BRANDIX APPAREL LIMITED
Fostering women leaders
Commitment to action

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

Australian Aid

IMAGE: COURTESY OF BRANDIX LANKA LTD

IFC
International Finance Corporation
Creating Markets, Creating Opportunities

brandix®
inspired solutions
About IFC
IFC—a member of the World Bank Group—is the largest global development institution focused on the private sector in emerging markets. We work in more than 100 countries, using our capital, expertise, and influence to create markets and opportunities in developing countries. In fiscal year 2020, we invested $22 billion in private companies and financial institutions in developing countries, leveraging the power of the private sector to end extreme poverty and boost shared prosperity. For more information, visit www.ifc.org.

About IFC’s Women in Work Program in Sri Lanka
Women in Work (WiW) is a five-year, $9.5 million initiative launched in partnership with the Australian government in April 2017. It is IFC’s largest, standalone country-based gender program designed to close gender gaps in the private sector while improving business performance. The program, which benefits from multisector program design and works closely with the World Bank on research, tackles women’s access to jobs and assets at the same time. It aims to increase women’s workforce participation in Sri Lanka’s private sector, create more and better jobs for women, and has the potential to increase profits and drive overall economic growth. WiW also contributes to the vision of the government of Sri Lanka where all citizens can achieve higher incomes and better standards of living by 2025.

COPYRIGHT AND DISCLAIMER NOTICE
© International Finance Corporation 2020. All rights reserved.
2121 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20433
Internet: www.ifc.org

The material in this work is copyrighted. Copying and/or transmitting portions or all of this work without permission may be a violation of applicable law. IFC encourages dissemination of its work and will normally grant permission to reproduce portions of the work promptly, and when the reproduction is for educational and non-commercial purposes, without a fee, subject to such attributions and notices as we may reasonably require.

IFC does not guarantee the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of the content included in this work, or for the conclusions or judgments described herein, and accepts no responsibility or liability for any omissions or errors (including, without limitation, typographical errors and technical errors) in the content whatsoever or for reliance thereon. The boundaries, colors, denominations, and other information shown on any map in this work do not imply any judgement on the part of the World Bank Group concerning the legal status of any territory or the endorsement or acceptance of such boundaries. The findings, interpretations, and conclusions expressed in this volume do not necessarily reflect the views of the Executive Directors of the World Bank Group or the governments they represent. The contents of this work are intended for general informational purposes only and are not intended to constitute legal, securities, or investment advice, an opinion regarding the appropriateness of any investment, or a solicitation of any type.

IFC or its affiliates may have an investment in, provide other advice or services to, or otherwise have a financial interest in, certain of the companies and parties (including named herein).

All other queries on rights and licenses, including subsidiary rights, should be addressed to IFC Communications, 2121 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20433. International Finance Corporation is an international organization established by Articles of Agreement among its member countries, and a member of the World Bank Group. All names, logos and trademarks are the property of IFC and you may not use any of such materials for any purpose without the express written consent of IFC. Additionally, “International Finance Corporation” and “IFC” are registered trademarks of IFC and are protected under international law.

November 2020
Brandix, a leader in Sri Lanka’s Apparel industry and adjudged ‘Exporter of the Year’ at the 2018/19 Presidential Export Awards, operates apparel manufacturing units in Sri Lanka, India and Bangladesh, with operations in Haiti, Cambodia and UK. The company continues its inspired journey in developing, manufacturing and marketing end-to-end apparel solutions to world-renowned brands, whilst empowering sustainable development in the communities it operates in. Brandix has over 53,000 employees of which approximately 85 percent are women.

CREATING HARASSMENT FREE WORKPLACES

Brandix developed a new anti-harassment policy in 2019 and is presently working on a comprehensive communication and awareness campaign on the policy covering all levels of staff. The policy was developed with insights from global best practices and upon engaging in knowledge sharing with other SheWorks member companies AIA, Hela, John Keells Holdings, MAS Holdings and National Development Bank. The company drafted a detailed policy covering procedure, reporting structures and staff protection. Driving anti-harassment from the top down, the company has taken a zero-tolerance stance with the leadership vocally advocating for a healthy respectful workplace across all tiers.

An in-house counseling team is always made available to staff in general, while the company is in the process of developing a new tri-lingual communications plan to disseminate information on the anti-harassment policy. The communication will focus on socializing the policy material taking into consideration its sensitivities, while reinforcing the company’s zero tolerance stance towards harassment.

“I have been working here for a little over two years and I can safely say that I nor my colleagues have encountered any harassment by far, and we are confident that we will not in the future as well. The company goes to the extent of orienting the spouses and parents about the work we do and provide us with a safe environment and safe transportation as well.”

Pathampriya
Senior Production Associate – Team Leader, Batticaloa, Brandix Apparel

BUSINESS RESULTS:

- Share of women in the non-executive cadre increased from 33% to 75%
- Overall share of women in the workforce increased from 67% to 71%
- Share of women in leadership increased from 12% to 17%
- Percentage of women in the executive cadre has increased by 26% to 32%
To ensure they assess candidates in line with the aim of fostering a respectful workplace, Brandix worked with Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) to draft a series of questions to be asked at the interview stage of recruitment for all staff. These questions are designed to understand the candidate’s compatibility with the values of the company and raise behavioral red flags, if any.

**SUPPORTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF FEMALE LEADERSHIP**

Brandix identified the middle tier of leadership as a challenging layer for women to break into. In 2019, an 18-month leadership training program was introduced. Through this, 73 candidates have been selected for succession, including 13 women. They are being supported with skills development and leadership training as well as coaching and mentoring.

“Through our collaborations with other SheWorks companies, we learnt that the process we had earlier with just one central committee for anti-harassment is inadequate and can be replaced with a cluster approach across our premises. We have therefore included this approach into the new policy. Through SheWorks, we learnt that it is very important to empower each employee to feel safe enough to speak up, and to create the infrastructure to enable them to be vocal.”

**Nilangani De Silva**
Head - Group Capability, Brandix Lanka Limited

As a result of SheWorks, the two biggest competitors in the apparel industry came together to brainstorm our anti-harassment policy. I think that alone is an achievement. These competitors were at one table working together for one cause, which was quite inspiring!"

**Anusha Alles**
Head - Corporate Social Responsibility, Brandix Lanka Limited
PERSONAL ADVANCEMENT AND CAREER ENHANCEMENT (P.A.C.E)

The GAP Inc. flagship initiative – Personal Advancement and Career Enhancement (P.A.C.E) – learning program at Brandix, targets associate level female workers, providing personal and professional capacity building. Initiated in 2012, the program has since been expanded across the Group. Having developed the first batch of 68 P.A.C.E trainers and master trainers in 2018, the company increased the number to 130 trainers, of which 100 are master trainers in 2019. Lessons learned through SheWorks have influenced the curriculum of P.A.C.E. with subjects like financial literacy being introduced to the program. The company observes a sharp uptick in the rate of promotion for staff who undergo the P.A.C.E program, with more women being promoted to supervisory roles, an uncommon trend in the apparel industry. As of now, 46 percent of P.A.C.E. participants have received advancements in their careers.

FACING COVID-19

The pandemic expedited the introduction of the Brandix Flexible Work Policy, which encompasses flexible working hours, flex-week, flex-location and work from home modalities. The policy is planned for socialization and implementation across the company by November 2020, supported by a communication plan to share best practices and tips, and reinforce the importance of employee accountability throughout the process.

Brandix further engaged in personal protective equipment (PPE) manufacturing during this period and deployed its factories in Sri Lanka and India to meet the growing national and international need for health and safety gear. Throughout its operations, the company always remained committed to treating the safety of its employees as a non-negotiable priority and ensured complete alignment with Government regulations and practices.
Thuyamathy’s Story

Thuyamathy Makeshwaran
Sewing Associate, Batticaloa

“I saw a sewing machine for the first time when I joined Brandix. I was so nervous and just wanted to run back home. It’s been over two and a half years since I’ve joined and I have handled multiple roles on the production floor with confidence,” says Thuyamathy.

The Brandix Essential Factory commenced in late 2017 with 300 employees and now counts close to 5,000 employees. Women make up 90 percent of the workforce, of whom 56 percent are single female headed households; 18 percent are widows. As most of the factory staff are the sole income earners for their families, P.A.C.E includes life skills with practical tools to build the capabilities of women economically and socially. Relevant lessons learnt through SheWorks have also been incorporated to the P.A.C.E program.

Thuyamathy says, “Undergoing the P.A.C.E program was a life-changing experience – I finally understood what savings and investments meant. As a sole income earner, on a monthly basis I ensure to save money in different accounts for my three children and myself. I’ve also learnt to self-sustain and reduce our monthly expenses by investing and growing our own vegetables and chickens. I am much bolder and braver, and these life skills also help me negotiate and navigate problems much more effectively”
The IFC-DFAT Woman in Work program in Sri Lanka, partnering with leading private sector companies, aims to demonstrate that corporate performances can improve from closing gaps between women and men in the private sector.