

Economic inclusion and empowerment of women

7th UN Forum on Business and Human Rights¹

I. CHALLENGES

- **Widening gender economic gap:** Given the continued widening of the economic gender gap, it will now not be closed for another 217 years.
- **Gendered division of labor** discourages women from labor force participation and is one of the principal causes for low economic activity of women. Women are limited by discriminatory gender norms that deem specific professions as inappropriate for women, such as some jobs in the service industries (restaurants and tourism). **Social and cultural norms** in the existing patriarchal society discourage women from labor force participation, promotion to managerial positions, encourage gender pay gap, are highly influential over individual behavior in a broad variety of contexts, including domestic violence, sexual harassment, sexism, or other forms of discrimination based on gender. The existing stereotypes around women's and men's jobs also limit women's opportunities in fields such as Science, Technology, Engineering, Math and others.
- **Representation of women in the workforce:** Women are more likely than men to be unemployed (constituting only 39% of the workforce), are overrepresented in low wage jobs, hold fewer managerial and leadership positions, and on average, only make 77 cents for every dollar earned by men.
- **Legal barriers to women's economic empowerment:** In 18 economies, men can legally prevent their wives from working.
- **Women entrepreneurs:** Women entrepreneurs also face particular challenges to building and growing their businesses including lack of access to financing and business networks. In fact, less than 1% of spending by large businesses on suppliers is earned by women-owned businesses.
- **Insufficient sanitation in developing countries:** Women living in homes that are not equipped with regular access to water, sewage collection and a bathroom earn less and are less economically active than women who have full access to basic sanitation. Insufficient sanitation hinders enrolment of girls in primary education.

II: POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS

- Eliminating gender-based discrimination in hiring and promotion.
- Ensuring equal pay for work of equal value.
- Guaranteeing safe working conditions for women workers throughout supply chains.
- Support women's participation in decision-making at all levels of business to strengthen diversity, inclusion and empowerment at the workplace. This should include proactive recruitment of women to board and senior positions.

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- Strengthening internal communication with employees and contributing to social campaigns that encourage men to carry out a larger share of unpaid care work, including care of dependents and household labour.
- Design and implement family-friendly working arrangements for all workers. Specifically consider providing flextime and job-sharing position. Establish child care facility for staff children at the premises of the company.
- Contribute to women's involvement in male-dominated professions through: awareness raising activities with school children and university students; internship programmes that target women; mentorship programmes for women; targeted PR campaigns and marketing practices.
- Facilitate a micro-credit program to enable women to set up their enterprises. Subsequently include women entrepreneurs in the supply chain.
- Equipping women with knowledge and tools in the areas such as IT and Programming.
- Raise awareness among business and local communities about the benefits and impacts of sanitation on the quality of life, health, economic activity of population and sustainable development of the region.

III. GOOD PRACTICES

Danish Companies operating in developing countries have addressed the empowerment and inclusion of women in their operations through:

- Launching programmes that focus on empowering women with initiatives on how to attract, invest in, and grow women in the business.
- Introducing gender-sensitive workplace benefits to ensure that women can balance their work and home responsibilities. These benefits include flexible working hours and reduced working hours after maternity leave, establishing childcare facilities in the workplace that enable male and female workers to bring their children to work, and organizing transportation to and from work for male and female workers in support of female inclusion and safety in the workplace.
- Encouraging women to engage in male-dominated technical education via promotional events and discussions with parents to change attitudes and reduce barriers for women's economic inclusion and empowerment.

Georgian companies have addressed the empowerment and inclusion of women in their operations through:

- **“m2 Real Estate”** is a Georgian company active in the real estate development and property management sector. One of the company's direction is construction - a male-dominated industry in Georgia. With the aim of defeating stereotypes in this field, company launched internships and employment programmes for women, promoting their role in construction industry. Since the launch of the programme, previously male dominated positions in the company, such as Construction Site Manager, are presently fully occupied by women. Company has worked hard to improve gender balance in the top management as well, resulting in 50-50 % representation of women and men in the top management positions of the company.

- Hospitality Company in Georgia “**Adjara Group**” which manages hotels in Tbilisi and in the regions of Georgia, has implemented number of projects inside the company and in the society to address the problem of domestic violence. Company partnered with local non-governmental organization to raise awareness in the community, in the mountainous regions of Georgia, around the topic. Company also held information sessions for employees, informing them about the available internal complaint mechanisms and assistance possibilities from the side of the company, as well as external state mechanisms which can help victims to address the issue.

Brazilian companies have addressed the empowerment and inclusion of women in their operations through:

- **BRK Ambiental** - Providing universal sanitation services significantly advances human rights, especially for women. This is what happened to the women of Uruguaiana, a city in Brazil's southernmost state, where BRK invested 145 million reais since 2011 in sanitation services. Access to basic sanitation and regular water supply were practically unheard of prior to 2011, but with investments in these services over the last eight years, the city has seen improvements in the school system, public health and job creation. By achieving universal and equitable sanitation objectives at Uruguaiana, was possible to note a notorious advance in community wellbeing especially in sanitation-related diseases indicators; a reduction of 96% of diarrhea cases between 2015-2018.

ADWAR Association in Palestine:

- 40 marginalized Bedouin and rural women in Hebron and East Jerusalem became able and qualified to choose suitable projects and taking responsibilities of their families, in addition to the transfer from the private sphere to the public sphere; that contributed in improving their self-confidence, economic life conditions, and contributed in reducing poverty ,unemployment and improve the gross domestic production economic women's right; unifying women's efforts and presenting their products to local and international parties. That is to contribute in selling them in local and international markets through establishing a communication network consists of women's names and their eligible projects, and a list of companies and stores that would sell their products as to ease communication with them.
- Institutionalize Communication network between women, private sector institutions, and companies to facilitate procedures of supporting women productions and sell them in local and international markets. The network will continue its work even after finishing the project.
- By providing qualified women with the necessary logistic and equipment's, they will be able to buy the necessary materials to produce the products needed according to the local community needs, because they are the only productive business in their communities. So as they will be able to provide the local community of those products, whether sweets or pastries or production of clothing wool, as well as the salon and the provision of cosmetics. Women will publish brochures to identify their projects and how to communicate with them to promote the sale and use of all social networks.

Initiative for the Development of Africa - IDA

- This project is started in Senegal on March the 26th 2015, supported by IDA, ECOWAS, worldwide training institutions, the local government, universities, experts and women associations. The first product to transform is peanut, so every woman can start with a small unit of oilseeds pressure for cold extraction of edible oil and protein meal for animal feed, which has a fast return on investment. Others products could be processed in function of the Country and the market request. Now in Senegal IDA has an incubator center to train the new entrepreneurs and give the best technical support for the project success. The second pilot is in Ivory Coast for the rice processing and the third again in Senegal for the shea nut processing.
- We are working to start others pilots in Nigeria, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Rwanda and in Uganda into Nakivale for the Burundian refugees. The system identified, allow generating a solidarity chain because even if the cooperatives get a donation, the commitment is to pay for

the machineries and give to others women the opportunity to start e new business. Until now we have developed the project with the contribution of small private funds, to do the second step we need the financial involvement of the local and the international institutions.