Hela Clothing

Our strength lies in our diversity

Commitment to action
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.

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Hela Clothing (Hela) is a $200 Million company focused on apparel manufacturing, design and innovation headquartered in Sri Lanka. The company has eight factories across Kenya, Ethiopia, Sri Lanka, and employs over 15,000, of which 71 percent are women.

**CELEBRATING ZERO DISCRIMINATION DAY**

In the lead up to Zero Discrimination Day, Hela introduced a new policy on Sexual Harassment and strengthened existing ones to ensure that the workspace remains a safe space for all. These policies include anti-bullying, third party grievance mechanism, non-discrimination, equal employment opportunity and sexual harassment in the workplace.

Furthermore, in partnership with the Employee Federation of Ceylon (EFC) an awareness training on workplace harassment was developed and made mandatory for all employees from the executive level up. This training will also be extended to the factory staff.

**BUSINESS RESULTS:**

- Increase in employee satisfaction
- Employees feel respected and safer at work
- 13% of middle managers are women

In my long career, this is the first awareness session on workplace harassment and bullying that I have ever attended. This experience was an eye opener as a manager and a human. Now I am clear on how to voice out any inappropriate incident or even engage in an intervention, as a by-stander, if I see it happen to someone else."

*Muditha Ediriweera,
General Manager – Merchandising.*

At Hela we strongly believe that it is our differences that make us strong. This belief is reflected in our hiring, promotion and retention policies, which help us nurture a culture of inclusivity. It is the different experiences, mindsets and points-of-view we all bring to the table that help us think outside the box and evaluate problems in interesting new ways to reveal novel solutions."

*Manique Jayasooriya
Group General Manager - Human Resources & Administration*
TACKLING CHILDCARE IN THE WORKPLACE

Building on the SheWorks childcare learning events, Hela established a childcare facility at its factory in Kenya. This was in response to findings from an internal staff survey which indicated parents were enrolling children at low-quality childcare facilities because of financial constraints. These services often resulted in children becoming exposed to illnesses and other poor conditions. As a result, parents were often absent or were unable to focus at work due to concerns about the wellbeing of their children. The Kenya facility has the capacity for 70 children and caters for day and night shift workers. The on-site childcare facility is managed by nannies trained in early childhood development to ensure that children receive the best care and follow a curriculum that supports their mental and physical development.

In Sri Lanka, Hela supports parents in several ways. These include providing a daycare subsidy for children up to age six, a special healthy meal for pregnant women from the canteen, and 14 days of paid paternity leave for new fathers.

Hela was recently awarded the ‘Most Inclusive Employer of the Year’ by the Ethiopian Centre for Disability and Development (ECDD) at the Inclusive Employers Forum. This award was in recognition of Hela’s efforts to nurture a culture of inclusivity within their workforce that is exhibited in their hiring, promoting and retention policies. While these policies were awarded in Ethiopia, they are standard operating procedure across the Group.

UPSKILLING AND PROVIDING A SECONDARY INCOME SOURCE

To provide factory staff with a secondary income source, the company created the Hela Diriliya Club. This initiative allows each factory to execute projects that will help staff generate a secondary income. Through an internal survey, the areas identified for income generation are home gardening, plant nurseries, food manufacturing, transportation, and beauty and skin care.

Hela supports interested employees by developing an action plan, providing technical training and linking participants with a market for their products. By the end of 2020, 350 female factory staff will have completed the pilot of the Diriliya program.

Muditha's Story

Muditha Ediriweera
General Manager, Hela Clothing

“Growing up, I have gone through the struggle of not being financially independent. My family could not afford my school fees. I was determined to not drop out of the Advance Level (A/L) class and started earning a little by giving English lessons. With that I managed to pay for my own education and successfully completed school.”

“When I made the decision to get into the garment sector, I was very aware that I was in it to build my career as I was very passionate about design and pattern making. Just like most garment workers, I also got married at a very young age, 22 years old, and had children right after but was determined not to quit my career as I was the bread winner of my family.”

Muditha started her journey as a Merchandizer in Hela Clothing seven years ago and has grown within the company and was recently promoted from Deputy General Manager to General Manager. She handles 56 percent of the business volume of intimates wear and manages a team of 80.

She says, “Hela invests in their people, especially in on-the-job learning experience. I was sent on a four-month PVH Internship Program in New York, which gave me the technical and business skills required to perform at my best on the job. My line managers also have been great coaches and sponsors of my work.”
During the nation-wide curfew that was in place between March and June, Hela experienced an increase in demand for some products from international buyers. As a result, the company required a number of its factory employees to attend work. This was done in a safe and secure manner under the guidance of the Ministry of Health and with approval from the government. Hela prioritized employee health and safety during this time ensuring that no team member would be put at risk. In addition to providing transportation to and from work along with on-site meals during shifts, Hela set in place stringent safety protocols that included temperature checks, mandatory face masks, compulsory hand sanitization every couple of hours, staggered mealtimes, and a host of other procedures. The factory was also divided into four zones to prevent the possibility of an outbreak and allow for physical distancing within the premises.

Further, to alleviate the concerns of employees during this difficult and confusing time, Hela provided access to a 24-hour hotline to allow employees to access counselling and mental health and wellness support.

While the pandemic may have impeded the delivery of training and development programs it did not stop them. Over 60 technical and soft skill development programs were successfully completed over the course of the pandemic, through a combination of face-to-face and online learning. The programs included Strategic Thinking in Uncertain Times, Business Planning and Managing your Finances during a Crisis, Telework and Virtual Teams, and Business Continuity - IR and HR Challenges.

**INTRODUCING PERSONAL ADVANCEMENT AND CAREER ENHANCEMENT (P.A.C.E) PROGRAM**

The PACE program introduced by PVH Corp. was launched at Hela in February 2020. It provides female factory staff with training on life and technical skills and helps them advance both in the workplace and in their personal life. To date over 210 female staff members across four factories have completed modules on communications, problem solving and decision making, financial and legal literacy and wellbeing. Hela aims to reach 10,000 female workers by 2022 across Sri Lanka, Kenya and Ethiopia. The program includes health and empowerment information on issues such as sexual and reproductive health, maternity care, and nutrition.

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Hela provides multiple platforms to build our skills and knowledge on the job. Be it “Shark Tank” debates, weekly presentations on any business topic or webinars. They help us learn the importance of business strategies, building trust with our customer and team, and most importantly it boosts my confidence level. Our leadership team gives us the opportunity to speak up”.

Jayani Chinthika Weerasekera
Assistant Manager, Merchandising, Hela Clothing
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.