



Improving the bottom line: **Women in business and management**



Women have become engines for economic growth within countries, across regions and around the world. Achieving gender diversity is increasingly seen as necessary for competitive business performance with evidence showing that gender diversity contributes to the bottom line. However, globally women remain under-represented in business and management. Very few women attain top management positions or serve as chairpersons or members of company boards and barriers to women's entrepreneurship still exist. There has been significant progress made but the results are mixed and challenges persist. Women remain an underutilized, dynamic pool of talent even though women have caught up to, and in some regions even overtaken, men in terms of the percentage of overall tertiary graduates.

By leveraging companies and national employer and business membership organizations (EBMOs) globally, the ILO Bureau for Employers' Activities (ACT/EMP) is contributing to the promotion of women in business and management (WIBM) through research grounded on authoritative data and providing an evidence base for businesses to realize the competitive edge gender diversity brings to their bottom line. The work contributes to the ILO's Women at Work Centenary Initiative which examines and identifies innovative, effective actions towards securing a better future for women at work.

Since embarking on this global project, ACT/EMP has convened several conferences, regional and national activities which have all been supported by data-driven publications and reports to prompt discussion and solutions - with more planned.

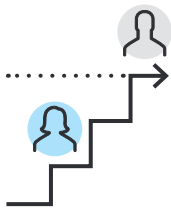


When we began talking about this as a topic, it was irritation then grudging acceptance and now companies are beginning to embrace that actually increasing the number of women in management and in the governance structures makes good business sense.

Deborah France-Massin
Director, ILO-ACT/EMP



Key findings of global report on Women in Business and Management: Gaining momentum



Women are moving up the ladder but only to a certain point

- Glass ceilings persist and only 5 per cent of public companies have female CEOs.
- 30 per cent of the companies responding the ILO company survey had no women on their boards, while 65 per cent in total had less than 30 per cent women.
- Glass walls prevent women from moving laterally in companies. A greater proportion of companies that participated in the survey had 100 per cent women compared to 100 per cent men in managerial functions such as human resources, public relations and communications management, and finance and administration.



Women represent a significant talent pool

- Women have been increasingly filling the ranks of management.
- Women represent 30 per cent of business owners.
- In most regions women are surpassing men at Bachelors' and Masters' level.



The top three barriers to women's leadership

- Women having more family responsibilities than men.
- Roles assigned by society to men and women; and
- Masculine corporate cultures.

The WIBM project has achieved



- Ten publications on women in business and management.
- Over 14,300 companies surveyed from across five regions.
- Four detailed EBMO case studies on women in leadership (India, the Occupied Palestinian Territory, South Africa and the United Kingdom) and over 78 EBMOs surveyed.
- 11 case studies of company good practices to promote women in business and management and in-depth interviews with representatives of 34 companies globally.
- One global and three regional conferences.
- Collaboration with UNDP and UN Women on gender equality in business.



Working towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The WIBM initiative contributes to the achievement of SDG target 5.5 focusing on ensuring “women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.” In particular, the initiative is directly connected to SDG indicator 5.5.2 on the “proportion of women in managerial positions,” for which the ILO is a custodian.

Events

Global conference

Reflecting global change: Women in business and management, London, United Kingdom, April 2015: An international conference organized in partnership with the International Finance Corporation and hosted by the Confederation of British Industry. The event was opened by the Guy Ryder, ILO Director-General who highlighted the need for accelerated change. Panel speakers from around the world covering Europe, South Africa, United States, Singapore and the Republic of Korea discussed and shared solutions on creating change and progress for women in business and management. The event was attended by approximately 60 people and was closed by Vivian Hunt, Managing Director, Mckinsey & Company who shared some of Mckinsey & Company’s hard-hitting research on the business case.



What we found was that diversity does matter. Full stop and overwhelmingly so.

Vivian Hunt
Managing Director, Mckinsey & Company



The main obstacle that we identified as holding women back is gender stereotyping linked to the fact that family responsibilities are still mainly assigned to women in most societies and these stereotypes tend to be mirrored - not different - in masculine corporate cultures. Elements such as differences in educational levels, qualifications, work experience, occupational categories and hours worked can be considered as the “explained” part of the gender pay gap. But the remaining, and more significant part, is the unexplained part of gap is down to discrimination.

Guy Ryder
Director-General, ILO



Regional conferences

[Asia and the Pacific] Fostering female talent in the workforce: Women in business and management, Singapore, July 2015. An Asia-Pacific regional conference was organized together the Singapore National Employers Federation (SNEF). The event was opened by Amy Khor, Senior Minister of State from Singapore with a keynote address by Ho Kwon Ping, Executive Chairman, Banyan Tree Holdings. Over 200 people attended the event. Significant regional media attention was generated with conference being reported *Channel News Asia* among others.

[Middle East and North Africa] Women in business and management: Gaining momentum in Middle East and North Africa, Muscat, Oman, February 2016. The Conference, organized with the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, gathered more than 60 company and EBMO representatives, as well as experts and practitioners from the region and abroad to discuss potential measures that could support women's performance in the private sector.



The Women in Business and Management conference served as a vital opportunity to openly discuss how we can do things better, how we can make the business case for gender diversity stronger and how to overcome existing challenges. Congratulations to the ILO leadership for this fantastic and impactful conference.

Marife Zamora
CEO, Convergys Philippines



For the first time in history in the next few decades, there can finally perhaps be no longer any trade-offs for women wanting to pursue both careers as well as home-making. Finally they can perhaps truly have both. This by itself would be unprecedented.

Ho Kwon Ping
Executive Chairman,
Banyan Tree Holdings



Today my country is prosperous compared to being very poor 100 years ago. This could not have been achieved without investing in gender equality...Despite advances in equality in Sweden there is still a glass ceiling challenge. Company culture reflecting perceptions that question women's capacity is the biggest barrier combined with women having greater responsibility for work at home.

Anna Ferry
Ambassador of Sweden to
Peru



Practicing equity, building gender-sensitive human resources management systems, creating enabling environments for women in the corporate world, establishing an accommodating social infrastructure and endorsing work-life balance arrangements for both women and men are all vital elements for successfully advancing women's careers.

Redha Bin Juma Al Saleh
Vice-Chairman for
Administration and
Finance Affairs, Oman
Chamber of Commerce
and Industry

[Latin America and the Caribbean] American regional conference: Women in business and management, Lima, Peru, May 2017.

A regional conference for Latin America and the Caribbean was organized together with the National Confederation Private Business Institutions (CONFIEP) followed by a closed-door workshop for EBMOs. A key note address was delivered by Ana María Romero-Lozada, Minister of Women Affairs and Vulnerable Groups, Government of Peru. Company and EBMO representatives such as the US Council for International Business, Coca-Cola Company, and Banco Bilbao Vizcaya Argentaria participated as panellists to reflect on the business case as well as the challenges and solutions to advancing women in business and management. Approximately 300 people attended the conference and the regional report received considerable attention from local media such as *La República* among others.

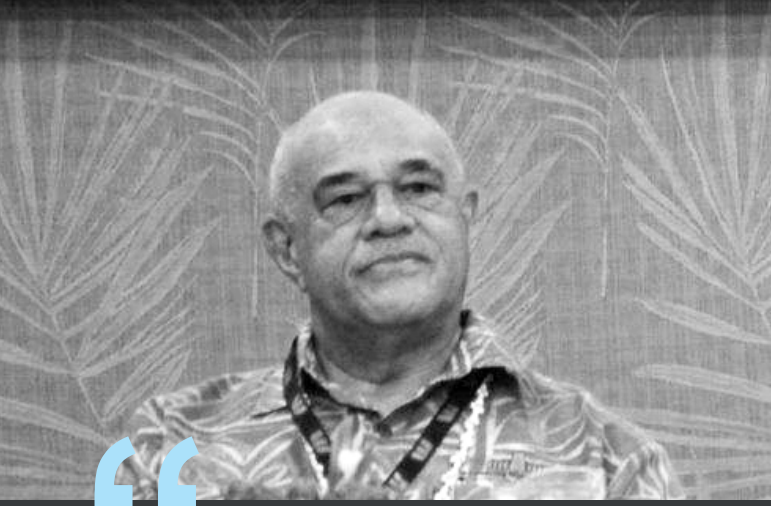
Workshops

Five regional workshops were held in Bangkok, Beirut, Lima, Johannesburg and Ukraine during 2012-2013. Representatives of EBMOs and gender experts gathered to explore the issues facing companies and national EBMOs regarding the promotion of women in business and management. Country papers about women in the labour market, business and management were prepared by many of the EBMOs in the different regions.

In 2017, ACT/EMP together with the Caribbean Employers' Confederation organized a validation meeting to discuss the findings of a sub-regional enterprise survey on women in business and management which formed the basis of a region-specific report. As a result of this sub-regional effort, national EBMOs in Antigua and Barbuda and Jamaica have decided to prioritize the issue of gender diversity in their policy portfolio.



Champions of women in business and management in the Caribbean gather together to validate and discuss findings of a sub-region wide enterprise survey. St Lucia, October 2017.



Driving gender diversity in business at national and regional levels

Women in business in Fiji: ACT/EMP assisted the **Fiji Commerce and Employers' Federation** (FCEF) with its effort to scale-up its support of female entrepreneurship. FCEF founded the Women Entrepreneurs and Business Council (WEBC) in September 2013 in response to a membership needs survey. The WEBC has grown significantly and plays an important role in advocating for policies that support women business owners in Fiji as well as offering services to women business owners. WEBC has over 100 subscribers and has received substantive coverage in the local media.

An evidence-base leading to business change in Honduras, India and Panama: In 2018, ACT/EMP supported the development of three country level reports on women in business and management for Honduras, India, and Panama in partnership with respective national EBMOs. These reports provide country-specific data through the execution of company surveys on women in leadership positions and enable EBMOs to more effectively engage in policy dialogue with ministries, educational institutions and companies on ways forward to creating greater gender diversity across company ranks.

When FCEF looked at the issue of how to bring more women into the entrepreneurial space, we established – with the help of ILO ACT/EMP – WEBC as the 7th council of the Federation. We've made enormous strides during the past two years with a strategic plan in place and concrete services being offered to women entrepreneurs who are subscribing to become members. The Council is now working to blend this issue into the fabric of leadership so that we have a holistic approach from the politics of the country and employment laws down to company operations.

**Howard Politini, President,
FCEF (2013-2015)**



The Honduran Council of Private Enterprise (COHEP) launched its report *Mujeres en la Gestión Empresarial en Honduras* which is based on a survey of over 500 companies. April 2018.

Work in progress

Global

ILO Centenary (2019) – how far have we come? For the ILO's upcoming centenary, ILO-ACT/EMP will release a new global report to provide updated statistics, an expanded evidence base, and track progress on how businesses are realizing the benefits of greater gender diversity. Company data collected through a global survey of over 13,000 responses from more than 70 countries will form the basis of this study. The new report will be launched in 2019 and will contribute to the development of regional reports.

Regional

In the Americas region, ILO-ACT/EMP is working with UN Women on a joint programme funded by the European Union to promote the business case for gender equality. Win-Win: Gender equality means good business is a three-year programme (2018-20) that strengthens the capacities of private and public actors to drive organizational change regarding gender equality as a necessity for competitive business performance. The programme is implemented in collaboration with EBMOs and companies in six countries from the Americas: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Jamaica, and Uruguay.



Publications



[The ILO's] Bureau for Employers' Activities has brought together data from around the world to try to provide the most up-to-date and global picture on women in the business world.

The Guardian, 2015



Research by the International Labour Organization (ILO) shows that the gender wage gap has gradually narrowed over the past few decades, for example in Latin America.

The Financial Times, 2015



Women in business and management: Gaining momentum (2015): A world-wide report that presents the results of a global survey conducted by ACT/EMP in 2013 across five regions to capture the extent to which companies have policies and practices in place to promote women in management. The report received substantive coverage in international media including The Guardian, The Independent and The Financial Times.



Women in business and management: Gaining momentum in Asia and the Pacific (2015): This regional report highlights statistics from Asia and the Pacific and key actions for business in advancing gender equality. A [factsheet](#) summarizes the key findings.



Women in business and management: Gaining momentum in the Middle East and North Africa (2016): This report brings together regional statistics from the Middle East and North Africa and shares insights on achieving greater economic gains through better utilization of the full talent pool. Also see the [factsheet](#).



Women in business and management: Gaining momentum in Latin America and Caribbean (2017): Provides a regional perspective by collecting regional data and information on the topic and presenting regional specific information collected from the global ILO company survey as well as workshops and case studies of EBMOs and companies. Also see the [factsheet](#).



Women in business and management: Gaining momentum in Eastern Europe and Central Asia (2018): This report brings together up-to-date labour market statistics and presents the regional information gathered through the ILO company survey. The report also highlights good practices and examples from companies and national EBMOs in the region. Also see the [factsheet](#).



Women in business and management: Gaining momentum in the Caribbean (2018): This report presents the landscape of women in leadership positions for the Caribbean sub-region through a survey of over 650 companies across 13 Caribbean countries and territories.



A global snapshot: Women leaders and managers in employers' organizations (2017): This paper presents data collected from a global survey conducted with national EBMOs to understand the status quo and representation of women in governance, leadership and management roles within EBMOs and their membership.



Promoting women in business and management: A handbook for national employers' organizations (2017): This handbook discusses ways EBMOs can support companies to advance women in business and management. It includes case studies from India, Occupied Palestinian Territory, South Africa and the United Kingdom to provide greater detail on initiatives EBMOs are undertaking.



Gender diversity journey: Company good practices (2017): This publication profiles successful efforts of companies in their journey to attract and retain female talent. Eleven detailed company case studies are available.



Women's economic empowerment: Good practices (2018): This publication highlights key findings of a survey of employers' organizations and companies conducted by the International Organisation of Employers in partnership with the ILO Bureau for Employers' Activities (ACT/EMP) to better understand their experiences in promoting women's economic empowerment as an enabler for growth and build a knowledge base of good practices from around the world.

Other noteworthy media



Eve Programme, March 2017: Deborah France-Massin, ACT/EMP Director, shared some insights for the Eve programme's special focus on women's leadership in the workplace of tomorrow. Read [here](#).



ILO Blog, May 2015: Deborah France-Massin, ACT/EMP Director, provided her insights and takeaways from the launch of the recent global report. Read [here](#).



BBC Woman's Hour, June 2015: Deborah France-Massin, ACT/EMP Director, discusses some of the results of the global publication with a focus on the glass ceiling in an interview on BBC Woman's Hour. Listen [here](#).

About The Bureau for Employers' Activities of the ILO

The Bureau for Employers' Activities (ACT/EMP) is a specialized unit within the ILO Secretariat. Its task is to maintain close and direct relations with EBMOs in member States. Across the region, ACT/EMP assists EBMOs in building strong, independent and representative organizations that respond to their members' needs and challenges through Technical Cooperation Programmes. The key components of ACT/EMP's role are:

- Maintaining and developing a global network of EBMOs.
- Being a trusted internal partner of the ILO to EBMOs and keeping the ILO informed of their views, challenges and priorities.
- Running capacity-building programmes for EBMOs that respond to their needs (targeting three areas: policy, services and strategy).
- Facilitating the wider work of the ILO with EBMOs.

<http://www.ilo.org/employers>