SANASA Development Bank PLC

Banking on women as a pillar of success

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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SANASA Development Bank PLC (SDB), a licensed specialized bank registered by the Central Bank of Sri Lanka, under the Banking Act No. 30 of 1988. SDB bank serves rural and underbanked communities through an extensive network of over 8,500 co-operative societies and government organizations countrywide. SDB has an island-wide network of 94 branches and a workforce of over 1,500 staff of which 48 percent are women.

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

SDB continues its upward trajectory of women at the helm, recently appointing Dinithi Ratnayake to the Board of Directors and Delrene Seneviratne as the Deputy Chief Executive Officer. The bank also recorded a 6-percentage point increase of women in senior and middle management. Ms Seneviratna was selected by IFC to serve as an IFC Trailblazer and share insights on economic inclusion for women-owned or led SMEs at global panel on managing the COVID-19 crisis.

“I was never made to feel that being a woman would be an issue in fulfilling my job role. When I was promoted as a Branch Manager, it was my skills and experience that were considered and the bank supported me in developing my capacity with technical training as well as personal capacity building.”

Sewwandi Muthumali
Kaduwela Branch Manager, SDB bank

Currently there are two major management development programs conducted for the Corporate Management. There is a coaching program also running parallel to these. ‘Corporate Leader’ is the program for the Corporate Team with consists of 50 percent female representation. The Management Development program for managers has 25 participants, where there is only one woman as this is the first batch. Further SDB bank has commenced a fitness program for women with about 40 staff participating.

“I The bank tries to maintain 50:50 gender representation at all tiers and this is reflected as both men and women progress in their careers. The bank recognized my aptitude and gave me the opportunity to transition to a more technical role. Half my staff are women and I am proud to be a mentor to them.

Lakmini Muththunga
Head of Systems and Operations, SDB bank

BUSINESS RESULTS:

Number of women in senior management has increased by 3% to 29%

Number of women in middle management has increased by 3% to 43%

Number of women in non-executive roles has increased from 16% to 56%

WSME portfolio has increased to Rs. 1.6 Bn since the launch in 2018.

60 Financial Literacy programs have been conducted for over 6000 women island-wide.
STRENGTHENING WOMEN IN THE VALUE CHAIN

The UN Sustainable Development Goal 5, to Achieve Gender Equality and Empower all Women and Girls, is a key pillar in SDB Bank’s 2020 strategic plan. Mainstreaming this goal to the company business strategy the bank introduced a MSME loan product to ‘SDB Uththamavi Initiative’ in 2018 specifically targeting women to enhance capacity building in financial literacy and client engagement. Uththamavi translates to mean ‘empowered woman,’ and offers female clients a comprehensive financial solutions package including savings, structured savings, investment accounts and MSME and SME loans.

Many women entrepreneurs encounter barriers in access to finance often with businesses registered in a male relative’s name instead of their own. Lack of collateral and low levels of financial education sees them operating in the unregulated financial sector to fulfil capital needs. The SDB Uththamavi SME loan facility was introduced so that these women entrepreneurs can meet their financial business needs, offering collateral free MSME, SME and personal loan facilities up to 10 million rupees, including insurance benefits to those obtaining a loan.

Since the launch, Uththamavi MSME loan and has attracted over 3,000 accounts with a total portfolio value of 1.6 billion rupees to date.

“Banking on women is a corner stone in our 2020 strategic plan. Our goal is to build a strong backbone of female entrepreneurs. We have expanded our initiatives to fit the needs of the women in the sector, extending our free workshops on financial literacy to include business management and start-up development, removing obstacles that existed in access to finance and introducing digital onboarding to enable more women access to digital financial solutions.”

Delrene Seneviratne
Head of Business, SDB bank

In my experience of 12 years as a development banker, my understanding is that women are an asset in the banking sector. In most Sri Lankan homes, mothers are the financial controllers. So they have a drive to earn and save for the betterment of the family. On average women’s repayment rates are high they are disciplined and keen to learn new skills like bookkeeping and business planning.

Nilupama Madurawala
Senior Manager – Product Development and Retail Business, SDB bank
DIGITAL FINANCIAL INCLUSION

By educating Uththamavi account holders to utilize internet banking through digital onboarding sessions held at local branches, SDB Bank is encouraging more women to use their Business Internet Banking platform, mobile app facility including fund transfers, on-line savings and FD A/C creations and make bill payments through the bank’s UPay App including Lanka QR code payments. SDB goes beyond just financial services and fosters socio-economic progress by improving financial literacy and teaching sound financial habits among local communities. SDB bank UPay payment app recently reached 115,000 registered users. SDB has a rapidly growing SME customer base, and its varied portfolio provides solutions that span areas such as development, personal banking and leasing, while deposit products encourage rural communities to invest and save.

ENTREPRENEUR FINANCIAL CENTRE IN SRI LANKA IN COLLABORATION WITH OTHER COMPANIES

SDB in collaboration with multiple stakeholders of SANASA group has launched the Entrepreneur Financial Centre in Sri Lanka (EFCS) for value chain financing in four selected segments: pepper, traditional rice, tourism and bananas. Under the above value chain projects, heavy emphasis has been placed on financing women supply chain players and promoting entrepreneurship amongst women.

Under the SDB Uththamavi initiative for women, 60 financial literacy programs have been successfully completed since 2018 for more than 6,000 women around the country, free of charge. This is a special tailor-made training program for women on financial planning, financial products, entrepreneurship and digital banking services. The aim is to make aware the women of financial literacy, banking and digital banking services. This is a CSR project carried out for SDB customers as well as for non-customers. A MOU has been signed with John Keels Foundation (JKF) to conduct Financial Literacy Programs focusing women and youth.

PROMOTING RESPECTFUL AND SUPPORTIVE WORKPLACES

SDB bank recently set-up regional Human Resources (HR) teams to lead grievance and HR functions for staff including branch employees, 50 percent of whom are women. Through this mechanism, SDB hopes to demonstrate the organization’s commitment towards a safe, respectful workplace, while implementing a structured process on gender specific issues.

EXTERNAL EVENTS

Taking its commitment to the recruitment and promotion of women to a wider audience, SDB Bank was the platinum sponsor of the Academy of Administrative Professionals workshop for women at work. A capacity building training session and networking event participated by executives from Sanasa as well as other organizations.

SDB bank earned a spot in the top 50 of the prestigious, Brand Finance Sri Lanka’s 17th annual review ‘Sri Lanka’s 100 most valuable brands’, earning the additional distinction of clinching the top spot among first-time entrants. With a brand value of 2029 million rupees, SDB Bank surpassed significantly larger banks to earn the accolade of being one of the best performing brands in the country.

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From the targeted 1000 workshops for 2020, the bank had allocated 150 workshops specifically for women. Of which 50 workshops had been conducted prior to COVID-19 lockdown. From the new women clients who came from these workshops, we had a net increase of LKR 800 million to the bank portfolio.”

Champa Dassanayake,
Head of SME Banking, SDB bank
**FACING COVID-19**

SDB bank continued to function during the COVID 19 pandemic lockdown. Staff worked from home and were equipped with laptops and internet connectivity. Customers were engaged through the bank’s robust digital platforms. SDB Bank also facilitated special liquidity lines to co-operative societies, enabling them to better support their membership and thereby stay relevant while facing the crisis.

“The COVID situation was tough. Our usual Business Continuity Plans did not apply in this scenario. But we were able to rally, distributing laptops to staff and ensuring our financial support functions continued uninterrupted. The teams have been working around the clock to roll out relief packages and ensure we served our clients’ needs at this most dire time.”

*Lakmini Muththunga,*
Head of Systems and Operations, SDB bank
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.