



Advancing Gender Diversity through Equal Opportunity Recruitment Practices

CASE STUDY

Packages Limited

Manufacturing, Pakistan

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IN COLLABORATION WITH



FOREWORD BY IFC

Pakistan's economy is presently growing at just under 6 percent annually. The country's GDP could grow by 30 percent if women and men participated equally in the workforce. Women's education levels in Pakistan have increased over time. Yet, only a quarter of women are working compared to over 80 percent of men. The gap is staggering and closing it represents a huge economic opportunity for Pakistan.



In addition to Pakistan's economy, closing gender gaps is also good for Pakistan's businesses. The competitiveness and growth of Pakistan's firms could be significantly enhanced if firms could bring into their company diverse skills and talents, which are urgently needed to be more productive and innovative. Despite competition over attracting and retaining skilled employees, few companies have widened their search for talent and skills by tapping into Pakistan's vastly underutilized female talent pool.

A 2017 study by The Pakistan Business Council's (PBC) Centre of Excellence in Responsible Business (CERB) found that women represent less than 20 percent of the workforce of 90 percent of the surveyed PBC member firms. Although this is higher than the national average of less than 10 percent women in the formal, private sector workforce, in most cases, women continue to be underrepresented in formal employment and earn less than men for equivalent work. Pakistan's private sector has a critical role to play in ensuring that women have access to more and better jobs.

A growing number of forward-looking Pakistani companies are now starting to see the business case for gender diversity, even in sectors considered non-traditional for women. To expand this awareness and turn it into action, IFC partnered with PBC to bring to Pakistan IFC's global research and advisory expertise on the business case and good practices for advancing women's employment.

These case studies are part of a series of initiatives that IFC and PBC have jointly led over the past year to mobilize more companies in Pakistan to increase gender diversity in their workforce. The aim of the case studies is to provide guidance to Pakistani firms on successful approaches for recruiting, retaining, and promoting more women and achieving better business outcomes.

The case studies feature five PBC member companies that are promoting greater inclusion of women in their workforce in five thematic areas: Artistic Milliners Limited for the Women in Business Leadership theme, HBL for the Anti-Sexual Harassment theme, Interloop Limited for the Women in Non-Traditional Roles theme, National Foods Limited for the Family-Friendly Policies theme, and Packages Limited for the Equal Opportunity Recruitment Practices theme. HBL and Packages are IFC investment clients and Artistic Milliners and Interloop are IFC advisory clients.

Our aim is that these case studies will reach many businesses in Pakistan and help them better understand the business case for women's employment, get insights into the approaches that work, and learn from each other's experiences while replicating solutions.

On behalf of IFC, I would like to thank the companies that participated in this project and generously shared their data and good practices, and PBC for their commitment to this important agenda. 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.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "N. Siddiqui". The signature is stylized and fluid.

Nadeem A. Siddiqui

Senior Country Manager for Pakistan

International Finance Corporation, World Bank Group

FOREWORD BY THE PAKISTAN BUSINESS COUNCIL



The Pakistan Business Council (PBC) is a business advocacy forum composed of the largest businesses including multinationals that have significant investment in and a long-term commitment to Pakistan. Members' turnover represents 11% of Pakistan's GDP and they contribute 25% of the taxes and exports. Our key advocacy thrust is on easing barriers for Pakistani businesses in the wake of progressive regional and global free trade, as well as improving national investment flows to match target GDP growth rates.

PBC works closely with the relevant government departments, ministries, regulators and institutions, as well as other stakeholders including professional bodies, to develop consensus on major issues which impact the conduct of business in and from Pakistan. It has submitted key position papers and recommendations to the government on legislation and other government policies affecting businesses. PBC also serves on various taskforces and committees of the Government of Pakistan as well as those of the State Bank of Pakistan, the Securities & Exchange Commission of Pakistan, and other regulators with the objective to provide policy assistance on new initiatives and reforms.

The Centre of Excellence in Responsible Business (CERB) is the first of PBC's outreach initiatives to build capacity and capability of businesses in Pakistan. CERB's vision is to assist Pakistani businesses to pursue long term sustainability and value creation, and its mission is to contribute towards inclusive social development. As part of its strategic objectives, CERB engages with businesses and industry leaders to provide a clear direction towards conducting responsible business in Pakistan. It leverages private sector growth as a means for development and poverty reduction taking guidance from the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals framework.

CERB's aim is to identify and impart good practices from within the PBC member companies and work towards changing the mind-set of the many businesses that are not members of PBC but contribute equally to Pakistan's economy.

In the context of gender equality, PBC is privileged to have partnered with the International Finance Corporation over the past year and, as part of our collaborative efforts to enhance women's employment in Pakistan, we have together worked on five case studies where opportunities among domestically-owned companies to do so have been highlighted. On behalf of PBC, I would like to thank our member companies for allowing our respective teams to carry out in-depth analyses of their good practices in this area and sharing with us their data that may be published.

Ehsan Malik

CEO

The Pakistan Business Council

Case Study: Advancing Gender Diversity through Equal Opportunity Recruitment Practices¹

WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT IN MANUFACTURING IN PAKISTAN

Less than 8 percent of Pakistan's permanent full-time workers are female.² In the country's manufacturing and related sectors, the percentage of women in the workforce drops even more: Less than 1 percent of permanent full-time production workers and 1.5 percent of permanent full-time non-production workers are women.³ In addition, women account for the majority of unpaid work—64 percent of female employment is in unpaid family work, double the South Asia average.⁴ Women also face wage differentials of 18 percent vis-à-vis their male colleagues.⁵

To increase GDP growth, Pakistan would have to make concerted efforts to close gender gaps in economic participation. In doing so, Pakistan could increase its GDP by 30 percent.⁶ Increasing women's participation in manufacturing and related sectors, both as production and non-production workers, would be particularly important in this regard. It will contribute to business and economic growth by tapping into Pakistan's underutilized

¹ **Methodology:** Information presented in this case study is based on HR data gathered and analyzed between October to November 2018 with Packages Limited's HR team as well as a focus group discussion with 15 employees and 10 one-on-one interviews with Packages Limited's female board director, HR Director and team, business unit heads, and various female and male employees. This research was conducted by [IFC Gender Secretariat](#) in collaboration with [PBC](#).

² World Bank Group. 2013. Enterprise Surveys: Pakistan. Available at <http://www.enterprisesurveys.org/data/exploreeconomies/2013/pakistan#gender>.

³ Ibid. Note: Production workers are directly involved in the production process/working on production lines. Non-production workers include supervisors and managers.

⁴ IMF. 2017. Women, Work, and Economic Growth: Leveling the Playing Field. Available at https://www.elibrary.imf.org/doc/IMFO71/23146-9781513516103/23146-9781513516103/Other_formats/Source_PDF/23146-9781475579062.pdf?redirect=true.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ IMF. 2018. Pursuing Women's Economic Empowerment. Available at <https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=2&ved=2ahUKewiXgl7Izq7eAhVvZN8KHSdhDhoQFjABegQIBxAC&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.imf.org%2F-%2Fmedia%2FFiles%2FPublications%2FP%2F2018%2FPp053118pursuing-womens-economic-empowerment.ashx&usg=AOvVaw37P2lC3y1aMZdZWgHLBVTt>.

Packages Limited

Manufacturing,
Pakistan



Packages Limited's Employee Profile (2018):

- 4% (57) of 1,518 employees are women
- Female board directors: 3 women on 2 boards across Packages Group

Packages Limited's equal opportunity recruitment practices:

- Recruitment drives at top universities
- Public-private partnership to increase outreach to female candidates
- For every advertised job, 50% of shortlisted resumes are of women
- Training and capacity building
- Family-friendly policies advertised through social media

Main business impacts of Packages Limited's equal opportunity recruitment practices:

- Recruitment: The percentage of women in the workforce has increased from 3% in 2017 to 4% in 2018. Between 2016/2017 and 2018, the number of female job applicants for each position has doubled



female talent pool and helping firms enhance productivity and competitiveness by meeting skilled labor shortages.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY RECRUITMENT PRACTICES

A growing number of forward-looking companies in Pakistan's manufacturing industry recognize the missed opportunity resulting from women's low representation in the manufacturing sector, especially on factory floors and in supply chain, distribution, marketing, and sales functions. Many companies are therefore making efforts to correct this imbalance.

One of the ways in which companies are achieving this is through equal opportunity recruitment practices. These practices enable recruiters and hiring managers to limit discrimination and bias and ensure equality of opportunity at every stage of the recruitment process, from developing job descriptions and advertisements to shortlisting and interviewing candidates. As a result, companies can increase their likelihood of recruiting the right person with the right skills for the job.⁷

While developing job descriptions, equal opportunity employers focus on the skills required for a job and avoid references to characteristics, such as age, gender, race, ethnicity, marital status, pregnancy, maternity, religious beliefs, and other identity markers, that either directly or indirectly apply to a particular person. Equal opportunity employers instead focus on job requirements and analyze jobs in terms of their purpose, duties, and responsibilities, as well as the competencies, equipment and tools, education, and experience required for a particular job.⁸

At the shortlisting stage, equal opportunity employers avoid stereotyping applicants by managing conscious and unconscious bias and ensuring there is consistency in the way rules and policies are applied during the process. Usually at least two people are involved in the process and shortlist candidates against a set of predetermined criteria.⁹

At the interviewing stage, equal opportunity employers limit bias and avoid stereotyping candidates according to their appearance and other identity markers and ensure consistency in the way the process is carried out and rules and policies are applied. The interview panel includes a diverse group of staff, especially in terms of gender, and avoids asking discriminatory questions, such as those related to marriage, pregnancy, children or childcare.¹⁰

⁷ University of Birmingham. Equal Opportunities in Recruitment: A Guide for Employers. Available at <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/partners/employers/equal-opps.pdf>.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

“Getting more women into the workforce requires a culture shift towards a work environment in which women do not have to work twice as hard as men to get the same opportunities. At the end of the day, such a work environment is good for all: employees and the business.”

Syeda Henna Babar Ali, Advisor Business Unit Consumer Products, Packages Limited, Chairperson DIC Pakistan Limited, Director Packages Constructions Ltd., and Member of Packages Group Advisory Board

PACKAGES LIMITED: COMPANY OVERVIEW

Packages Limited is a manufacturing company that produces and sells packaging materials and tissue products. Operating since 1956, Packages Limited is part of Packages Group, a large Pakistani conglomerate engaged in diversified business including construction, hydropower, insurance, and printing ink. In 2017, Packages Limited realized an annual turnover of PKR 18.1 billion (around USD 135 million). Although Pakistan’s rapidly growing manufacturing industry is largely male-dominated, Packages Limited recognizes the value and competitive edge that hiring female workers can bring to the company and contribute to its image as an employer of choice for women.

PACKAGES LIMITED’S BUSINESS CONTEXT FOR EQUAL OPPORTUNITY RECRUITMENT

Packages Limited aspires to establish itself as a global player in the international market with a strong focus on sustainable business practices. To that end, the company has developed a broad vision focused on moving the company past its competitors in South Asia to become one of the global leaders in sustainable business practices in the industry. To accomplish this, Packages Limited has set a vision for 2020 that aims to increase the share of women in the company’s workforce from currently 4 percent to 15 percent by 2020.

With workforce gender diversity as a strategic business goal, Packages Limited began in 2015 to introduce measures focused on closing the large gender gap in the company’s workforce. In 2017, the company committed to assigning goals to be achieved by 2018 and 2020.

The company’s commitment to increasing the share of women across all levels of the organization (from machine operators to managers and executives) has been driven by the company’s top leadership. In doing so, the top leadership is motivated by a compelling business rationale: gender diversity and female talent in the leadership of Packages Limited is expected to inspire innovative strategies to enable Packages Limited to become a global brand.

“A female leader by virtue of being a female has innate abilities of building consensus and developing other leaders through coaching, mentoring, and teaching.”

Male business unit manager, Packages Limited

PACKAGES LIMITED'S EQUAL OPPORTUNITY RECRUITMENT PRACTICES

In 2017, Packages Limited conducted an employee engagement survey and staff townhall 'Have Your say' sessions with HR. The survey highlighted areas of improvement for the company and revealed the need to ramp up ongoing gender diversity efforts. As a result, the company introduced a series of equal opportunity recruitment practices and related policies to foster gender diversity.

1. Recruitment drives targeting female university graduates:

The company began with the development of a comprehensive recruitment plan focused on recruiting from top universities across Pakistan. A list of top 15 universities was put together. The company then visited these universities and held various sessions and career fairs specifically targeting women. During this process, the company also reached out to its current employees who were alumni of these universities to join these recruitment drives and directly share with prospective candidates more information about life at Packages Limited.

2. Partnership with the Punjab Commission on the Status of Women:

To increase outreach to potential female job candidates, Packages Limited has entered into a public-private partnership with the Punjab Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW). In 2014, PCSW was set up by the provincial Government of Punjab to ensure that laws, policies, and programs promote women's empowerment and address gender discrimination.¹¹ In 2018, PCSW set up the Job Asaan-Employment Facilitation Hub for Women to offer a range of support services to women to enable them to find and pursue suitable employment opportunities. Packages Limited is one of the employers that have signed up to take advantage of this service and gain access to a qualified pool of female candidates.

3. Gender-inclusive HR practices: Packages Limited also introduced gender-neutral language in its job advertisements, focusing on skills and requirements rather than personal characteristics of applicants. The company also introduced a company-wide policy requiring 50 percent of all candidates shortlisted for an advertised job to be female. In cases where this target is not met, HR can re-advertise the job through diverse networks targeting female candidates. When a gender-balanced roster of candidates is passed on to the business unit or hiring manager to make the final selection and yet a male candidate is selected for the position, HR checks-in with the manager to understand their reasons for not selecting a female candidate and discuss ways in which gender diversity could be prioritized moving forward.

4. Training and capacity building: Internally, Packages Limited has a strong focus on building the capacity of female employees to support their lateral moves to non-traditional technical and skilled roles as well as promotions to managerial positions. In this regard, Packages Limited provides its high-performing employees with opportunities to participate in all-paid, year-long business courses at one of



¹¹ Punjab Commission on the Status of Women: <https://pcsw.punjab.gov.pk/>



Pakistan's top business schools, Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS). As of 2018, Packages Limited has invested in three high-potential female employees and sent them to LUMS to receive advanced professional training.

- 5. Pick and drop service:** Packages Limited offers a door-to-door pick-and-drop service for its female employees. This service was introduced in 2018 to address the lack of mobility and safe transport, which often prevents women in Pakistan from entering and staying in the formal workforce.
- 6. Ladies and Children Area:** Packages Limited conducted an employee needs assessment and identified that the lack of good quality, accessible, and affordable childcare solutions was preventing women from entering and staying in the workforce. Hence, in 2018, Packages Limited launched its Ladies and Children Area, which includes a daycare center, kitchenette, prayer room, and a gym.
- 7. Social media:** Through its social media pages, Packages Limited posts gender-neutral job advertisements and regularly shares information with potential job candidates about the various family- and women-friendly benefits it offers to its workforce. For example, Packages Limited's Facebook page features popular photos of its Ladies and Children Area, which have received positive feedback from prospective female employees.

ACTS—Actively Caring Through Sharing

ACTS is a forum where educational awareness sessions and panel discussions are conducted on important topics concerning women's employment, for example, family influence on working women, safe organizational culture, and sexual harassment. This initiative was launched by another Packages Group company, Bulleh Shah Packaging, in 2015. Since 2017, ACTS has expanded its scope to cover all Packages Group companies.



THE BUSINESS IMPACTS OF PACKAGES LIMITED'S EQUAL OPPORTUNITY RECRUITMENT PRACTICES

Packages Limited has invested around Rs. 5,000,000 (around USD 37,000) to set up and run its new Ladies and Children Area to attract and retain female talent. The company believes that it is already seeing a return on this investment in many ways.

Recruitment

Through the introduction and implementation of equal opportunity recruitment practices, the company has increased the share of women in its workforce to 4 percent in 2018—57 of 1,518 employees are women—up from 3 percent in 2017. Since 2017, 27 women have been hired. For every advertised job, 50 percent of shortlisted resumes are of women.

Since the Ladies and Children Area opened its doors in 2018 and has been advertised on social media, and since the targeted university recruitment drives, job applications from female candidates have increased. On average, Packages receives around 1,000 job applications for each job that is

advertised, out of which women's applications make up roughly 20 percent, up from 5–10 percent in 2016/2017.

Innovation and Growth

Packages believes that greater gender diversity in its workforce has expanded its pool of talent and skills and positively impacted collective thinking and decision making, opening the door for more innovation. The higher share of women seems to have also contributed to an overall level of motivation and improved behavioral and work discipline. This is central to Packages Limited's goal of improving its image as an employer of choice for women and becoming a global player in the manufacturing industry.

Networks and Relationships

Packages Limited has noticed that the establishment of the Ladies and Children Area has improved interdepartmental relationships and increased networking opportunities within the organization for women employees. This is particularly important for women seeking mentors and sponsors, looking to move laterally within the company, or aiming for a promotion.

"If we want to change the image of the male-dominated Pakistani manufacturing industry, if we want to be competitive and capture the global market, then we need to actively go out to the untapped reservoirs of female talent rather than wait for them to come to us."

Jawad Gilani, Head of Organizational Excellence, Packages Limited

“In some departments, the number of women managers has doubled while other departments are not doing too well but are now held accountable. HR is not docile anymore. Culture change takes time and I think we are on the right track.”

Female assistant manager, Packages Limited



WHAT'S NEXT FOR PACKAGES LIMITED?

Although Packages Limited has made significant changes in its policies and come a long way since its early days when it barely had any women in its operations, the company believes that it still has a long way to go until it meets its Vision 2020 target of 15 percent. Increasing the share of women is an ongoing process to which the company is committed. Moving forward, the company aims to continue building on its existing initiatives, and the momentum these have generated.

On top of its agenda is to constructively address, through gender sensitization trainings and awareness-raising sessions, the reluctance of some male supervisors and factory managers to hire women. One of the primary reasons for this is the perception that women are unable to work in certain professions, such as sales and production, and do not want to work late or evening hours. A focus group discussion with employees revealed that this is not just a women's issue. Employees across the board, women and men, do not prefer working long hours beyond designated work hours. Packages Limited now aims to streamline its processes to ensure that employees do not have to unnecessarily or consistently work overtime.

Packages Limited recognizes that one way to improve employee work-life integration is to introduce more family-friendly policies, such as paternity leave, flexible timings, and telecommuting, which it aims to do in the near-term.

Packages Limited also recognizes that once it has a significant number of women in the workforce, the company will no longer need to enforce positive or affirmative action. It can then consider offering a similar menu of benefits to male and female employees.

**“Pakistani women fly fighter planes, climb Mount Everest, and play football! So, why stereotype at the workplace?
Let our ladies decide what they can or cannot do. And we would be pleasantly surprised at how much they can do!”**

Nayab Baig, Group Head of HR, Packages Group

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