



GUIDE TO DIVERSITY IN BUSINESS LEADERSHIP

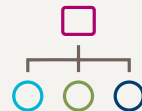
The Organisational Mandate for Diversity

Research rolled out by the Pearl Initiative and NAMA Women Advancement Establishment across 2019 and 2020 noted that regional employees believed that their organisations' leadership was committed to diversity and inclusion. However, women respondents reported concerns pertaining to workplace practices and cultures, which impacted their satisfaction and retention in Gulf workplaces. To ensure that workplaces are inclusive and welcoming for women, and to ensure the application of best practices in diversity and inclusion (D&I), we recommend implementing the following solutions:



Applying a Holistic Approach to Diversity and Inclusion

Diversity policies cannot be drafted and implemented in silos within organisations – they must be intersectional, cross-influential, and wide-ranging. Successful diversity policies will analyse all the concerns that women face in the workplace, how they impact each other, and create solutions that collectively support women in the workplace.



Strengthening the “Tone from the Top”

A supportive tone from the top is crucial towards instilling an organisational culture of support for women and other minorities. Messaging from organisational leaders should be visible, resolute and stress the importance of D&I across an organisation's activities and culture.



Enabling Flexible Work Hours and Policies

Organisations should implement flexible work hours and policies that support employees who need to manage familial obligations, healthcare, and other non-work-related concerns. This would particularly help women, who face the double burden of their work in the office and at home, and should be trusted by employers to balance their time in a way that accommodates their familial commitments.



Mentorship and Sponsorship Programmes

Mentorship and sponsorship programmes in the workforce for women give “the old guard” a chance to pass along their insights to women who might otherwise be excluded or not given the chance to grow their skillsets. These programmes help women gain access to leadership opportunities through networking and inter-level connections, access to organisational information and resources, and help them address gendered concerns in the workplace with some comfort.



Collecting and Tracking Organisational Data on Diversity

Organisations should collect data on employee diversity and implement monitoring mechanisms to evaluate the effectiveness of their diversity and inclusion policies to understand if their policies are having their intended effects or if they require change. This data will help organisations understand how they can improve their policies or modify internal practices to effectively support women in the workforce.

WHAT?

HOW?

Define the organisation's values and mandate and ensure that D&I is considered at every phase.

Cross-check policies from different segments and departments within an organisation to ensure they are compliant with the organisation's overarching D&I mandate.

Include diverse groups in the policy-making and decision-making processes to ensure that any organisational policies are inclusive.

Organisational leaders must be educated in the importance of D&I for improved business outcomes and be cognizant of whether their messaging and actions are truly inclusive, whether in the office or in the media.

Organisational leaders should conduct regular follow-ups across their businesses to ensure that equitable treatment is the foundation of all organisational policies, and that the policies and initiatives established to encourage women's workplace engagement (and those of other minority groups) are achieving their intended results.

Conduct an employee mapping exercise to assess what styles of flexible working are most needed in the employee pool, and shift policies to accommodate these.

Examples of flexible working include:

Flexible hours: Working a full day but choosing work hours
Compressed work weeks: Working full-time but for fewer days, meaning increased work hours in a day
Telework: Using technology to work remotely / outside the office
Job sharing: Having two or more individuals share responsibilities for one position

Map the stakeholders most interested in mentorship / sponsorship programmes. Work with them to create relevant programmes and activities.

Set targets and goals using a timeline and the feedback received from women in the organisation. Make sure the goals are reviewed in a timely manner and that progress is plotted.

Set aside a dedicated budget for training and development activities as part of the mentorship programmes.

Set up a dedicated team to establish monitoring and evaluation standards for D&I.

Establish organisation-wide goals based on the gaps uncovered through D&I monitoring initiatives.

Make D&I reporting a part of organisational governance reporting standards.

Use the data gathered on D&I in organisations to ask strategic questions and re-evaluate internal policies and cultures.

To read the full report, *Women in the Economy: The Gulf Region Outlook*, with additional data and recommendations, please [click here](#).