

GENDER ACTION PLAN

PHASE 1 REPORT

2022 - 2023

INTRODUCTION

According to an estimation shared in 2020, Pakistan's information technology sector has the potential to increase its exports by \$10 billion in the next few years. The sector employs over 100,000 people, and according to the study, 29% of them are women. Gender inclusivity in the tech startup ecosystem like PSW is vital for fostering innovation, expanding the talent pool, understanding diverse markets, enhancing corporate culture and reputation, and ensuring compliance with legal requirements. By embracing gender diversity, we can access varied perspectives, skills, and experiences, leading to more innovative products and services while demonstrating a commitment to equality and fairness.

Background

Based on the gender audit we conducted, we started developing strategies to strengthen our internal and external policies, systems, and procedures by mainstreaming gender considerations and compliance areas. At PSW Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion are an integral part of the company's culture. We are committed to providing a workplace culture that generates equal opportunities, assuring people are treated right with dignity and respect. We also put our efforts to strengthen this inclusive culture which means that all the employees must be treated equally irrespective of their biological or claimed gender, caste, color, religion, exposure, abilities etc.

Furthermore, it implies hiring more diverse people in the team without being hindered by any unconscious biases and ensuring that they have equal opportunities both in terms of monetary/non-monetary to perform in a conducive work environment.





KEY FINDINGS AND GAPS IN THE GENDER AUDIT REPORT

- **Underrepresentation of Women:** Women are underrepresented in technical roles and leadership positions.
- **Absence of Gender Strategy/Policy:** The absence of a Gender Strategy or Policy to guarantee gender mainstreaming in the company is a missed opportunity.
- **Membership of Board of Directors:** The lack of women on the executive boards of corporate organizations is a worldwide challenge and concerted efforts are being made to bridge that gap.
- **Vacancy Announcements:** There is a need to use inclusive language in job announcements. Generally, women are less likely to apply for jobs that are male-labeled. Gendered wording sends a message to the applicants about whether they belong to that organization or not.
- **Lack of Professional Development Opportunities:** Currently, there is no training and development department in place to assess the capacity-building needs of the staff and provide career growth-related learning opportunities.
- **Challenges in External Trade-related Procedures and Systems:** Currently, the system does not have a feedback mechanism where women traders could provide feedback on the challenges they face while using the portal and what additional facilitation the portal can provide to them.
- **Organizational Culture:** A majority of women interviewees in the Karachi office mentioned that their male counterparts find it hard to communicate with women colleagues due to shyness or religious inclination.
- **Knowledge about Gender issues and Gender Mainstreaming:** Staff has low levels of gender capacity and required skills and very little understanding of diversity aspects. A large number of respondents were not able to understand the concept of gender integration other than staff gender balance.
- **Diverse Work Environment:** PSW staff blending in the Islamabad and Karachi office shows a negligible representation of religious minorities- with only one staff member and no representation of persons with disabilities.

GAP PHASE 1: INTERVENTIONS

In response to the identified challenges and disparities, various interventions have been implemented to promote gender inclusivity at PSW. These interventions encompass a range of initiatives aimed at addressing barriers to entry, enhancing career opportunities, and fostering a more inclusive and supportive workplace environment for women.



No. 01 – Inclusive Policies

Our HR policies are integral to fostering a supportive and equitable workplace environment where all employees feel valued and empowered. These policies encompass various aspects, including providing flexible leave options for diverse needs such as parental, and bereavement leaves. We have also established equitable reward and recognition systems based on performance and contributions, celebrating diverse achievements, and offering monetary rewards, while providing advancement opportunities regardless of background. Additionally, inclusive learning and development initiatives offer diverse learning opportunities and support for professional development, including programs on diversity, equity, and inclusion, while creating equal pathways for career advancement and skill diversification. Our DEI policy is central to our HR approach, promoting a culture of inclusivity and respect, ensuring that all voices are heard and valued, and actively working towards eliminating bias and discrimination in all forms.



No. 02 – Recruitment Quotas

We have defined a quota system for differently abled employees, women, and minority groups, and encourage them to apply to ensure that they are given equal opportunities for employment and advancement within the organization.

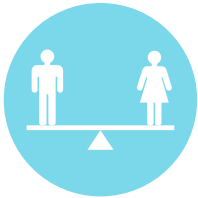
1. Differently abled people: 1% of total no of employees
2. Women: 10% quota for employment to all posts across the board
3. Minorities: 5% quota for employment to all posts across the board



No. 03 – A 24-Hour Helpline

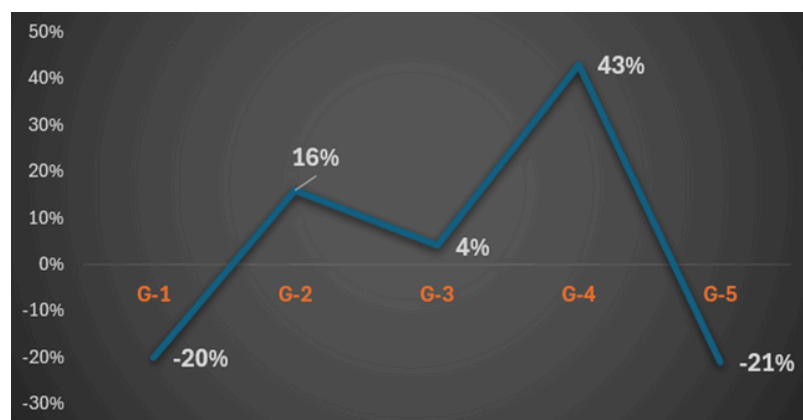
We have installed a dedicated 24-hour helpline for women traders to ensure that the system is responsive to their emerging needs. Around 100 women traders have been facilitated.

GAP PHASE 1: INTERVENTIONS



No. 04 — Reducing and Eliminating Gender Pay Gap

We conduct regular pay audits, addressing any discrepancies in pay between male and female employees, and implement policies to promote transparency and fairness in compensation practices.



The provided graph illustrates the variance in average salaries between male and female employees across five different groups (Internal grades: G-1 to G-5), reflecting our ongoing commitment to offering pay packages based on merit, education, and experience. We are encouraged by the progress shown in Groups G-2, G-3, and especially G-4, where female employees earn 16%, 4%, and 43% more on average, respectively. These positive variances highlight our successful efforts to streamline pay parity in the organisation. While Groups G-1 and G-5 indicate areas for improvement, with female employees earning 20% and 21% less, respectively, we remain dedicated to conducting regular pay audits and implementing targeted interventions to address these discrepancies.



No. 05 — Gender Neutral Job Descriptions

By having gender-neutral job descriptions it helps us attract a more diverse pool of candidates by avoiding gender-specific language and stereotypes. By focusing on skills, qualifications, and job requirements rather than gendered traits, we encourage greater gender diversity in our applicant pool.

GAP PHASE 1: INTERVENTIONS



No. 06 – The Women Entrepreneurs Program

To raise more awareness and increase women participation in trade, we launched the Khadijah Program in 2022. The program is designed to support women entrepreneurs through quarterly support sessions to track their progress towards achieving a set target and receive guidance on overcoming any challenges they may encounter. Through this program, we have successfully onboarded around 300 women entrepreneurs.



3500
Women Subscribers



GAP PHASE 1: INTERVENTIONS



No. 07 — Empowering Women Entrepreneurs: PSW-Khadijah Program's Participation in the Kazakhstan Trade Opportunities Forum

Women entrepreneurs affiliated with the PSW – Khadijah Women Entrepreneurship program participated in the 'Trade Opportunities Forum,' sponsored by USAID Pakistan Regional Integration Activity and USAID Trade Central Asia Activity, held in Kazakhstan. The delegation, which included PSW representatives and talented businesswomen, engaged actively in cross-border trade and explored the potential for selling products overseas in Kazakhstan. The forum provided a platform for networking, knowledge exchange, and forging valuable partnerships. This initiative is expected to strengthen economic ties between Pakistan and Kazakhstan, fostering collaboration and growth.

By enhancing the capabilities of women entrepreneurs, the Khadijah program seeks to break down barriers and promote inclusivity in international trade.



GAP PHASE 1: INTERVENTIONS



No. 08 – Learning & Development Opportunities

Opportunities are provided to the PSW staff for informal learning and sharing of good practices on gender integration. Internal and external guest speakers are invited for staff to encourage informal exchanges on gender issues among colleagues within and between offices.

We have 27 female employees, of whom 18 have received paid training opportunities, with a completion rate of 67% for unique employees. Additionally, 31 different training courses, including specialized, soft skills, technical, and certification-based courses, were completed by PSW female employees through in-house, external, and online platforms. Moreover, 2 dedicated sessions were conducted to raise awareness about diversity, equity, and inclusion.



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PHASE 2: NEXT STEPS

2024 - 2026

No. 01 – Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Capacity Building Training Program

Phase 1: Pulse Check (Focus Group Discussions with employees)

Phase 2: D&I Trainings

Phase 3: Post Training Assessment and D&I Strategies

No. 02 – Expanding Sourcing Channels

01: Partner with organisations, universities, and boot camps that focus on training women in technology.

02: Encourage current employees to refer female candidates and consider offering incentives for successful referrals.

03: Targeting women-focused job boards such as (WomenInTechPK, SheJobs, HerCareer.pk, JobsForHer, Rozee.pk Women's Section).

No. 03 – Enhance Employer Brand

01: Showcase success stories of female employees on social media

02: Initiating internal awards within the company to enhance recognition and motivation such as (PSW Annual Woman Award, Innovative Women Award, Diversity Champion Award, Inclusive Team Award, DEI Initiative of the Year)

No. 04 – Diversified Interview Process

01: Cross-functional interview panels to reduce unconscious bias in the selection process.

02: Evaluate candidates on multiple dimensions, such as cultural fit, problem-solving abilities, and potential for growth.

03: Provide unconscious bias training to all interviewers to make them aware of their own potential biases.

No. 05 – Conduct regular Audits and Reporting

Initiate D&I audit through Internal Audit Team at PSW.

PHASE 2: NEXT STEPS

No. 06 – Women Resource Group

At PSW LadyLeaders Lounge, we are committed to fostering a supportive and inclusive environment where women empower each other to thrive both personally and professionally. Through mentorship, networking opportunities, and collaborative initiatives, we aim to cultivate confidence, resilience, and leadership skills, enabling every woman within our organization to reach her full potential and contribute to a diverse and thriving workplace culture.

No. 07 – Identifying roles for Women

Liasion with departmental heads and identify roles for which females can easily be recruited. This targeted approach will help increase the no of females at PSW especially at mid-senior level.

No. 08 – Feedback Surveys

Feedback surveys will be circulated twice a year to guage the progress of D,E,I efforts.

No. 09 – Inclusive Building Design & Infrastructure

Ensure that all facilities are accessible to individuals with disabilities. This includes ramps, elevators, wide doorways, accessible restrooms, and clear signage.

No. 10 – Care Corner

A dedicated space within our office facilities to support female employees. This nurturing space serves dual purposes: providing a private environment for mothers to feed their children and functioning as a safe, engaging area.

No. 11 – Enhance Leadership Engagement

Include D&I in C-Suite WIGs e.g. happiness with inclusivity.

PHASE 2: NEXT STEPS

- No. 12 – Ensure adequate representation of Women in BOD**
Ensure adequate representation of Women in BoD and relevant committees.
- No. 13 – Enhance the engagement of Women traders in Change Management Sessions**
We aim to enhance the engagement of women traders through targeted Change Management sessions. To achieve this, we plan to sign Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with key stakeholders. This includes partnering with the Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry (WCCI) for two sessions per quarter, collaborating with the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) for the National Export Trade Program (NETP) and a women entrepreneur program, facilitating three to four sessions per quarter, and teaming up with Daraz to promote women in E-Commerce through one to two sessions per quarter.
- No. 14 – Targeted Training for Sector-Specific Development**
As the Khadijah Women Entrepreneurship Program enters phase two, the objective will shift to more targeted and focused areas of training for specific Khadijah participants. The focus will be on particular sectors and industries, with training designed according to their needs.
- No. 15 – Engage External Partners and Communities**
Collaborate with external organizations, networks, and communities to share best practices and resources to support Khadijah Program.