



GENDER-SMART BUSINESS SOLUTIONS

PAKISTAN BUSINESS COUNCIL HELPS BOOST WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT



IFC

**International
Finance Corporation**
WORLD BANK GROUP

Creating Markets, Creating Opportunities

CASE STUDY: PAKISTAN BUSINESS COUNCIL

Boosting Women's Employment



Project Overview

There is an enormous opportunity to increase Pakistan's GDP by 30 percent¹; that opportunity resides in women's economic participation. In Pakistan, the female labor force participation rate is only 24 percent², although 47 percent of students enrolled in Pakistan's universities were women. Recruiting women into the formal workforce represents a significant opportunity for Pakistani companies, as workforce diversity has been linked to a variety of business benefits, including increased productivity, competitiveness, and growth³.

To help Pakistan's companies tap into this large and underutilized pool of female talent, the Pakistan Business Council, or PBC, partnered with the International Finance Corporation to use IFC's research, company tools, and expertise with the aim of advancing women's employment. By identifying and addressing barriers to women's employment that originate in and outside the workplace, PBC member companies are strengthening their workplaces. The partnership is part of a larger IFC effort to drive economic development and close gaps between men and women in the economy.

Objectives

PBC is a business advocacy forum composed of 79 private sector businesses, collectively representing 11 percent of Pakistan's national economy⁴. Just prior to the partnership with IFC, PBC's Centre of Excellence in Responsible Business conducted a survey of its member companies and found that most firms had less than 20 percent of women in their workforce. Through this initiative, PBC and IFC set out to mobilize companies in Pakistan to increasing their knowledge on successful approaches for recruiting, retaining, and promoting more women while achieving better business outcomes. Specific objectives for PBC members included the following:

- Enhance PBC-member companies' understanding of the business case for women's employment
- Strengthen the capacity of participating PBC-member firms to apply in their companies' practical approaches and solutions that work
- Increase the knowledge of participating PBC-member firms on the topic through the mutual sharing of their experiences while replicating the most effective solutions.

Challenges

Currently, women in Pakistan hold only one in 14 jobs in the country's businesses⁵. In the country, just one in 17 companies, or about 6 percent, is led by a woman⁶. Research shows that several factors keep women out of the workforce or hold them back in their careers. Firms may harbor biases against hiring women or may not have amenities such as restrooms for women. They may not have policies to protect women from sexual harassment or facilities such as flextime, lactation rooms, childcare, for working mothers. Women also can be held back by disproportionate household responsibilities, including time spent on unpaid care, and constrained by limited mobility due to harassment on transportation systems. Underlying these challenges is a legal framework that does not create an equal playing field for women in the workplace. Specifically, Pakistan's laws—for example, the Sindh Shops and Commercial Establishment Act of 2015 and the Provincial Employees Social Security Ordinance of 1965—prohibit women, unlike men, from working night shifts and in some industries⁷. Laws also do not mandate parental leave or equal remuneration for work of equal value⁸.

IFC and Women's Employment

This IFC-PBC partnership is part of the global IFC Women's Employment Program that provides gender-smart business solutions to IFC clients in manufacturing, agribusiness, and services. It supports private sector client companies undertake employment assessments and provides them with customized in-depth advisory for advancing women's employment. The partnership also supports business networks deliver knowledge activities to their member companies on effective strategies to increase women's employment.

1 IFC (2018). Nadeem A. Siddiqui, IFC Senior Country Manager for Pakistan

2 International Labour Organization, ILOSTAT database (2019). Available at: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.FE.ZS?locations=PK>

3 IFC (2018). Nadeem A. Siddiqui, IFC Senior Country Manager for Pakistan

4 Pakistan Business Council (2019). Available at: <https://www.pbc.org.pk/>

5 The World Bank (2013). "Enterprise Surveys." Available at: <http://www.enterprisesurveys.org/data/exploretopics/gender>

6 The World Bank (2013). "Enterprise Surveys." Available at: <http://www.enterprisesurveys.org/data/exploretopics/gender>

7 World Bank Group (2018). Women, Business and the Law. Available at: <http://wbl.worldbank.org/en/data/exploreeconomies/pakistan/2018>

8 Ibid.

Addressing Gender Gaps and Delivering Results

PBC members expressed interest in learning more on the topics of female employee retention, anti-sexual harassment policies, women in leadership, and the business case for women's employment. Over the course of this 12-month project, IFC and PBC produced a series of peer-learning activities and knowledge tools to address these inquiries, for both PBC member companies and the wider Pakistani private sector. The project covered more than 335 executives from the Pakistan business community.

AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

Enhancing Business Community Awareness on the Value of Women in the Workforce

- Video: An awareness video was produced profiling Pakistani companies with initiatives aimed at boosting the share of women in their workforce, bringing them into nontraditional careers, and placing value on women as customers. Profiled companies include HUBCO, Standard Chartered Bank, UBL, and Unilever. This video addressed cultural stereotypes of women's employment and included testimonials from these business leaders regarding the business case for diversifying the talent pool in their respective companies, including offering women opportunities to hold positions traditionally reserved for men. The video recorded about 100,000 individual views.
- Five local Pakistani company case studies were produced and disseminated. The case studies on Artistic Milliners, HBL Pakistan, Interloop, National Foods and Packages- highlighted how each of the companies increased workforce gender diversity in one of the following five areas: women in leadership, combating sexual harassment, women in nontraditional roles, introducing family-friendly policies, and implementing equal opportunity recruitment practices.
- Conferences: Two conferences were held to foster peer-to-peer learning and create momentum for change. Over 150 participants attended the conferences. Messages shared at the conferences reached more than 230,000 Twitter users and showed up in feeds over 400,000 times. Companies announced gender diversity pledges and reported on progress at each of the events.

TRAINING OF MALE AND FEMALE CORPORATE LEADERS

Women and Men Working Together to Break the Glass Ceiling

- Webinar Series: Three webinars were held covering topics such tackling childcare, sexual harassment, equal pay, and advancing women in business leadership. These webinars provide knowledge to over 130 executives on the business case for women's employment, how to offer private sector-supported childcare, and how to develop effective anti-sexual harassment mechanisms.
- Leadership Training: IFC and PBC delivered a face-to-face training in conjunction with the Pakistan Institute of Corporate Governance, which brought together 14 male CEOs and 24 women executives. As a result, the knowledge about the positive business impact of gender diverse leadership was increased, pipeline building of female ready board members was discussed, and action plans for advancing women at senior levels of businesses were co-created. The training also led to two of the female participants facilitating similar subsequent training.

COMPANY COMMITMENTS & PLEDGES

Walking the Talk on Gender Diversity

- 22 PBC member companies made commitments to advance workforce gender diversity such as signing the Women's Empowerment Principles⁹ and conducting a childcare-needs assessment. These companies included Artistic Milliners, English Biscuit, GSK, and Indus Group. Companies made public pledges to create more or better jobs for women in their workforce; four of these companies delivered on their pledges and more companies are following.

AWARDING EMPLOYER OF CHOICE FOR WOMEN

Providing National Recognition

- Award: PBC members were invited to compete for the 2018 Employer of Choice for Gender Balance award. Twenty-four companies entered the competition. Three companies—Serena Hotels, HBL Pakistan and Telenor—were highlighted as top performers, receiving gold, silver, and bronze awards, respectively, for their efforts to advance gender diversity and equality in the workplace. The Employer of Choice for Gender Balance Award has now been institutionalized within PBC as an annual event to celebrate and award companies that are creating more and better jobs for women.

What the Client says

"Gender equality is one of our key strategic areas, and the collective efforts of PBC and IFC will further enable equal opportunities for women in the workplace—helping reduce the gender gap and contributing to the growth of Pakistan's economy."—Ehsan Malik, CEO, the Pakistan Business Council

"I see this event as a platform for companies to not only showcase their initiatives but also as a learning opportunity from one another."—Jawad Gilani, Head of Organizational Excellence, Packages Ltd.

"Covering Interloop as a case study has provided great encouragement to our teams and inspired us to keep pushing boundaries. It has been useful in highlighting our efforts to our stakeholders, including our customers, helping create useful networks and relationships for future collaboration."—Faryal Sadiq, Vice President of People and Organization Development, Interloop

"When organizations have gender balance, their revenue lines are much better than their competitors. We were initially hesitant to employ women in some roles but now they are the top performers in these roles."—Muhammad Umer, Head of HR, Standard Chartered Bank, Pakistan

"The key to my success is ambition and drive. When I set out to work it's not like I am competing with men; it's about women reclaiming their own space."—Shiza Nasir, Project Engineer, HUBCO

What IFC says

"Pakistan's private sector has a critical role to play in ensuring that women have access to more and better jobs ... IFC is committed to working with the private sector in Pakistan to create equal employment opportunities, decent working conditions, and lucrative career paths for women, and we will continue to do more."—Nadeem A. Siddiqui, Senior Country Manager for Pakistan, IFC

"We are delighted with the success of this partnership and the number of people we've been able to reach in the business community. But we also know there's still a long way to go. IFC remains committed to working with individual firms to help them develop and implement gender-smart strategies to attract and retain women in their workforce."—Shabana Khawar, Principal Country Officer in Pakistan, IFC

⁹ The Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs) are a set of Principles for business offering guidance on how to empower women in the workplace, marketplace and community. They are the result of a collaboration between the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) and the United Nations Global Compact and are adapted from the Calvert Women's Principles[®]. For more information: <https://www.unglobalcompact.org/take-action/action/womens-principles>

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About IFC

IFC—a sister organization of the World Bank and member of the World Bank Group—is the largest global development institution focused on the private sector in emerging markets. We work with more than 2,000 businesses worldwide, using our capital, expertise, and influence to create markets and opportunities in the toughest areas of the world. In fiscal year 2018, we delivered more than \$23 billion in long-term financing for developing countries, leveraging the power of the private sector to end extreme poverty and boost shared prosperity. For more information, visit www.ifc.org.

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GENDER BALANCE AWARDS



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