Colombo Stock Exchange (CSE) for the fourth consecutive year to ring the opening bell for trading. This annual global initiative is aimed at promoting women’s participation in the economy to catalyze sustainable and inclusive private sector growth. This year’s Ring the Bell event in Colombo marked the release of the report “The Case for Gender Diversity Among Sri Lanka’s Business Leadership”, as well as the second edition of the “Women on Boards of Companies Listed at the Colombo Stock Exchange”, a crucial repository of 136 women directors on the boards of CSE-listed companies as of 2018.

The “Ring the Bell for Gender Equality” event is a partnership of IFC, Sustainable Stock Exchanges (SSE) Initiative, UN Global Compact, UN Women, Women in ETFs, and the World Federation of Exchanges. This year, the event was held in over 70 stock exchanges around the globe.



Ring the Bell for Gender Equality, March 7, 2019, held at the Colombo Stock Exchange. [From L to R: Rathika De Silva, Director, Global Compact Network Sri Lanka; Jon Philp, Acting Australian High Commissioner to Sri Lanka and the Maldives; Amena Arif, Country Manager for IFC Sri Lanka and Maldives; Ranel T. Wijesinha, Chairman, Securities and Exchange Commission of Sri Lanka; Asha De Vos, Marine Biologist and the only Sri Lankan to be included in the BBC’s 100 inspiring and influential women for 2018; Renuka Fernando, CEO, Nations Trust Bank; Ray Abeywardane, Chairman, Colombo Stock Exchange; Chaminda de Silva, CEO, Sri Lanka Institute of Directors]



IFC EVENT

IFC organized a knowledge sharing session on “**Employee Resource Groups**” to support women in leadership. *SheWorks* members valued the learnings from the Ernst & Young (UK & I) extensive Diversity and Inclusion networks journey and lessons learned. A few takeaways from the session:

- ERGs are transitioning from social networks to think tank groups that directly impact the business.
- Intersectionality, male engagement, innovation and leveraging technology are interconnected. For example, companies may want to consider including male membership when establishing a women’s network.
- Successful ERGs have the support/sponsorship from a trusted/impactful senior leader in the organization.
- Internal Women’s Networks can also be an innovative opportunity to reach external clients and connect with the wider community.
- ERGs can play an active role in recruitment drives at universities/external platforms, which may help companies to better position themselves as an employer of choice.

ONE YEAR OUTCOMES:



Increase of women on boards in two *SheWorks* member companies



14 COMPANIES offer succession planning
(1 company has introduced it since joining the *SheWorks* Sri Lanka program)



12 COMPANIES conduct coaching for women
(2 companies have introduced this in the last year)



8 COMPANIES have in place women-focused employee resource groups
(2 companies have introduced this in the last year)



DIMO – Women’s Network

Diesel & Motor Engineering PLC (DIMO) is a diversified company operating in traditionally male-dominated sectors such as luxury & commercial automobiles, construction machinery, power & energy and marine engineering. The company has over 1700 employees out of whom 10 percent are women, and 20 percent are women in senior leadership. In comparison to global numbers, only 8 percent of executives in the top 20 motor vehicles and parts companies in the Fortune Global 500 are women.¹⁰ In the past, DIMO has invested in sourcing, training and retaining women in non-traditional job roles such as Auto Technicians, Mechanics and Engineers.¹¹ DIMO launched an 18 months Automobile Technology course for females breaking stereotypes in the employment of women. As the company has spread over the country, identifying and accessing female talent and ensuring that they receive the same opportunities for development is a priority for the organization.¹²

What they did: DIMO launched a Women’s Network in November 2018, which brings together women from all the business clusters and provides a platform to collaborate on resolving business issues via a gender lens. The primary objective of the Network is to provide mentorship and professional guidance to female employees assisting them to achieve their career aspirations. The Network also revisits policies and procedures ensuring that they are fair and equitable. The network is inclusive, with sponsors from the DIMO board and three male member represented in the executive committee.¹³

Outcomes: Three senior women managers have been included in the career ambassadors pool as mentors. Increase in the number of women in the leadership talent pool from 13 percent in 2016 to 36 percent in 2018. Women in executive’s cadre has increased from 10 to 12 percent from 2018 to 2019.



DIMO’s Launch of a Women’s Network in November 2018



Nilanthi Wijesooriya - Jetwing Hotels

Women currently represent less than 10 percent of the tourism industry in Sri Lanka in comparison to the global average of 65 percent.¹⁴ Travel and hospitality company Jetwing is opening avenues for both women and men to build skills and capability across the country.

Nilanthi Wijesooriya is the Deputy General Manager of both Jetwing Jaffna and North Gate by Jetwing in Sri Lanka's Northern Province. Her 12-year tenure with Jetwing Hotels has seen her begin as a Guest Relations Officer at Jetwing Beach in 2007 and work her way up to an executive in 2010, and managerial positions by 2011. In 2014, she underwent the Jetwing Ascension Program, which focuses on the professional development of associates aiming to enter senior management roles. The program is conducted for an 18-month period, with training, exposure, and mentoring components included. Jetwing's policies as an equal opportunity employer are also instrumental in ensuring a work environment free of discrimination and harassment that would otherwise prohibit satisfaction, welfare, personal and professional development.



Nilanthi Wijesooriya, Deputy General Manager of both Jetwing Jaffna and North Gate by Jetwing



ENSURE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF (FEMALE) TALENT IN THE WORKPLACE

26 COMMITMENTS
MADE BY 17 COMPANIES

ACHIEVED 8% | IN PROGRESS 62%

2 ACHIEVED

16 IN PROGRESS

8 NOT STARTED

1 NEW COMMITMENT

Business Case:

Despite improved educational and health outcomes, only 36 percent of Sri Lankan women participate in paid work.¹⁵ A World Bank study highlights these main factors impeding Sri Lanka's women's participation in paid work: marriage, childrearing and household chores disproportionately performed by women.¹⁶ It finds that marriage drastically lowers a woman's odds of securing paid work (26 percent), while increasing the odds slightly for men (2.5 percent). Apart from the challenges of entering the workforce, retaining women employees is another key challenge for employers, which can lead to inefficiency, large investments in training and recruiting new staff, and other costs associated with attrition.

The fact that the baby boomers' decades of knowledge and experience are now retiring from the workplace makes this state of play more unsettling. In addition, millennials—now the largest cohort in the global and Sri Lankan workforce—present a new set of needs, demands, and concerns with less regard for traditional gender roles and more focus on shared work-life responsibilities and family-friendly policies that support both working parents. With these priorities, millennials are switching between employers based on job quality and the benefits package offered. Thus, employers can face challenges in retaining top talent if they do not adopt gender-inclusive policies.



CASE STUDY



MAS Holdings – Going Beyond

Industry Context: Globally, Sri Lanka is considered a “socially responsible and preferred destination for apparel sourcing” as it is the only outsourced apparel manufacturing country in Asia to ratify all 27 International Labour Organization conventions, according to Sri Lanka's Export Development Board. The apparel industry provides direct employment opportunities to over 300,000 and 600,000 indirectly, the majority of whom are women.¹⁷ These conditions have encouraged the position of Sri Lanka's top three apparel companies amongst the world's 50 most important suppliers, and the industry has sustained over US \$3 billion in export revenue for five consecutive years.¹⁸

SheWorks Sri Lanka member MAS Holdings is one of the largest design-to-delivery solutions providers in the realm of apparel and textile manufacturing industry in South Asia. Headquartered in Sri Lanka, with 53 manufacturing facilities across 16 countries and design facilities in key locations across the globe, the company produces for brands like Calvin Klein, Marks & Spencer, Nike and Victoria's Secret among others. MAS Holdings employs more than 99,000 employees (70 percent women) globally, and close to 76,000 employees in Sri Lanka (66 percent women).

MAS believes in inclusivity and is moving towards an aspirational goal for 2025 - to be an equal opportunity employer with a 1:1 gender ratio in management positions.

What they did:

- **Established a flex work policy:** In certain locations, employees can apply for flexible work hours, work from a different MAS location, work part-time, work from home or from a location closer to one of the MAS-supported childcare facilities. MAS is working towards rolling out these policies across its businesses.
- **Iron Lady Training Programs:** In order to develop women mechanics, electricians, printers, and cutters, a technical training program was designed for women to excel in stereotypically male-dominated roles. The objective is to support women with alternate career opportunities.
- **Women Go Beyond:** Celebrating 16 years in operation since its inception in 2003, hallmark women's empowerment platform Women Go Beyond has achieved its objectives, making a positive difference in the lives of the company's majority female associates. The program is woven around four pillars of success: Career Advancement, Work-life Balance, Skills Development, and Rewarding Excellence.

Outcomes: Internal promotions of women have progressed from 26 to 36 percent over the past year, and an increase of one percent in women's representation in the executive cadre to 36 percent. Based on a recent survey conducted by MAS KREEDA, 31 percent of men and 25 percent of women utilize the flex work benefit. In 2018, a total of 48 female employees were trained to be cutters, 3 to be mechanics, 12 to be end-line printers and 67 to be technicians. The winners from Abhimani (Team Member work levels) have benefitted from leadership training, English, IT, and personal development training, and they are also highlighted as role models for other women in the organization. The Women Go Beyond framework measures its success against 5 of UN Women's Empowerment Principles. WGB is also aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set by the United Nations General Assembly. Over the years, the program has seen over two million beneficiaries through over 9000 programs.

Key Highlights:

Several conversations on different ways to attract, retain, and promote female talent (parental leave, maternity return scheme) have already taken place as part of the *SheWorks* partnership with more to come in the second year. It was acknowledged that work-life balance policies are important for all employees, women and men. As a result of their efforts in this commitment category, members report more diversity in the workforce.





Based on 13 *SheWorks* members' baseline survey results, the top three reasons for women to resign are family commitments, migration or relocation to support a spouse, and career advancement. On the other hand, the reasons for men to resign vary, with the top three reasons recorded as career advancement, benefits and pay and family commitments. Of the companies citing family commitments as the top reason, the lion's share of female staff surveyed who resigned did so due to lack of childcare support. Thus, it is vital for companies to recognize that the causes of resignation between women and men can be vastly different. Accordingly, members look to put specific policies into place to ensure the better management of attrition in these companies.







IFC conducted a *SheWorks* seminar on “**Gender-Informed Communication in the Workplace**”, which provided insights on how to ensure fair and equitable treatment for women and men. A few key takeaways:

- Gender-Informed Communications includes equal representation, inclusive language and visuals, and a conscious move beyond gender stereotypes.
- It is important to include gender equality and commitments to diversity within mainstream messaging, not just during Women's Day or women-specific panels/topics.
- Optics are important! Ensure headlines and key photos reflect the diversity and inclusivity to which your organization has committed.
- Inclusion Nudges are a great way to change behavioral patterns and implicit bias.

ONE YEAR OUTCOMES: RECRUITMENT

-  **15 COMPANIES** track new recruits by gender
(2 companies have started tracking in the last year)
-  **12 COMPANIES** have non-discrimination or equal employment opportunity policies (3 companies have introduced this in the last year)
-  **9 COMPANIES** capture feedback by gender on employee engagement surveys (2 companies have started tracking this in the last year)
-  **7 COMPANIES** have diversity and inclusion policies
(1 company has introduced this in the last year)

ONE YEAR OUTCOMES: RETENTION

-  **15 COMPANIES** track promotions by gender
(6 companies have introduced it in the last year)
-  **12 COMPANIES** provide flexible/agile working arrangements
(1 company has introduced this in the last year)
-  **8 COMPANIES** have an employee resource group/women's network
(3 companies have introduced this in the last year)
-  **7 COMPANIES** have equal pay for equivalent work policies
(2 companies have introduced it in the last year)



Herath Mudiyansele Herath - MAS Slimline

After working seven years on the factory floor in Katunayake, Herath Mudiyansele Herath moved to MAS Slimline in 1993, as a line supervisor. At Slimline, she attended English classes, leadership training programs and part time programs in project management. Herath harnessed her new skills to steadily ascend the corporate ladder. In 2001, she became one of the first female Assistant Production Managers at Slimline, a strong position within the management team.

Herath oversaw the work of over 400 machine operators, while still managing two children at home. A couple of years later when she became the first plant manager at Slimline, she took up responsibility for over 2000 machine operators. Currently, although she has retired from her official position, she continues to serve MAS as a mentor and an informal consultant.



Herath Mudiyansele Herath, Consultant and Mentor, Former MAS Slimline Line Manager



EXPLORE EMPLOYER SUPPORTED CHILDCARE

11 COMMITMENTS
MADE BY 9 COMPANIES

ACHIEVED 72% | IN PROGRESS 9%

8 ACHIEVED

1 IN PROGRESS

2 NOT STARTED

3 NEW COMMITMENTS

Business Case:

Poor access to high-quality childcare is a leading reason for parents with young children to drop out of the labor force. This yields lower household incomes and lost opportunities for workplace advancement. For businesses, this can mean high attrition rates and high expenditure on recruiting and training replacements. The Centre for American Progress notes that companies spend up to 21 percent of a departed employee's annual salary to replace them.¹⁹ Poor childcare access can also affect life choices of those who continue working. Many employable women either fail to enter the work force or exit prematurely and fail to return. A recent World Bank Report indicates that having a child under age five at home reduces Sri Lankan women's labor force participation compared with women without young children by 7.4 percent, and this percentage has increased over the years.²⁰

Childcare and early childhood programs are critical to economic development going forward. At only 0.0001 percent of GDP, Sri Lanka has one of the world's lowest rates of public spending on early childhood development.²¹ However, it is crucial to recognize that returns on early childhood programs can be as high as 13.7 percent. Such programs can raise individual adult incomes up to 25 percent.²²

MAS Holdings has a total of 10 childcare facilities in Sri Lanka, Jordan and India, and recorded reduced volatility in attendance and turnover by introducing employer-supported childcare. In fact, they quantified this by recording absences due to sick leave falling by 9 percent within eight months of their introduction of a childcare center at their MAS Kreedaa Al Safi-Madaba location in Jordan.²³ Based on case studies with 10 Sri Lankan firms featured in IFC's *"Tackling Childcare: The Business Case for Employer-supported Childcare in Sri Lanka"* report, the top five business improvements caused by establishing workplace crèches are increases in recruitment, retention, productivity, diversity, and market access.

Key Highlights:

SheWorks Sri Lanka members are providing critical, family-friendly services by investing in their staff, reaping business benefits in terms of motivation, productivity, and staff retention, as well as making key strategic investments in order to drive Sri Lanka's economic development and stability. Members also understand the importance of identifying and implementing gender-smart solutions which meet employees' work-life needs, such as actively supporting employees - including working parents - with flexible working hours, thus increasing retention rates and maternity return rates.



IFC conducted a seminar on the topic of **"Tackling Childcare"**. A few key takeaways from the session:

- Global research shows how companies that invest in childcare initiatives can experience multiple benefits for their business such as improved recruitment, retention, productivity, diversity, regulatory compliance, employee relationship and enhanced corporate reputation.
- Employee preferences are an important component of understanding the potential demand for employer-supported childcare. i.e. availability, accessibility, affordability and quality.
- One of the key challenges can be that childcare is viewed as a "cost" center, and not as a "profit" center. This can be verified by conducting business case analysis and putting the right key metrics/indicators in place.
- Remember that one size does not fit all, offering childcare should be a part of the organizational strategy and quality of the caregiver is a key for success.

In December 2018, IFC in partnership with UNICEF and the Australian Government launched a report on *"Tackling Childcare: The Business Case for Employer-supported Childcare in Sri Lanka"*. It features 10 case studies with specific business case evidence on childcare and practical guidance on putting ideas into practice. Of the 10 case study companies, 6 are *SheWorks* Sri Lanka members (**Brandix Lanka Ltd, Fairway Holdings (Pvt) Limited, Hemas Holdings PLC, LSEG Technology, MAS Holdings, and Standard Chartered Bank**).

The report builds on the learning that there is a plethora of ways in which employers can support their employees' childcare needs beyond onsite crèches, and still gain significant business benefits. Despite unique benefits in each industry, each sector has seen significant business benefits at the firm level. Childcare initiatives in the garment industry, including by firms like **Brandix Essentials** and **MAS Holdings**, fortify relationships with high-value, international buyers, augmenting long-term market access and growth opportunities. Their women-empowering stances also position them as employers of choice, both having won awards locally and globally. **Fairway Holdings (Pvt)** and **Hemas Holdings PLC**, diversified businesses with multiple verticals, provide childcare in order to improve employee work-life balance and to foster productivity through increased gender diversity.

Within the IT sector, with its 24/7 operations, **LSEG Technology's** corporate values focus on the needs of parents and children in order to improve recruitment and retention. A worldwide study estimates that closing IT female leadership gaps would add between USD 430 and USD 530 billion in global output.²⁴ LSEG Technology states that to recruit a new staff member and train them up to speed requires 8 months, and that every time there is a resignation, it leads to a productivity loss. In the banking sector, **Standard Chartered Bank** offers childcare as a fundamental component of gender inclusion strategies focused on women in leadership.

Employer-supported childcare can be a powerful tool to recruit and retain parents. This was explored in detail at the Tackling Childcare CEO Roundtable event, where *SheWorks* members shared their experiences on the topic and offered to help other companies outside the partnership to identify viable childcare solutions. The event was in association with UNICEF, who also led the Facebook Live event. The event sparked discussion across media outlets too, including in the Daily Financial Times²⁵ and a six-page article in the Echelon magazine.²⁶ The lead up to the event and the aftermath saw close to 0.5 million reach on social media along with an informative animated video produced for the Tackling Childcare campaign.²⁷


CASE STUDY




Standard Chartered Bank - Kidkare Crèche Facility

Providing childcare support and measures to improve employee work-life balance is part of Standard Chartered Bank's (SC) broader corporate objectives of increasing gender parity in the workplace. In 2008, SC introduced a crèche facility 'Kidkare' to all its employees and was one of the pioneers in the industry. The investment is justified with SC's maternity return rate at 100 percent and parents claiming they are at ease and can better concentrate during work knowing that their children are well taken care of. SC takes pride in a zero percent attrition of mother's resigning to care for their children. This is predominantly due to the crèche facility, flexible working arrangements and other enhanced benefits offered to parents.

ONE YEAR OUTCOMES:

 **10 COMPANIES** have extended maternity leave over and above the mandated norm (3 companies have introduced this since becoming SheWorks Sri Lanka members)

 **7 COMPANIES** have introduced paternity leave (3 companies have introduced it in the last year)

 **7 COMPANIES** provide a childcare facility (2 companies have introduced it in the last year)



Hemas Holdings - Kidzone, a Back Up Care Arrangement

Hemas Holdings PLC, a member of IFC's *SheWorks* partnership in Sri Lanka, has provided wellness, leisure and mobility services in the last seven decades. In a regional analysis of diversity in the workplace published by Cornerstone Partners LLP in UK, 2017, Hemas was ranked amongst the top 10 most diversity-friendly corporate institutes in Asia.²⁸

What they did: While seven other *SheWorks* Sri Lanka member companies offer onsite childcare support, this example spotlights the innovative approach of back up childcare that Hemas Holdings set up as a pilot initiative at the Hemas House (headquarters of the group). They have a specially designed space for children that can accommodate up to 10 children aged 3 to 12 years old. This age group is considered to be one that can be managed by the parent without supervision by additional staff (such as a crèche supervisor or nannies). This allows parents to "hot desk" from one of the adjoining work stations and have the peace of mind that their children are safe and occupied. This space is not meant to replace regular childcare arrangements but was designed as an option to be used when regular childcare arrangements fail, as they occasionally do. The facility also provides a MumZone for lactating mothers and a MedZone for all employees who are feeling unwell or need to rest during the working day.

Outcomes: The Group is considering collecting more comprehensive gender-disaggregated data on the success of its existing back-up care facilities, including data on employee satisfaction and retention, and using this data to further strengthen the case for childcare support. Hemas is on a quest to build a stronger employer brand associated with diversity and inclusion in addition to other areas of holistic employee experience, like wellness.



The Kidzone facility at Hemas House



PROMOTE EFFECTIVE ANTI-SEXUAL HARASSMENT MECHANISMS

14 COMMITMENTS
MADE BY 13 COMPANIES

ACHIEVED 21% | IN PROGRESS 57%

3 ACHIEVED

8 IN PROGRESS

3 NOT STARTED

1 NEW COMMITMENT

The Business Case:

Both men and women can experience sexual harassment at work, however, it is most commonly experienced by women. In Asia-Pacific countries, between 30-40 percent of women workers reported some form of harassment.²⁹ According to a World Health Organization study, 57% of female garment workers in Sri Lanka have reportedly faced sexual harassment at work.³⁰

A global study estimated that sexual harassment costs a typical Fortune 500 company \$6.7 million a year in absenteeism, low productivity, and employee turnover.³¹ An issue that does not get as much attention as absenteeism is the cost of “presenteeism,” which is when an employee is present but not fully productive at work because of stress or demotivation associated with being a victim of sexual harassment. Moreover, employees who witness sexual harassment are also susceptible to stress and uncertainty associated with deciding on an appropriate course of action, which can hamper their productivity and add to the overall cost associated with presenteeism.³²

Key Highlights:

SheWorks Sri Lanka members who have made commitments in this category are driven to ensure that their anti-sexual harassment mechanisms are effective. Members highlight this as an ongoing effort, to make the workplace a safe environment, which they will continue to monitor regularly. Members have also conducted trainings, sensitization sessions, and put in place counselling and third-party grievance handling mechanisms for employees, in order to further strengthen the anti-sexual harassment policies and ensure effectiveness. Many members found the guidance by the Employers’ Federation of Ceylon useful.




IFC EVENT

Anti-Sexual Harassment Mechanisms in the Workplace


A seminar on “**Effective Anti-sexual Harassment Mechanisms in the Workplace**” featured the lessons learned and impact of IFC’s work in Cambodia and Solomon Islands. Summarizing a few key takeaways:


- The costs of workplace sexual harassment extend to individual employees, the company and society. In the workplace it can lead to decreased enterprise productivity; compromised teamwork; low employee motivation; absenteeism; difficulty in filling vacancies and hinders progress and innovation. E.g. 13.5 percent of workers from the Cambodian garment factories stated that their productivity was significantly affected by sexual harassment, with the group estimating that they were able to work on average 47 percent less effectively.
- The best way to gauge effectiveness on anti-sexual harassment mechanisms is to measure outcomes. E.g. For SolTuna, a tuna processor in Solomon Islands, reduced absenteeism increased the production of fish process each day to 125 metric tons, which resulted in an additional \$1.58 million in revenue a year.
- Leadership, frontline management’s support and workplace risk factors in the workplace need to be considered while designing an effective anti-sexual harassment mechanism.
- Policies, reporting and investigating procedures and trainings need to be in simple language, fair and accessible by all employees.


ONE YEAR OUTCOMES:

 **13 COMPANIES** provide transport services for their employees
(2 companies have introduced this in the last year)

 **ONE SHEWORKS MEMBER** has fully incorporated their anti-sexual harassment policy within their company code of conduct, and as a result was able to further promote awareness amongst employees

 **ONE SHEWORKS MEMBER** is currently undertaking an extensive study through a survey to better understand socio-cultural contexts, and more effectively address sensitive and taboo issues

 **7 COMPANIES** have an anti-bullying policy
(4 companies have introduced this in the last year)

 **8 COMPANIES** have a third-party grievance mechanism
(3 companies have introduced this in the last year)

John Keells Holdings PLC - Working Against Violence through Education

SheWorks Sri Lanka member John Keells Holdings PLC (JKH) is Sri Lanka’s largest listed conglomerate, with companies in seven sectors, including Leisure, Transportation, Consumer Foods, IT, Financial Services, Property and Retail. Maximizing and capitalizing on workplace diversity is an important focus for management, and continuous efforts have resulted in an increase in overall women representation from 25 to 29 percent over the past year.

What they did: John Keells Holdings PLC continuously evaluates, trains and sensitizes staff about harassment and discrimination in the workplace and in their external communications (advertisements and programs). The John Keells Group Policy Against Sexual Harassment, which has been in place for 5 years, was revised in January 2018. The CSR Project of Working Against Violence through Education (WAVE) was launched in November 2014. In commemoration of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women (IDEVAW) 2019, WAVE launched sensitization sessions conducted by qualified external resource persons for senior management.

Outcome: In the calendar year 2018, 2214 employees underwent general sensitization across all company sectors. Awareness sessions targeting supervisory level staff were conducted for 394 employees. The cumulative total of sensitized persons including JKH employees, school children, police officers (including setting up women and children’s desk at the Puthukuduyirripu – Mullaitivu Police station), lawyers, and the general public was 323,205 (as of December 2018).



The WAVE awareness and sensitization sessions in progress



SUPPORT WOMEN IN THE VALUE CHAIN AS EMPLOYEES AND ENTREPRENEURS

10 COMMITMENTS
MADE BY 7 COMPANIES

ACHIEVED 20% | IN PROGRESS 30%

2 ACHIEVED

3 IN PROGRESS

6 NOT STARTED

1 NEW COMMITMENT

The Business Case:

Women are a critical part of the workforce and are present in global value chains as employees, entrepreneurs, and community members. Studies have shown that supporting women in the value chain can result in stronger and larger supplier networks that contribute to higher input quality and more competitive prices over time.³³ Managing gender issues in the supply chain and connecting women to new markets can have a direct effect on a company's bottom line. In 2007, the U.S. Women's Business Enterprise National Council conducted a survey of 1,227 female consumers between the ages of 35 and 55. Of the survey participants, 79 percent said that knowing that a company purchases from women-owned businesses was likely to compel them to try the product or services provided by that company. Survey findings also confirmed that awareness of a company's commitment to buy from women-owned businesses can enhance consumers' loyalty to that brand.^{34, 35}

Moreover, WEConnect International, a global network that connects women-owned businesses to qualified buyers around the world, notes that "if you are not sourcing inclusively everywhere you do business, you do not have full access to critical innovations and the best total value options that will help you meet and anticipate the needs of your clients."³⁶

Supporting women entrepreneurs and enhancing their income generating capacity has wider socio-economic benefits at the employee, employer, community, and national levels as women often invest more in their families and communities.³⁷ Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Sri Lanka provide 45 percent of employment and 75 percent of the total enterprises in the economy.³⁸ Sri Lanka has more than one million registered SMEs, each employing three persons on average. Taken together with other micro-enterprises and SMEs that are not registered, the sector makes a sizeable contribution to the economy – an estimated 52 percent of GDP.³⁹ The value chains of many large companies are critically dependent on these SMEs as distributors and retailers. Though many women play significant roles in SMEs, the majority of women-owned businesses can be found in the micro space (26.3 percent), and the percentage of women-owned businesses falls dramatically as business size increases (6.1 percent women-owned businesses among medium size enterprises, 4.6 percent among large enterprises).



CASE STUDY



CBL Group to Increase Women Distributors and Retailers




The fast-moving consumer goods (FMCGs) sector is a significant contributor to Sri Lanka's economy, accounting for 30 percent of GDP and close to 20 percent of employment.⁴⁰ It relies significantly on SME multi brand distributors and retailers to reach consumers. However, these distributors and retailers often struggle to grow and operate at low efficiency levels due to lack of business planning, recordkeeping, effective financial and human capital management practices, and commitment and attitude of owners towards business management. Women-owned SMEs in Sri Lanka are estimated at 25 percent, although many women play significant informal roles in SMEs. Integration of women into distributor and retailer chains remains a big gap reflective of the disparity in women labor force participation (36 percent) vs men (76 percent) in Sri Lanka.

The CBL Group is working with IFC to increase the number and role of women in distributor and retailer networks serving FMCGs. The project will also be an opportunity to improve efficiencies of FMCG distribution chains by helping retailers and distributors to adopt digital payment methods which will help other FMCG companies. There will be focus on rural segments of the retail industry and in making them recognize the value, convenience and cost effectiveness of the digital payment model. The CBL Group intends on scaling this program to their overall retail network spread across the island.

Key Highlights:

SheWorks Sri Lanka members are committed to sourcing from women entrepreneurs and/or supporting women-owned businesses and women's employment in their value chains, which also positively impacts their bottom line. Members have put in place innovative programs and strategies to realize their commitments. Training and capacity building have been the key focus of members in this category and they plan to continue scaling these efforts. By engaging women entrepreneurs in local communities to become more familiar with the company's operations, they can potentially become more valuable contributors to a diverse supply chain. Members also promote women's employment opportunities in businesses that the company is sourcing from – potentially leading to more productive and stable supply chains and the company's reputation overall (establishing them as a company of choice for both consumers and buyers).

ONE YEAR OUTCOMES:

-  **ALL 4** *SheWorks* Sri Lanka financial institution members are actively promoting women's entrepreneurship in the country
-  **ONE SHEWORKS MEMBER**, Ceylon Biscuits Limited, over the course of the past year has put in place efforts to further build the capacity of distributors and retailers, with a special focus on women
-  **ONE SHEWORKS MEMBER**, AIA Insurance, over the course of the past year has further advanced its women and insurances initiative, focusing on women as customers and distributors



CASE STUDY



SANASA Development Bank Uththamavi Loan - Financial Solutions for Women Entrepreneurs

According to the 2014 census, 24.8 percent of total MSMEs in Sri Lanka are female-owned; the majority of women SME's are either in the micro or small segment. The primary constraints encountered by entrepreneurial women in growing their business are knowledge gaps, lack of access to finance, and an inability to find suitable guarantors.

What they did: The UTHTHAMAVI initiative (undertaken by *SheWorks* Sri Lanka Member **SDB Bank**, an IFC Banking on Women client and partner) extends its scope and purview beyond the traditional bank offerings for women. It encompasses a plethora of products and services primarily catering to women at the grassroots level to promote entrepreneurship among women, empowerment of women towards a self-sufficient lifestyle, creation of wealth through value creation and investment. This initiative has savings, structured savings, investment offerings, and a collateral-free micro-entrepreneurship loan proposition. The above product propositions are backed by financial education and entrepreneurship training programs conducted by bank staff or resource personnel island-wide.

Outcomes: The microloan initiative targeting women entrepreneurs was launched in 2018 and has attracted 904 accounts with a total portfolio value of Rs 445 Mn to date. Entrepreneurship skills have been built amongst 4000 female entrepreneurs through 42 number of programs throughout the country. Creating a platform for entrepreneurial women to build their business and mentoring them through difficult times has created a series of successes in the program.



R.D. Surandini - Recipient of Capital from Sanasa Development Bank

Based in Mankulam, a small village 25 kilometres away from Vavuniya, R.D. Surandini started her business with her family members, husband and her children back in 2015. She began business operations with a working capital of Rs. 75,000 and benefitted from training from the Small Enterprises Development Bureau on Business Management at the beginning of her enterprise. She also qualified for a Rs. 400,000 loan from Sanasa Development Bank to build the capital for her business and received loans for working capital from time to time. R.D. Surandini now has around 10 workers in her business, and her ambition is to expand her business as an exporter with the help of the SDB Vavuniya Branch.



R.D. Surandini of LEO Creations in the Batik Industry



FOSTER THE COMPANY'S LEADERSHIP AND COMMITMENT TO WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT AS A SMART BUSINESS STRATEGY

11 COMMITMENTS
MADE BY 9 COMPANIES

ACHIEVED 20% | IN PROGRESS 30%

1 ACHIEVED

11 IN PROGRESS

3 NOT STARTED

4 NEW COMMITMENTS

Business Case:

To become a truly diverse and inclusive organization while also generating benefits for business, companies and their leaders need to develop policies grounded in three key types of approaches: holistic, integrated, and strategic.⁴¹ The business case is clear: gender diverse and inclusive organizations are not only positioning themselves as an employer of choice, they are also poised to win in the external women's customer market. Performance data from the Global Banking Alliance for Women shows that, compared with institutions that are just starting in the women's market, those with mature programs on average employ 19 percent more women and have 46 percent more women on their boards. They also have higher shares of female customers, credit portfolio to women, and deposits held by women.⁴²

Successful business leaders understand and acknowledge that there may be systemic biases that disadvantage women employees. By "walking the talk" they ensure that diversity and inclusion policies are effective. Likewise, when customer-facing employees have the skills and mindsets for respectful, effective interactions with female clients, women's market programs will succeed.⁴³ Not only do these leaders promote gender equality within their organizations, but often they also cultivate equality within the larger business community. Leaders are often encouraging and inspiring their peers, stakeholders and partners to join in the effort and raise awareness through national and international platforms. Without leadership support, companies can have difficulties in getting their gender equality efforts off the ground and reaping the associated business benefits.⁴⁴

Research from the United States suggests that one of the key barriers to gender equality in the workplace is the lack of leadership commitment. Seventy-four percent of 1800 companies reported that their CEOs are committed to gender diversity, however less than 50 percent of employees believed it to be true,⁴⁵ posing a challenge for prescriptive gender-equality policies and practices to be impactful.



In August 2018, on the occasion of the Australian Ambassador for Women and Girls' visit to Sri Lanka, a Private Sector Roundtable with *SheWorks* Sri Lanka members was held to learn from the Ambassador's global experiences. "At the top levels of industry and government, the faces remain stubbornly male, although women are present on most boards of directors of large companies, their number remains low compared to men. These barriers produce serious challenges for women's advancement, as well as inhibiting business performance and economic growth for the nation. The economic case for gender equality is clear and compelling" the Ambassador said.⁴⁶



SheWorks Sri Lanka Private Sector Roundtable with The Australian Ambassador for Women and Girls, Dr. Sharman Stone, on August 7, 2018

Key Highlights:

An important step for *SheWorks* Sri Lanka members has been to assess whether existing diversity and inclusion policies and practices are having the desired impact. Following an internal assessment and employee survey, member companies found that they can better understand what works and what can be improved in their talent management and family-friendly policies and adjust programs and policies accordingly. In addition to the baseline survey, several *SheWorks* Sri Lanka members were keen to conduct institutional employee surveys informing employers of potential entry points for 'gender-smart' solutions. One tool, the EDGE Gender Assessment and Certification⁴⁷ methodology enables companies to benchmark themselves against other companies in the sector, region, and globally, to further improve and identify new approaches that benefit both employees and the business.




SheWorks Seminar on Pursuing Firm-level Workplace Gender Equality Certification

IFC conducted a *SheWorks* Sri Lanka seminar on "Pursuing Firm-level Workplace Gender Equality Certification". It focused on "Economic Dividends for Gender Equality (EDGE)", the leading global assessment methodology and business certification standard for gender equality in the workplace. The EDGE Gender certification operates on the principle that 'what gets measured gets done' and is distinguished by its rigor and focus on business impact. By pursuing the EDGE Gender assessment and certification, companies can benefit through:


- A robust workforce analytics approach to inform organizations gender diversity strategy and priorities.
- An effective benchmarking tool across all industries, geographies and against the EDGE Certification Global Standard.
- A global branding tool, allowing organizations to give visibility and credibility to their commitment for workplace gender equality.


EDGE assesses policies, practices, employee experiences, and the organization's numbers in five different areas: equal pay for equivalent work, recruitment and promotion, leadership development training and mentoring, flexible working and company culture. EDGE Certification is currently working with nearly 200 organizations, in 50 countries and 23 industries. Accenture, Asian Development Bank (ADB), Deutsche Bank, Ernst & Young, IKEA, International Monetary Fund (IMF), International Finance Corporation (IFC), Marriot, Mercer, Pfizer, SAP, and World Bank have all applied this certification and are demonstrating their commitment to gender leadership to employees and the market. EDGE Certification has received the endorsement of business, government, and academic leaders from around the world. For more information, visit <http://www.edge-cert.org>

ONE YEAR OUTCOMES:

 **3 COMPANIES** are currently considering EDGE Gender Certification (one company, NDB, obtained the certification last year)

 **4 COMPANIES** have conducted an institutional employee survey

 **6 COMPANIES** have signed up for external gender diversity related initiatives such as UN Women's Empowerment Principles, #HeForShe, etc. (3 companies have signed up since becoming *SheWorks* Sri Lanka members)

 **4 COMPANIES** have been recognized by an external organization for promoting gender diversity in the workplace (2 companies have been recognized in the last year)

CASE STUDY



NDB Becomes the First Company in Sri Lanka to Pursue EDGE Gender Certification

Industry Context: IFC identifies a global credit gap of around \$285 billion for women entrepreneurs.⁴⁸ Research shows that closing the credit gap for women-owned SMEs in emerging markets could push income per capita an average of 12 percent higher by 2030,⁴⁹ highlighting that women entrepreneurs have the potential to impact Sri Lanka's future growth. However, many women currently lack access to basic financial services.

"Research shows that banks with a diverse workforce tend to have a better understanding and reach of the women's consumer market, translating to women's higher financial inclusion"⁵⁰ said Amena Arif, IFC's Country Manager for Sri Lanka and Maldives.

Overall, women's representation among 4 *SheWorks* Sri Lanka Banking and Insurance sector members is 43 percent, 27 percent at senior leadership, and 11 percent at the board. Compared to the other *SheWorks* Sri Lanka membership sectors, this marks the highest senior leadership representation by women who also were able to report the highest average maternity return rate of 90 percent.

In January 2019, NDB announced having become the first Sri Lankan institution to obtain the EDGE Gender certification, the leading global certification standard for gender equality at the workplace. NDB Group CEO Dimantha Seneviratne said "This exceptional recognition not only positions us as the employer of choice for both women and men, but it also makes us one of the most trusted and reliable partners for our customers, as multiple and diverse teams within our organization consistently deliver first-rate results."⁵¹

What they did: Motivated by its recent rapid growth and goal to achieve the status of a systematically important bank by 2020, NDB, an IFC Banking on Women client and partner, has leveraged its almost 2500 employees across a network of over 110 branches to meet its ambitious business objectives. This has been spurred by a continuous focus on vital areas such as retail, SME, microfinance and project finance. NDB also offers programs such as Araliya, which is not just a women's savings account but also a platform, supporting women who want to further develop their skills, health and knowledge.

With 39 percent of the current workforce and 41 percent among senior management being women, NDB management has been determined to promote gender parity by providing constant encouragement to women's professional development and financial guidance for Sri Lankan women. Meanwhile in 2018, 64 employees took maternity leave and 100% of them returned to work upon completion of their leave, demonstrating the Bank's commitment towards retaining female employees through flexible working arrangements that foster better work-life balance. Through the EDGE Gender assessment (which included a staff survey with a high 73 percent response rate), NDB was able to perform a deep analysis on their overall gender distribution, which helped them identify further opportunities, including vis-à-vis their customer interface. NDB's workplace gender equality achievements were featured on TV, radio, social media and publications in all major print newspapers across the country.⁵²

Outcomes: Against the EDGE Gender benchmarks, NDB was able to gauge their performance against the best standards and used the comprehensive qualitative and quantitative reports to streamline the implementation of a set of actionable plans to further promote gender diversity in the organization. These plans reflect NDB's senior management's commitment to further pursue tangible workplace improvements and, in the process, gain a competitive edge in the market.

Through its commitments, NDB has recognized the power of advancing a diverse and inclusive workplace environment for both men and women and promoting stewardship and industry standards in Sri Lanka. Attaining this certification sends a strong message to employees, peers and clients, and has set an example for other institutions in the country to follow.

Taking *SheWorks* Sri Lanka to the Next Level

One year. Eighteen companies. 99 commitments in six focus areas. The *SheWorks* Sri Lanka partnership for women's employment accomplished a lot in a year: it is advancing employment opportunities and improving working conditions for more than 100,000 women by putting in place new (and strengthening existing) gender-smart solutions on recruitment, retention, and promotion policies and practices.

SheWorks Sri Lanka members showed consistent and committed enthusiasm in coming together face-to-face several times during the past year, which further enhanced the partnership, building trust and rapport. In many instances, *SheWorks* members are now in regular contact with each other, including beyond the program, to benefit from each other's experiences. It is indicative that programs and policies designed to reduce bias and ensure fairness benefit everyone – both women and men, as well as businesses and the economy.

A few examples of where *SheWorks* Sri Lanka members and partners envision other large-scale partnerships (private and public) to reduce economic gender gaps include:

- **Expanding gender-smart solutions beyond the “one” location of a company.** Many of the *SheWorks* Sri Lanka companies have been implementing policies and practices around recruitment, retention and promotions – typically as a pilot in one location. The natural next step for many *SheWorks* members is to take such initiatives to the next level – either to fully replicate or to further improve on the learnings, ensuring business impact across multiple locations and – for *SheWorks* holding companies with various businesses across sectors.
- **Growing gender equality initiatives from the firm level to the sectoral level.** One of the strengths of the *SheWorks* Sri Lanka partnership is the fact that it includes a “critical” mass of members/leading employers representing key growth sectors. For example, *SheWorks* members **London Stock Exchange Group** and **Virtusa** joined forces to bring *SheWorks* insights and learnings to key stakeholders in the IT industry and have facilitated introductions to **The Sri Lanka Association of Software and Services Companies (SLASSCOM)** and **Sri Lanka's Information and Communication Technology Agency (ICTA)**. SLASSCOM has 189 members with an estimated workforce of 35,000-40,000 employees which accounts for over 90 percent of export revenue in IT. ICTA conducts regular national IT workforce survey covering more than 250 employer organizations and educational/technical institutions that provide ICT services in Sri Lanka.

A worldwide study estimates that closing IT female leadership gaps would add between USD 430 and USD 530 billion in global output.⁵³ Extrapolating from baseline data in Sri Lanka's IT sector alone suggests that companies could reduce replacement costs by at least 22 percent and generate savings of approximately USD 4 million for the sector if gender-smart solutions are successful at equalizing retention rates for women and men.⁵⁴ Savings would be even higher if solutions were to result in women's retention rates being higher than those of men.⁵⁵ IFC is liaising with SLASSCOM and other IT companies to understand the employees' demand for employer-supported childcare (including in Orion City). IFC has supported ICTA in enhancing their 2018/9 National Industry Survey tool to incorporate a gender dimension. The survey targets more than 400 employer organizations as well as educational and technical institutions that provide ICT services in Sri Lanka.

- **Leveraging the public sector's role in supporting the private sector's efforts to advance women's employment.** For example, the *SheWorks* Sri Lanka partnership includes several companies with businesses in the hospitality sector - including **Cinnamon Hotels (John Keells Group)**, **Fairway Holdings**, **Hemas Holdings**, **Jetwing**, and **Melwa** - who are looking to increase the share of women's employment in Sri Lanka's tourism industry (estimated at 10 percent in Sri Lanka compared to a global average of approximately 65 percent).⁵⁶

Sri Lanka's Tourism Industry Arrivals and Employment Forecasts expect 3.2 million international visitors in Sri Lanka by 2020, with a need to employ over 100,000 staff to meet this growth.⁵⁷ IFC is exploring a Workplace Consortium

around “Employer-supported Childcare in the Tourism Sector” which would enhance parents’ participation in the labor force through a potential partnership with the **Colombo Municipal Council**. IFC is currently in the process of conducting a Childcare Employee Demand Survey (covering a group of Colombo-based hotels with more than 4000 employees) which will help each employer collect information about their employees’ childcare needs and guide employers in deciding whether employer-supported childcare support might be a feasible win-win solution. Moreover, on behalf of the **Prime Minister’s Office**, the **Ministry of Women and Child Affairs** has been coordinating a **National Child Day Care Centers Policy Taskforce** (IFC and other private sector companies are members) that aims to enhance the quantity and quality of childcare provision (and thereby parents’ labor force participation) in the country.

- **Strengthening the role of businesses in addressing other critical issues to women’s (and men’s) well-being in the labor force.** Population projections show that the proportion of Sri Lankans above the age of 60 years will increase from 14 percent in 2017 to 22 percent by the year 2037.⁵⁸ Moreover, Sri Lankan women’s healthy life expectancy is estimated at 69 years, five years higher than that of men.⁵⁹ With such a rapidly ageing population in Sri Lanka - and women’s predominant role as care giver for both parents and in-laws - leading employers may find it imperative to look at **elder care support** as a gender-smart solution to attract and retain women in the labor force.

SheWorks Sri Lanka member **AIA Sri Lanka** recently held a “Healthiest Workplace Symposium” for the first time in Sri Lanka. They concluded that 91.5 percent of employees at Sri Lankan corporates don’t eat a healthy diet, almost 60 percent suffer from work stress factors, and 12.9 percent suffer from mental stress. According to AIA Sri Lanka, companies are losing 53.2 days of productivity a year which amounts to over Rs. 2.6 million.⁶⁰ *SheWorks* Sri Lanka member **DIMO** was recognized as the Healthiest Workplace in Sri Lanka - Large Organisation Category for the year 2018. “At DIMO it is understood that employees in good health are three times more productive, more engaged and motivated. Therefore, the company believes in VOI (value of investment) rather than ROI (return on investment) when it comes to providing health benefits to employees.⁶¹ Moreover, other key stakeholders in Sri Lanka are exploring how to promote employees’ wellbeing at the workplace. A global partnership led by the **World Food Program** includes the **Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Business Network to promote employees’ nutrition** at the workplace. They launched a private sector partnership in Sri Lanka in March 2019.

- **Enhancing women’s (and men’s) mobility to get to work.** As mentioned earlier in this report, safe transport is a huge enabler to women’s and men’s ability to join and stay in Sri Lanka’s workforce. By collaborating with **PickMe**⁶² (an IFC client and partner), PickMe and IFC are looking to explore how increasing the number of women drivers may increase the number of women riders as highlighted in the global IFC report “*Driving Toward Equality*”⁶³. According to IFC COO Stephanie von Friedeburg, the business case for women in the ride sharing economy is formidable, as “research finds that under the right circumstances, the sector can boost women’s income potential, while at the same time provide a broader section of women access to places that aren’t served by public transportation or where they feel the existing options are less safe”.

Going forward, IFC Sri Lanka is gearing up toward compiling information for the 2020 *SheWorks* Knowledge Report, which will consolidate the valuable learnings and best practices generated from the *SheWorks* program so that they can be replicated in other companies, industries, and regions in the years to come.

Future areas of collaboration with partners and members have also been identified, which will help the *SheWorks* Sri Lanka program become more robust and effective in the months to come. The progress and results of the program thus far will serve as examples for other companies and organizations aiming for better and more profitable business practices through the implementation of vital gender-inclusive policies and practices.

For more information, please visit the IFC Gender Secretariat website (www.ifc.org/gender).

SheWorks Sri Lanka Partnership Members

An important part of the methodology of this report involved drawing on the practical experiences of the 18 SheWorks Sri Lanka member companies. IFC acknowledges with gratitude the invaluable contributions made by the following:



AIA is the largest independent publicly listed pan-Asian life insurance group – with a presence in 18 markets across the Asia-Pacific region serving millions of customers for a hundred years. AIA is a key player in Sri Lanka's insurance industry, serving its valued customers over three decades. AIA's distribution network covers the entire island. The company employs over 3,500 wealth planners and operates over 120 branch offices. The company has over 800 employees of whom 37 percent are women.



The Brandix Group is one of the largest exporters of apparel in Sri Lanka. As the holding company of the Brandix Group of companies, they are engaged in developing, manufacturing and marketing end-to-end apparel solutions to global fashion brands such as Victoria's Secret, Gap, Lands' End, Lane Bryant, Marks and Spencer, and others. The company has over 20,000 employees of whom 68 percent are women.



The CBL Group is one of the fastest growing and largest conglomerates in Sri Lanka that manufactures and markets many leading brands in biscuits, confectionery, cereal, soya-based products, organic fruit products and many other categories globally. Recognized as a technology and innovation-led producer, the CBL Group caters to a large overseas market and has a global presence across all continents. The company has over 5000 employees of whom 45 percent are women.



Diesel & Motor Engineering PLC (DIMO) is a conglomerate engaged in automobiles and automobile solutions vehicles, commercial vehicles, agri machinery, electro-mechanical, bio-medical and marine engineering. The company has over 1500 employees of whom 10 percent are women.



Fairway Holdings is a diversified business, offering lifestyle enhancing products and services. The Fairway Holdings company is known for luxury residences and has rapidly expanded into real estate, manufacturing and trading operations, renewable energy projects, biotechnology, financial services and travel & leisure industry. The company has over 300 employees out of whom 21 percent are women.



Hela Clothing (Hela) is a USD 200 million company focused on apparel manufacturing, design and innovation. Headquartered in Sri Lanka, the company has 12 factories across 4 countries. Hela works with leading brands in the US and Europe and provides design-to-delivery solutions in the intimate, sleep and casual wear product range. The company has over 7500 employees out of whom 71 percent are women.



Hemas is a Sri Lankan conglomerate with wellness, leisure and mobility businesses. Over a span of nearly seven decades, Hemas has delivered an award-winning range of diversified products and services. At present, Hemas provides employment to over 6500 individuals, of whom 28 percent are female employees.



The Jetwing family of companies is one of the leading privately-owned groups of companies focused on the travel and hospitality industries in Sri Lanka. Founded in the 1970s by Herbert Cooray, it is now a USD 60 million company. Jetwing employs over 3000 individuals, of whom 11 percent are women.



John Keells Holdings PLC (JKH) is Sri Lanka's largest listed conglomerate at the Colombo Stock Exchange. Businesses range from managing hotels and resorts in Sri Lanka and the Maldives to providing port, marine fuel and logistics services to IT solutions, manufacturing of food and beverages to running a chain of supermarkets, tea broking to stock broking, life insurance and banking. Member of the World Economic Forum and having issued Global Depository Receipts on the Luxemburg Stock Exchange, JKH is the first Sri Lankan company to be listed overseas. The company employs over 13,000 people, of whom 29 percent are women.



London Stock Exchange Group (LSEG) leads as a provider of financial technology products. With more than 40 financial service firms and exchange businesses around the world, it processes over one billion transactions annually. In Sri Lanka, the company employs over 500 workers, 22 percent of them women.



MAS Holdings manages a portfolio of businesses with a revenue of USD 1.8 billion. It is one of the largest design-to-delivery solutions providers in the apparel and textile manufacturing industry in South Asia. MAS is headquartered in Sri Lanka, has 53 manufacturing facilities across 16 countries, and design locations in key locations across the globe. The company has over 94,000 employees of whom 71 percent are women.



Melwire Group (Melwa), situated in Ja-Ela, is the only Sri Lankan owned facility with advanced technology in steel manufacturing. Melwa, in partnership with Hilton Hotels, has invested over USD 100 million to build over six-star class hotels in the country. The company employs over 100 individuals, of whom 24 percent are women.



The National Development Bank PLC (NDB) is a Sri Lankan banking and financial services institution, headquartered in Colombo. Over the past few years, the bank has established several strategic alliances with global and regional players such as DBS Bank, Singapore and AIA group. The Bank offers capital market related products and services through its subsidiary, NDB Capital Holdings Limited. NDB has over 1800 employees of whom 40 percent are women.



Richard Pieris & Company PLC (ARPICO) established in 1940 a conglomerate with interests in manufacturing, engineering, retail, plantation and rubber industries in Sri Lanka. With a staff of more than 25,000, the company's major brands include Arpitem, Arpidag and Arpico.



SANASA Development Bank PLC (SDB) is the apex bank of the co-operative sector and a leading partner of national development with a global focus. SDB has over 1500 employees of whom 48 percent are women.



South Asia Gateway Terminals (SAGT), the first private stevedoring company in Sri Lanka (with approximately 60 percent Sri Lankan shareholding), commenced operations in 1999, launching the Port of Colombo as global trade's eminent gateway hub to South Asia. Today, the terminal is one of three operators in the Port of Colombo and continues to offer the international container shipping community. SAGT has over 700 employees of whom 4 percent are women.



Standard Chartered PLC is a British multinational banking and financial services company headquartered in London, United Kingdom. They operate a network of more than 1,200 branches and outlets across more than 70 countries and employ around 87,000 people globally. Standard Chartered Bank in Sri Lanka has over 600 employees of whom 48 percent are women.



Virtusa is an American information technology services company founded in 1996 in Sri Lanka and has its headquarters in Westborough, Massachusetts, United States. The NASDAQ-listed company provides IT consulting, business consulting, systems implementation and application outsourcing services to large enterprises and software vendors.

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The IFC-DFAT Women in Work program in Sri Lanka, in partnership with leading private sector companies, aims to demonstrate that corporate performance can improve from closing gaps between women and men in the private sector.