



# Post-Event Report

## Whistleblowing: A Pillar Of Sound Corporate Governance

**Date:** 18 September 2019

**Location:** Wyndham Grand Hotel, Manama, Bahrain

# Word of Thanks

The Pearl Initiative would like to extend their gratitude to all the event attendees, and particularly the speakers who unconditionally shared their time and expertise to make this event a success:

- **Jeyapriya Partiban**, Partner and Head of Risk Consulting, KPMG
- **Dr Jaffar Mohammed Ahmed**, Head of Operational Risk & Internal Controls, National Bank of Bahrain

It is heartening to see the support and commitment that is extended to drive the vision and mission of the Pearl Initiative forward to foster a corporate culture of accountability and transparency across the Gulf Region.

# Programme Overview

## Anti-Corruption Best Practices

Building communities and resources to encourage the implementation of better integrity and transparency practices in the Gulf Region.

Programme partner:



Activities:

- **Gulf Integrity Indicator** – A tool that provides a comprehensive, yet straightforward framework for companies to measure their performance relative to international benchmarks and regional best practices.
- **Collective Action Community** – Convene roundtable events across the Gulf Region sharing and promoting best practice integrity systems and policies within organisations.
- **Student Case study Competition** – Hold a student Case Study Competition for University business students in the Gulf Region to submit Case Studies of corporate good practices in accountability and transparency.

# Event Overview

In common parlance, whistleblowing is the action of speaking out on malpractices, corruption, misconduct or mismanagement. Whistleblowing can be defined in a number of ways. In its simplest form, whistleblowing involves the act of reporting wrongdoing within an organisation to internal and/or external parties and is an important tool when it comes to corporate governance and ensuring the practical application and implementation of corporate governance practices. It supports in ensuring that corporate governance systems and policies are not merely defined but rather complied with and adopted as the DNA of any organisation.

## Key Information

**Number of Attendees:** 20 Attendees

**Profile of Attendees:** Senior Executives from Compliance, Legal, Audit, Governance and Finance.

### **Attendee Feedback\*:**

- Event quality – Good
- Content and networking – Good

*\*Data captured through attendee feedback forms*

# Event Objective

The objective of the roundtable was to bring senior executives together to engage in discussions and share ideas, experiences and knowledge on the practical implementation of whistleblowing measures within organisations. Key topics of discussion were:

- A starting guide to implement a whistleblowing programme for an organisation.
- Areas for consideration when implementing a successful whistleblowing programme and the challenges that can be expected during implementation.
- Awareness of whistleblowing programmes and promotion of protection mechanisms available to whistleblowers.

# Opening Remarks

Yasmine Omari, Executive Director, Pearl Initiative



**Yasmine Omari** introduced Pearl Initiative to the audience and identified the business case for accountability and transparency in all businesses across the Gulf Region.

She introduced the Anti-Corruption Best Practices programme and elaborated on the importance of an effective whistleblowing programme to help organisations keep corporate integrity in place; leading to better corporate governance.

She concluded by introducing the distinguished speakers and kicked off the panel discussion segment.

# Panellists



## **Dr Jaffar Mohammed Ahmed, Head of Operational Risk & Internal Controls, National Bank of Bahrain**

Dr Jaffar is the Head of Operational Risk & Internal Control for the National Bank of Bahrain. Prior to his current role, he was the first Vice President- Head of Group Risk Management at Al Baraka Banking Group, Superintendent –Islamic Banking Supervision – Central Bank of Bahrain.

Dr Jaffar has also authored a research paper titled “A conceptual framework for the Basel accords-based regulations –Journal of Financial Regulations and Compliance.”



## **Jeyapriya Partiban, Partner and Head of Risk Consulting, KPMG**

Priya leads the Risk Consulting practice at KPMG in Bahrain and is a member of the Firm’s Board. She has over 25 years of experience providing governance, risk, compliance and internal audit services to clients globally.

Priya plays an active role in the Risk Consulting industry – she was a member of the steering committee which developed the code of corporate governance for the Kingdom of Bahrain and was a Board member of the Institute of Internal Auditors from 2007 until 2018.

# Panel Discussion

The panel discussion, moderated by Yasmine Omari, centred around the value of an effective whistleblowing programme that helps improve corporate governance within organisations. The panellists reiterated that effective whistleblowing programmes can help promote transparency and accountability within organisations.

Panellists were asked if the region's cultural landscape is what shapes its whistleblower policies, and if so, how organisations can actively be sensitive to this. The panellists used real life case studies and subject matter expertise to support the discussion. They went on to discuss how whistleblowing and corporate governance are closely linked.

“Whistleblowing is no longer a new phenomenon in the region. It is not a *‘nice to have’* but more of a *‘must have’* in terms of effective corporate governance.”

**Jeyapriya Partiban**



# Panel Discussion

Panellists discussed the challenges and opportunities organisations have when implementing an effective whistleblowing programme. The panellists agreed that in order to have an effective whistleblowing programme it is essential:

- 1) To have management buy-in
- 2) To fit it in with the organisational culture
- 3) To emphasise the protection of whistleblowers.



# Panel Discussion

Key takeaways highlighted during the discussion include:

- The risk, compliance and audit functions support the Board in formulating organisational policies, and the Human Resource Department forms the backbone in implementing these policies within an organisation.
- It is important for organisations to reduce the fear of retaliation within employees to encourage them to report on misconduct.
- Escalation mechanisms need to be in place for data management and for a successful whistleblowing programme to operate.
- Providing training programmes is essential for organisations to make employees aware of their policies, which will in turn help the employees identify misconduct for when they need to report cases.

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“Management buy-in is crucial to the successful implementation of whistleblowing policies.”

**Dr Jaffar Mohammed  
Ahmed**

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# Panel Discussion

You would not need a whistleblowing framework in a meaningful, robust, and tested corporate governance ecosystem.



**Dr Jaffar Mohammed Ahmed**



**Jeyapriya Partiban**

A robust whistleblowing/ hotline program can enhance an organisation's governance and overall performance, while also protecting it from contentious behaviour and potential risks – financial, operational and reputational.

Whistleblowing provides all stakeholders of a business an equal opportunity through which to report genuine concerns, that helps management identify various lapses in company processes.



**Yasmine Omari**

# Closing Remarks

- The closing remarks for the seminar were delivered by Yasmine Omari, Executive Director, the Pearl Initiative. Ms. Omari concluded the session and stated, “Having clear whistleblowing policies and procedures demonstrates an organisation’s commitment to integrity practices.”
- The Gulf Integrity Indicator was introduced as a tool to review internal integrity policies within an organisation and the value it can bring to organisations was highlighted.
- Ms. Omari concluded by thanking the panellists for sharing their experiences and expertise on the topic.



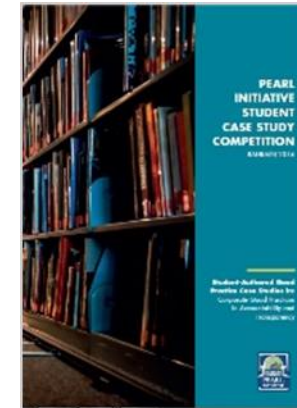
# On-Site Impressions



# Appendices

# Appendix 1: About Siemens Integrity Initiative

- The Anti-Corruption Best Practices Programme has been developed in an effort to influence the mindset and behaviour of business leaders and students across the Gulf Region. This is achieved through education, incentivisation and by further building a local community that is developing and sharing good integrity practices.
- As part of this programme, the Pearl Initiative has developed the Gulf Integrity Indicator (“GII”), a tool designed to promote and improve business integrity practices amongst Private Sector organisations operating in the Gulf Region. It provides a comprehensive, yet straightforward framework for companies to measure their current performance relative to international benchmarks and regional leading practices.





# Appendix 2: Event Agenda

- 09:30am – 10:00am Registration: Coffee & Tea
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- 10:00am – 11:30am Panel Discussion
  - *An overview of the whistleblowing policies implemented in the Gulf Region and a platform to shed light on how a truly effective whistleblowing programme is achieved.*
  - *Insights from the speakers' experience and expertise on the implementation of integrity best practices.*
- 
- 11:30am– 12:00pm Audience Q&A with the panellists
- 
- 12:00pm Coffee & Networking

# Appendix 3: Pre-Event Coverage

## Social Media Coverage

- A comprehensive social media campaign using the following posts was rolled out for two months the Pearl Initiative on our social media accounts.

**Whistleblowing**  
A Pillar to Sound Corporate Governance

Join our speakers at an upcoming roundtable to discuss the implementation of whistleblowing mechanisms.

**RSVP Today!**

18 September 2019 | Wyndham, Grand Marana, Bahariya | 9:30 am to 12:00 pm

**Whistleblowing**  
A Pillar to Sound Corporate Governance

Only 2% of whistleblowers experience retaliation in companies with programmes that have written standards, training, an in-house complaint process, and resources that employees can draw upon.

**RSVP Today!**

18 September 2019 | Wyndham, Grand Marana, Bahariya | 9:30 am to 12:00 pm

**Whistleblowing**  
A Pillar to Sound Corporate Governance

**Dawood Al Ashhab**  
Assistant General Manager, Rabohat Islamic Bank

**Jeyapriya Parthiban**  
Partner, Head of Risk Consulting, KPMG

**Dr. Jaffer Mohammed Ahmed**  
Head of Operational Risk (Internal Control), National Bank of Bahrain

18 September 2019 | Wyndham, Grand Marana, Bahariya | 9:30 am to 12:00 pm

**الإبلاغ عن المخلفات:**  
إحدى ركائز الحوكمة المؤسسية الرشيدة

انضم إلى متحدثينا لمناقشة كيفية تنفيذ اليات الإبلاغ عن المخالفات (أو ما يعرف بتفخ الصافرة)

**RSVP Today!**

18 سبتمبر 2019 | فندق ويندهام غراند في المنطقة البحرين | 9:30 صباحاً وحتى 12:00 ظهراً

**الإبلاغ عن المخلفات:**  
إحدى ركائز الحوكمة المؤسسية الرشيدة

72 فقط من كاشفي الفساد يعانون من التعسف والانتقام في الشركات التي تمتلك معايير مكتوبة، ومنظمة تدريب، وإجراءات رفع شكاوى، وموارد يمكن للموظفين الاستعانة بها.

**RSVP Today!**

18 سبتمبر 2019 | فندق ويندهام غراند في المنطقة البحرين | 9:30 صباحاً وحتى 12:00 ظهراً

**الإبلاغ عن المخلفات:**  
إحدى ركائز الحوكمة المؤسسية الرشيدة

**داود خليل العحاق الأشهب**  
مساعد المدير العام في بنك البحرين الإسلامي

**جياريا پارتيبان**  
شريكة ورئيسة قسم استشارات المخاطر في مؤسسة كيه بي ايم جي

**الدكتور جعفر محمد احمد**  
رئيس إدارة مخاطر العمليات والسياسات الداخلية في بنك البحرين الوطني

18 سبتمبر 2019 | فندق ويندهام غراند في المنطقة البحرين | 9:30 صباحاً وحتى 12:00 ظهراً

# Media Coverage

## Digital Press Release #1

[Gulf Today](#) Press Release (24 September 2019)  
Released by the Pearl Initiative

### Whistleblowing termed best tool to enhance business credibility



The Pearl Initiative, a business and technology organization, has released a digital press release titled "Whistleblowing: A Pillar of Sound Corporate Governance".

The initiative is a key part of the Pearl Initiative's commitment to transparency and accountability in the business sector. It aims to promote a culture of integrity and ethical behavior within organizations, which is essential for long-term success and credibility.

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**PEARL INITIATIVE**

**Roundtable discussion reaffirms strong link between whistleblowing and a culture of integrity within regional businesses**

Abu Dhabi, 23 September 2019 - The Pearl Initiative, a business and technology organization, has released a digital press release titled "Whistleblowing: A Pillar of Sound Corporate Governance".

The initiative is a key part of the Pearl Initiative's commitment to transparency and accountability in the business sector. It aims to promote a culture of integrity and ethical behavior within organizations, which is essential for long-term success and credibility.

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# Media Coverage

## Digital Press Release #2

[Al Khaleej](#) Press Release (24  
September 2019)

Released by the Pearl Initiative

### «بيرل» تبرز أهمية الإبلاغ عن المخالفات

نظمت مبادرة «بيرل»، ملتقى في مملكة البحرين بعنوان «الإبلاغ عن المخالفات: أحد ركائز الحوكمة المؤسسية الرشيدة»، تناول أهمية سياسات الإبلاغ عن المخالفات في تعزيز نزاهة الشركات في منطقة الخليج، إلى جانب استعراض آليات بناء وإدارة برنامج فاعل للإبلاغ ينسم بالسرعة والتشفافية والصدقية.

وركز الملتقى على العلاقة الوثيقة بين سياسات الإبلاغ عن المخالفات والحوكمة الرشيدة، وأهمية اعتماد سياسات واضحة لحث الموظفين على الإبلاغ عن المخالفات وتوفير الحماية اللازمة لهم واحترام حقهم في الخصوصية، وتعميمها على جميع الشركاء والموظفين العتيين على الصعيد الداخلي والخارجي لتعزيز المفهوم القانوني للإبلاغ عن المخالفات. كما بحث المشاركون التحديات الثقافية والاجتماعية والقانونية التي تعيق تنفيذ برامج فعالة للإبلاغ عن المخالفات، والخطوات اللازمة لمواجهة تلك المعوقات، والحد من تأثيراتها على عمليات الشركات.

وقالت ياسمين عمري، المديرة التنفيذية لمبادرة «بيرل»: «توفر سياسات الإبلاغ عن المخالفات فرصاً متكافئة أمام جميع الشركاء ضمن المؤسسة لطرح المشاكل التي يواجهونها. والإبلاغ عن أي مخالفات، ما يجعل تلك السياسات مصدراً موثوقاً للمعلومات يمكن لفريق الإدارة الاعتماد عليه لتحديد أماكن الخلل والتقصير في عمليات الشركة والعمل على إصلاحها».

# Programme Team

## Anti - Corruption Best Practices



**Yasmine Omari**  
*Executive Director*  
[yomari@pearlinitiative.org](mailto:yomari@pearlinitiative.org)

An expert in governance for family firms, Yasmine joined the Pearl Initiative as Head of Programmes, and became Executive Director in 2019. She has experience in the implementation and operation of governance systems, as well as business performance and risk management capabilities for private companies and family offices. Prior to joining the Pearl Initiative, Yasmine was a Senior Manager at Deloitte and supported clients in navigating the business challenges faced by entrepreneurial families in business. Yasmine has a legal background and holds a degree in Law and Arabic from SOAS, University of London.



**Akanksha Marwaha**  
*Programme Assistant*  
[amarwaha@pearlinitiative.org](mailto:amarwaha@pearlinitiative.org)

Akanksha joined the Pearl Initiative in 2017. She has secured graduate degrees from Surrey and Warwick in the UK in Engineering and Business Management, and has diverse experience working for the Big 4 and banks in the UAE. As a result, her academic and professional proficiency in compliance, project management and finance allows Pearl Initiative to move forward with aplomb.