TOGETHER WE CAN
A SHEWORKS SRI LANKA PARTNERSHIP
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FOREWORD

I congratulate the SheWorks partners on their organisational commitment towards greater gender equality. Their enthusiasm and leadership are commendable. I am sincerely grateful to each of the trailblazers for showcasing their inspiring stories to the world and I am honoured to share a place with them in this book.

We know there is great economic opportunity in Sri Lanka and that advancing opportunities for women is essential to unlocking this. Sri Lanka’s GDP could be 20 percent higher if women had equal opportunity to participate and contribute to the country’s productivity. The International Finance Corporation and Australian Government’s (DFAT) Women in Work Partnership aims to galvanise conversations and actions on gender smart policies to close this gap.

As a former DFAT Chief Economist, I believe the private sector has a powerful role to play in making gender equality a reality. We are proud to partner with the SheWorks companies given their vital importance to the economy and the influential role they play in Sri Lanka’s market. They understand that creating greater diversity within their organisations is not only the right thing to do, but is also good for their businesses.

As with Sri Lanka, greater gender diversity is both an economic and social priority for Australia. The business case is clear, investing in gender equality and diversity pays off. Australian companies in the top quartile for gender diversity are 15 percent more likely to have financial returns above their respective national industry medians. Companies with women board members outperform others by almost 9 percent over a five-year period. However, Australia still has a long way to go on women in leadership and women still earn 14 percent less than men on average.

I hope the SheWorks partnership acts as an exemplar and encourages other companies in Sri Lanka to adopt similar best practices for greater gender equality in their places of work.

Together we can push for progress on gender equality in the workplace, at home and within our communities.

H E David Holly
Australian High Commissioner to Sri Lanka and the Maldives

FOREWORD

In every conversation about women’s employment, I cannot overstate how having equal representation of women and men in the workplace makes business sense. It’s simple. A more diverse workforce has positive impacts on financial performance, shareholder value, investor confidence, and reputation.

Women’s employment is vital to driving economic growth and development. Sri Lanka could raise its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by as much as 20 percent in the long run by closing the gap between women and men’s participation in the workforce. The private sector can play a catalytic role in meeting this employment challenge. Recognizing this, the SheWorks companies are improving their hiring, promotion and retention practices to ensure more women and men join and stay in the workforce.

IFC’s commitment to advancing gender equality has anchored the business case and demand from our clients for solutions which help to maximize their workforce. The SheWorks Sri Lanka partnership, a two-year peer learning platform, supports participating companies with the tools they need to close the gender gap in the workforce. To date, it has supported the more than 170,000 employees across the 16 companies by providing improved employment and advancement opportunities and more respectful and supportive workplaces.

As I read the stories of each SheWorks member, I was struck by their leadership and perseverance not just within their own businesses, but in the broader context of economic transformation. Each member has delivered remarkable changes, in the way they do business and are now reaping the business benefits associated with those changes.

On behalf of IFC, I would like to thank our SheWorks members for their commitment over the past two years. While the SheWorks Partnership will come to an end this year, the work continues. As part of the World Bank Group, our focus is on fostering shared prosperity and eradicating extreme poverty. By bridging the gender gap, sustainable and resilient economies can be created. I invite you to join the campaign and help your company reap the benefits of greater gender equality.

Together We Can

Amena Afzal
Country Manager for Sri Lanka and the Maldives
International Finance Corporation
WOMEN AT WORK IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR

Despite improved educational and health outcomes for women in Sri Lanka, women’s participation in the labor force remains stubbornly low at 34 percent, and is less than half that of men (73 percent labor force participation of men). Across the 13 SheWorks companies that are not in the garment sector, women comprise only 28 percent of all employees. Research indicates that the key impediments to women’s participation in Sri Lanka’s paid workforce are mobility constraints, childcare, and household chores that fall disproportionately on women. Yet the benefits to increasing women’s participation are large; the IMF predicts Sri Lanka could raise its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by as much as 20 percent in the long run by closing the gender gap in the workforce. At the same time, companies across a range of sectors, including projected growth sectors such as Tourism and Information Technology, find it difficult to access the skills they need.

In response, Women in Work (WwW), a joint initiative of the International Finance Corporation (IFC) and the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFAT), Government of Australia, is working with the private sector to close gender gaps while improving business performance. SheWorks is one of the flagship initiatives of that partnership. SheWorks identifies and implements gender smart solutions to address barriers to women’s workforce participation and helps generate increased employment and leadership opportunities for women and men across the private sector. In doing so, SheWorks is also contributing to participating companies’ bottom lines, productivity, and growth.

SHEWORKS SRI LANKA PARTNERSHIP

The SheWorks partnership was launched in March 2018 and will conclude in April 2020. Through SheWorks, participating companies made a series of commitments to promote gender equality across the following six key areas:

1. Increase women in leadership
2. Recruit, promote and retain women in the workplace
3. Tackle employer-supported childcare
4. Build respectful and supportive workplaces
5. Support women in the value chain as suppliers or distributors
6. Encourage leaders to walk the talk – gender smart business strategy

In order to join SheWorks, each company was required to make at least three gender smart commitments and to stretch themselves to do more to create a fair workplace for women and men. The enthusiasm was abundant, with companies on average making five commitments each, leading to a total of 89 commitments across the 18 companies at the outset. Two years on, there are 16 active companies, with over 100 commitments, 90 percent of which are achieved or in progress.

IFC supports participating companies by undertaking business case research and providing tools and best practices for implementing gender smart solutions through training, workshops, and peer learning opportunities throughout the initiative. Please refer to page 05 (or details on commitment to action at a group level).

COMMITMENT TO ACTION
COMMITMENT 1

INCREASE WOMEN’S BUSINESS LEADERSHIP

- Offering a company-wide mentorship/sponsorship or leadership program
- Strengthening/building an effective Employee Resource Group/Women’s Network

27 COMMITMENTS

15 COMPANIES

COMMITMENT 2

ENSURE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF (FEMALE) TALENT IN THE WORKPLACE

- Identifying and implementing gender smart solutions around flexible working
- Increasing the number of women employees in non-traditional job roles

26 COMMITMENTS

16 COMPANIES
COMMITMENT 3

EXPLORE EMPLOYER SUPPORTED CHILDCARE

- Conducting a childcare needs assessment to explore whether supporting employees' childcare needs is feasible and relevant to the business
- Putting employer-supported childcare into action

14 COMMITMENTS

10 COMPANIES

COMMITMENT 4

PROMOTE EFFECTIVE ANTI-SEXUAL HARASSMENT MECHANISMS

- Supporting the development and implementation of more effective anti-sexual harassment mechanisms

14 COMMITMENTS

13 COMPANIES
COMMITMENT 5

SUPPORT WOMEN IN THE VALUE CHAIN AS EMPLOYEES AND ENTREPRENEURS

ACTIONS
- Identifying and implementing business case research for gender diversity in value chains
- Promoting women’s employment opportunities in business that the company is sourcing from

11 COMMITMENTS
8 COMPANIES

COMMITMENT 6

FOSTER THE COMPANY’S LEADERSHIP AND COMMITMENT TO WOMEN’S EMPLOYMENT AS A SMART BUSINESS STRATEGY

ACTIONS
- Pursuing a firm-level workplace certification (EDGE Gender Certification)
- Committing senior management (C-suite members) to speak about the importance of women’s employment as a smart business strategy and showcase respective companies’ efforts on public stage (media/event/conference) at least twice per year

14 COMMITMENTS
10 COMPANIES
There is no single, simple answer to the question of why women’s participation in Sri Lanka’s labor force remains stubbornly low over decades. Reasons such as hidden biases, gender stereotypes, and cultural norms all play a role. Others include: lack of family-friendly or flexible work options; disrespectful workplace cultures; limited access to leadership opportunities; lack of support for women returning to work after maternity leave; and limited access to career critical training. Also key is the lack of understanding of the value of gender equality for promoting business growth and productivity, and limited knowledge of how to go about making workplaces more supportive of women and men.

For Sri Lanka’s economy to continue to grow and to expand into new key sectors, it needs to maximize the potential of its workforce and tap into all its potential employees. The intervention of the private sector is essential for meeting this pressing employment challenge. If your organization wants to boost productivity by advancing gender equality – get inspired by the 16 SheWorks company business case results and act now.

Together We Can advance gender equality in Sri Lanka.
ABOUT THE BOOK

This coffee table book is meant to be shared and passed along, to inspire individuals, leaders and companies to advance gender equality in the workplace, and in doing so to boost productivity and growth. Each SheWorks member featured in this book has challenged the status quo. Every action taken at an individual, leadership, board and organization level to influence workplace policies and practices to reach gender parity requires purpose and commitment. This is not always easy, and the 16 SheWorks members featured in this coffee table book are true agents of change. Their perseverance and the impact of their leadership, not just within their own businesses, but in the broader context of leading towards sectorial and economic transformation, is commendable.

Initiatives such as introducing mentorship, sponsorship, employee resource groups, family friendly and respectful workplace policies, recruiting more women distributors and suppliers, and obtaining Economic Dividend Gender Equality (EDGE) certification have not only increased women’s representation, but also improved business outcomes.

Each SheWorks member (appearing in alphabetical order by company name), shares their drive towards gender equality, the initiatives taken to bridge the gender gap in their workplace, and some high-level business results.

SheWorks members wanted to share their journeys at the individual and organizational level because we believe that Together We Can advance gender equality in Sri Lanka.
#TOGETHERWECAN
Creating gender smart workplaces is not a ‘nice thing to do’, but a business necessity. When women and men at a workplace come together with diverse ideas, it increases innovation, effectiveness, overall productivity and profitability.

Joining SheWorks gave us access to a repository of global practices in gender smart solutions. AIA’s successful adoption of these measures added to the continuous improvement of our inclusive work practices.

Our key objective was to enhance women’s participation in leadership positions via mentoring and building succession pipelines. Propelling Ideas, a leadership learning program at AIA helped nurture six women leaders for future succession, while increasing the number of women’s representation to 29 percent in the top management tier.

Chathuri Munaweera
Director / Chief Officer
Legal, Governance & Ext. Relations
AIA Insurance Lanka Ltd
Our goal is to promote an inclusive work culture that gives people the confidence to realize their full potential, professionally and personally, which will boost business growth.

SheWorks gave us a window into industry best practices and tools to break the gender divide in the workforce, especially within the leadership cadre.

Our robust recruitment strategy has allowed Brandix to attract not only the right talent irrespective of gender, but more women into strategic decision-making roles. The appointment of two women leaders to the Board of Directors has significantly increased the leadership role of women in the business.

Childcare initiatives have increased maternity return rates close to 100 percent, and fortified our relationships with high-value, international buyers, augmenting long-term market access and growth opportunities.

Anusha Alles
Head of Corporate Social Responsibility
Brandix Lanka Ltd
Having experienced first hand how a supportive work environment can result in empowered and successful women, I am privileged to mentor talented women in their chosen career paths and to help create supportive environments in which they can thrive.

Partnering with the SheWorks network gave the CBL Group a platform to learn and share best practices, support employees and women in the value chain, implement policies and support robust supplier networks that contribute to higher input quality and bottom line.

We implemented an on-site childcare facility with two shifts operating from 6:00 a.m. till 10:00 p.m., running at full capacity, resulting in a 23 percent increase of the maternity return rate, within a few months. The CBL Group also works with IFC to increase participation of women in distributor and retailer networks in the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector. Through these programs, we were able to help these retailers become future ready by introducing digital payment methods to increase efficiency, convenience and cost-effectiveness within FMCG distribution chains while providing training to support their growth.

Jayani De Silva
Manager – Corporate HR
CBL Group
Working in a traditionally male-dominated sector, I have been able to facilitate equal opportunities in the workplace because of the sponsorship of the senior leadership.

Joining ShEWorks enabled me to engage with like-minded leaders and work towards strengthening a talent pipeline of women.

A mentorship platform and employee resource group to drive equality were launched, which resulted in a 5 percent increase in women in leadership roles within a span of a year. DIMO has invested in sourcing, training and retaining women in non-traditional job roles such as Auto Technicians, Mechanics and Engineers. The company also started an Automobile Technology course for women, shattering stereotypes and enabling women to have the training required to join the industry.

Dilrukshi Kurukulasuriya
Chief Human Resource Officer
DIMO
I believe in a merit-based structure for progression within an organization, which provides equal opportunities for men and women to reach their goals.

Joining SheWorks provided the opportunity to learn from world-class practices to recruit, retain and promote women in my organization.

We have implemented an on-site childcare facility which has improved employee work-life balance, building a reputation for Fairway as a family-friendly employer and thereby attracting the best quality of talent in the market. The company also offers, on a case-by-case basis, services in nursing, flexible work hours, extended maternity leave and medical benefits. Fairway has experienced a growth in the maternity return rate compared to previous years, which now stands at 100 percent.

Chinshaka Premaratne
Group Director HR & Administration
Fairway Holdings (Pvt) Ltd
Traditionally, the apparel sector is rooted in the strength of women, while the reins are held by men.

ShellWorks provides us with tools and best practices for shifting this paradigm, while illustrating the business case for women in leadership roles.

Hela Clothing aspires to have a 50 percent representation of women in management positions by 2025. We have embarked on gender-smart solutions to attract, retain, and develop our talent. Recognizing the work-life equilibrium that needs to be achieved for both men and women, we have also appointed a task force to implement a basket of pipeline projects to achieve our gender parity goals.

Manique

Manique Jayasooriya David
Group General Manager
Human Resources & Administration
Hela Clothing
Bridging the gender gap needs concerted efforts by governments, businesses and society. Growing up, I was never made to feel less important than a boy. These childhood learnings and becoming a mother, have strengthened my determination to work towards equality in the workplace.

ShelWorks gives us access to global expertise, resources and networks of like-minded companies focused on bridging the gender gap whilst boosting productivity and growth.

Through our employee resource group, Voice of Women’ network, we are strengthening the retention and growth of women. Hemas introduced extended parental leave, flexible working, capacity building, and a backup childcare facility at the Head Office that allows employees to bring in their children, in instances where regular childcare arrangements fail.

Hemais’ commitment to gender equality has resulted in an increase of 8 percent of women on boards and 5 percent of women in middle management.

Upulka Samarakoon Munasinghe
Head of Human Resources
Hemas Holdings PLC
As the second-largest export earner, tourism remains one of the most important sectors in the Sri Lankan economy. For us to progress further, I believe it’s imperative for the gender gap to be bridged.

Joining SheWorks has enabled Jetwing to adopt best practices to attract more women, as the tourism sector currently has only 10 percent of women representation in the workforce.

We strive to maintain a 50:50 representation of men and women in the trainee pool through the Jetwing Youth Development Project. This project also encourages young women to take up non-traditional jobs in areas such as Housekeeping and Food & Beverage operations. Our flexible work practices in the travel sector encourage attraction and retention of more female employees.

Sashika Perera
Manager - HR
Jetwing Travels, Jetwing
I strive, every day, to be the kind of person I looked up to when I was younger – someone who encourages, mentors and does the right thing, always.

My fierce passion for equal opportunity for men and women led me to represent John Keells Holdings (JKH) at the SheWorks partnership.

Joining SheWorks has strengthened our repository of gender smart solutions, resulting in an increase of women’s representation from 24 to 29 percent. As an equal opportunity employer, JKH promotes the employment and retention of women through recruitment policies such as facilitating enhanced maternity leave when requested, sexual harassment policies, work from home, and flexi hours. We are currently exploring the opening of creche facilities as well. JKH also conducts awareness sessions of its policies across the board, for both men and women, while continuously evaluating, training and sensitizing staff on harassment and discrimination in the workplace.

Kumudu Munasinghe
Assistant Vice President
Head of Corporate Communications
John Keells Holdings PLC
I strongly believe in driving the business case on diversity and inclusion amongst management and influencing the talent pipeline through mentors and role models.

London Stock Exchange Group (LSEG) is championing an inclusive culture with focused action plans targeted at driving meaningful change. Our partnership with ShelWorks gives us the framework as well as a network to action these goals.

In order to create an equitable culture, flexible working policies, employee and management awareness programs have been introduced. Our employee resource group ‘Women Inspired Network’ (WIN SL) has also grown by 25 percent in 2019. As a result, women mentors have increased by 10 percent. Women in leadership roles have increased from 6 percent to 18 percent in the company, which is very encouraging.

Being the forerunner of creche facilities in Sri Lanka, LSEG is also piloting IFCS Global Guide for Employer-Supported Childcare by pioneering recommendations within the industry and country through practical tools, checklists, examples of good practice, and comprehensive guidance from monitoring to evaluation.

Bani Chandresena
Head of Inclusive Diversity
London Stock Exchange Group Sri Lanka
It was always clear to me that something must be done to address the gender gap in leadership. While progress has been made, there is still much to be done to overturn deep seated biases, in order to create transformative changes within all mainstays of society: from the boardroom to the family.

Since joining SheWorks, tangible results have been made with the commitment of the leadership team. The partnership has also helped in engaging with other companies working on addressing the gender gap.

This year at MAS we have seen an increase in women represented on our boards and executive committees. A few initiatives that have supported this impact include sensitization workshops for all senior and middle management, engaging in conversation on the business case for diversity and accessibility, innovations, mentorship and sponsorship programs for women. We are also actively working on recruitment and communication policies, and are in the process of rolling out flexible work arrangements.

Thaniya Jayawardena
DCM Women’s Empowerment
Advocacy and Code of Conduct
MAS Holdings
For a business to succeed, it’s important for the employees in the workplace to have equal opportunities.

SheWorks provides access to gender smart policies which help in advocating gender equality at National Development Bank (NDB). Women make up 41 percent of our overall workforce and 39 percent among our senior management. We also maintain a 100 percent maternity return rate.

NDB is the first Sri Lankan company to obtain the EDGE Gender Certification and become a member of the Financial Alliance of Women. This was a natural next step for us towards further improving and positioning ourselves not only as a ‘Women’s Bank of Choice’, but also as an ‘Employer of Choice’. Being a part of the IFC-led Banking on Women’ program drove us to develop a one-of-a-kind value proposition for a dedicated financial inclusion plan for women.

Lilanthi Delgoda
Chief Manager - Human Resources
National Development Bank PLC
I firmly believe that empowering women at the grassroots with financial literacy is the way forward for the Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) sector.

It was more compulsion than choice for SANASA to join SheWorks to achieve our objectives by implementing gender smart solutions.

SANASA Development Bank is also working with IFC as a ‘Banking on Women’ client, extending its scope beyond the traditional bank offerings for women through the UTHTHAMAVI initiative. This initiative provides a basket of savings and investment offerings including a collateral-free micro-entrepreneurship loan proposition, backed by financial education and entrepreneurship training opportunities.

The women-centric micro loan initiative has attracted 97,659 savings accounts with a total loan portfolio value of Rs. 842 million to date. Entrepreneurship skills have been built amongst 4,000 female entrepreneurs through 42 financial literacy workshops throughout the country.

Debrena Seneviratne
Deputy Chief Executive Officer
SANASA Development Bank PLC
Predominantly, the maritime sector is driven by men—with women representing only 3 percent of the workforce at the Colombo Port City. There is an urgent need to increase this number especially in the leadership and executive cadre for business and sector growth.

Joining SheWorks has boosted our efforts to promote gender equality in our workplace as we strive to achieve at least 25 percent women’s representation over the next three years across the business.

A structured internship program has been introduced to encourage and facilitate more women joining South Asia Gateway Terminals (SACT), and thereby the maritime sector. Another landmark achievement has been the launch of the SACT anti-harassment policy, a first-of-its-kind at the Colombo Port City.

We also take pride in being a key sponsor of the Sri Lanka Rugby Women’s team, attesting to women’s capacity for fierce competition.

Thushara Jayawardana
General Manager – HR
South Asia Gateway Terminals (SACT)
I believe that solving the gender gap in the workforce requires a two-fold approach: one, at a community level to instill a mindset of confidence in every girl child, and the other, by creating a platform that enables equal opportunities for men and women in the workplace.

The Bank’s intention of joining SheWorks was to engage with the private sector in addressing gender inequality and sharing best practices with the corporate community while learning from each other’s success. With women’s representation in the Bank’s workforce at 49 percent and the country management team at 36 percent, we want to strive to make these numbers even stronger and build a sustainable and inclusive culture for all employees.

In 2019, we were awarded ‘Top 10 Workplaces for Women’ by the Great Place to Work® in Sri Lanka. Our success has come from pushing the industry norms by providing a childcare facility, parental leave – both paternity and maternity, flexible working arrangements, fair pay policies and continuous workshops on unconscious biases. Our women’s network Women Win® Work (WW3), the Country Diversity and Inclusion Council and the many policies and procedures we have introduced have contributed to setting a benchmark in the industry. At a community level, project GOAL was launched to educate 1,000 young girls on self-confidence, leadership, reproductive health and financial literacy through sports, helping them become leaders.

Ranil DharmaSirilwardana
Head of Human Resources
Standard Chartered Bank
I believe our employees are the foundation of everything Virtusa does. They are our differentiators. Virtusa was founded on the principle of building a digital-ready, people-centric organization, rich in diversity and reflecting the strong cultural values of the company.

We invest in our team members so that they have the skills and knowledge to fulfill their leadership roles in line with our long-term objectives. Joining SheWorks enables us to reach our gender diversity goals faster, gain access to tools and best practices, build talent pipelines and retain women within the organization.

The Women of Virtusa (WoV) program facilitates longer, more successful careers for our female team members. WoV objectives are to increase gender diversity by improving women’s hiring and retention rates across the company. It creates a platform for women to learn, share, exchange ideas, and build leadership skills. One of the WoV initiatives is the ‘Women in Leadership’ (WiL) program, which aims to enhance key skills including communication and leadership.

Chandi Dhamaratne
Vice President - Human Resources
Virtusa (Pvt) Ltd
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Shashika Perera, Kanchana Nanayakkara, Tharindu Wickramanayendra (Jetwing), Kumudu Munasinghe, Isuru Cunasekera (John Keells Holdings PLC), Bani Chandrasena (London Stock Exchange Group), Thaniya Jayawardena (MAS Holdings), Lilanthi Delgoda, Lasantha Dasanayake (National Development Bank PLC), Delmenene Seneviratne (SASANA Development Bank), Thushara Jayawarden (South Asia Gateway Terminals), Ranji Dharmasiiriwardhana (Standard Chartered Bank), Chandini Dharmaratne and Maneshha Abeysinghe (Virtusa Pvt Ltd).

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CBL - Ceylon Biscuits Limited
CSE - Colombo Stock Exchange
DFAT - Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
DCM - Deputy General Manager
DIMO - Diesel & Motor Engineering PLC
EDGE - Economic Dividends for Gender Equality
EXT - Extension
FMCG - Fast Moving Consumer Goods
GDP - Gross Domestic Product
HR - Human Resources
IFC - International Finance Corporation
IMF - International Monetary Fund
IT - Information Technology
JKH - John Keells Holdings PLC
LSEG - London Stock Exchange Group
MSME - Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
NDIR - National Development Bank PLC
SACT - South Asia Gateway Terminals
SDB - SASANA Development Bank
SME - Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
WJ - Women Win @ Work
WIL - Women In Leadership
WIN SL - Women Inspired Network Sri Lanka
WIM - Women In Work
WoV - Women of Virtusa