Fairway Holdings

Facilitating diversity and inclusion through meeting parent’s needs

Commitment to action
**About IFC**

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**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.

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An award-winning luxury property development company that has diversified to include real estate, manufacturing and trade, renewable energy, biotechnology, financial services and travel and leisure. The company has over 750 employees of which 24 percent are women.

PROVIDING QUALITY CHILDCARE SUPPORT TO PARENTS

This service is offered for a nominal fee to employees, the Fairway creche was opened in January 2018 at the company’s head office in Colombo. The creche is open to all staff and caters to children aged six months to five years, and services have been extended to include after-school care as well. It has been so popular that it currently has a waiting list.

After establishing the creche, significant improvements have been made in the retention of new mothers, with maternity return rates improving from 65% to 100% in 2019.

Committed to building a gender diverse organization, Fairway established a creche in line with the company’s diversity and inclusion policy. A dedicated inter-departmental team including human resources, cross functional business and parents was formed, under the overall guidance of the top management, to execute the creche plan. Fairway connected with other SheWorks companies that had piloted similar childcare facilities, such as Standard Chartered Bank, as well as the Sri Lanka Child Protection Authority during the planning phase, for guidance and to ensure the facility met all safety standards and regulations.

The creche is managed in-house with staff, facilities and resources provided by Fairway. The company invested approximately 4.5 million rupees to develop and open the facility and incurs monthly operating costs of 200,000 rupees. Qualified professionals are hired to care for the children and the creche boasts a garden space, lactation room and child-friendly interior design.

Parents provide meals and change of clothes for children while a daily logbook is maintained for each child tracking: food, sleeping schedules, hygiene, speech and social traits etc. Monthly meetings are held with parents to address any grievances.

In addition to childcare services, the company offers flexible working hours, medical benefits and extended maternity leave for new mothers on a case by case basis.

BUSINESS RESULTS:

- Increase in share of women on boards from 16.6% to 37.5%
- On-site childcare facility increased maternity return rates from 65% to 100%
- First time recruits of female pilots 66%
- Women representation in real estate sector Senior Management 66%
Thilanka’s Story

When Thilanka Dissanayaka’s son was almost two years old, a tough decision loomed ahead of her. Her elderly mother-in-law who had been helping to care for her son was unable to continue doing so, due to health concerns. Thilanka was faced with either finding a satisfactory day care center or resigning from her post as Senior Manager Business Development at Fairway.

“It was a tough time, with no place to leave our baby while we were at work, I was thinking of resigning to care for my little one. It was during this time that they opened the creche at Fairway. I now had the luxury of having my baby in the same building, where I could check on him. I didn’t need to give up on my career goals anymore and could provide good quality care for my child,” said Thilanka who has been employed with Fairway for ten years.

“The company gave parents the task of interior design for the creche, with free reign on the budget. Fairway went over and above our expectations in making this a safe, trusted space for our kids. My son loves going here!” shared Thilanka, adding that having the creche facility has helped reduce stress levels at work and increased her ability to concentrate on closing her sales, without worrying for her child’s welfare.
PROMOTING WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

Focused gender recruitment and promotion strategies have helped to increase women in leadership roles at the group level. From 2018 onwards the group has seen an increase in share of women on boards from 16.6 to 37.5 percent. A more than 50 percent increase has been witnessed in the number of women in senior management positions.

ADVANCING WOMEN IN NON-TRADITIONAL ROLES

Women’s under-representation as pilots, as well as in maintenance, repair and overhaul, is largely a result of stereotyped views in the airline industry. To advance gender equality in management positions, at the Fairway Aviation Academy, for the first time, two female pilot instructors have been recruited to provide pilot training from casual to commercial airline pilots. Women are also represented in managerial positions in the renewable energy sector.

The real estate sector is considered the core business of Fairway, where the sales team consists of 50 percent women with 66 percent of the senior management team also female. Evidence shows that the rise in women senior management is resulting in increased productivity by the staff.

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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.