



Increasing Women's Inclusion in the Pakistan Economy

An OICCI Perspective

2020



Overseas
Investors
Chamber of
Commerce &
Industry

About Overseas Investors Chamber Of Commerce and Industry (OICCI)

The Overseas Investors Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OICCI) represents the largest bloc of foreign investors in Pakistan. Established in 1860, primarily as a business chamber for foreign investors, the OICCI is not only engaged in the promotion and protection of existing foreign investment in the country and to attract new foreign investors, its diversified activities contribute significantly to supporting commerce and industry across the country. The over 200 OICCI member organizations belong to 35 different countries, have presence in 14 sectors of the economy, contribute nearly one-third of Pakistan's total tax revenue, employ around one million people and hold cumulative assets worth approximately USD 123 billion. The membership includes 57 organizations listed on the Pakistan Stock Exchange and 50 members who are associates of the 2019 Global Fortune 500 Companies. Besides their business operations, most OICCI members are actively engaged in corporate social activities, especially in the fields of education, health and community development which benefited 62 million people in the last one year.

In its comprehensive function as a facilitator for foreign investors, OICCI plays a vital role on several fronts. The Chamber is frequently called upon to assist government in policy formulation in the financial, commercial and industrial sectors, particularly where it impacts foreign investment in Pakistan and it does so by submitting a number of proposals for key areas of the economy, developed in consultation with member companies, to the Government of Pakistan and the concerned Regulatory bodies, besides other stakeholders. Through a process of advocacy and participation, OICCI ensures that the expert opinions and suggestions of its member organizations reach the right audience and contributes to the process of policy making. The Chamber also helps its members address challenges that may arise due to anomalies in laws or policy implementation.

The Chamber is also regularly called upon to interact and share its perspective on business environment and investment opportunities to prospective investors, foreign trade delegations and diplomats of the member organizations home countries.

Executive Summary

This perspective by the Overseas Investors Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OICCI) outlines obstacles to the economic prosperity of women in Pakistan, with recommendations for the government to support women's employment and career growth. A recent International Labour Organization (ILO) study indicates that if Pakistan merely **reduces the gender gap in female participation by 25%, its GDP can increase by 9%, an increase of \$24 billion**. The recommendations given below have been prepared after extensive consultation with experts, industry leaders and review of local and international best practices.

This document covers the OICCI's recommendations in three critical areas as listed below:

1. Equal Opportunities for Pakistani Women
2. Protection Against Workplace Harassment
3. Building Inclusive Workspaces

THEME 1: EQUAL OPPORTUNITY FOR PAKISTANI WOMEN

Pakistan ranks second-to-last for women in leadership roles, and Pakistani women earn roughly 34% less than men. Businesses should set a minimum goal of **25% women employees in overall workforce by 2025** in line with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Actions for Government:

1. Set target for **25% women in management roles by 2025**, in all key segments for **Government** and non-government organizations/ businesses employing more than 50 persons.
2. **Recognize at least 1 female/male leader at the national level who are empowering women** and introduce awards for spotlighting outstanding women leaders.
3. **Mandate Equal Pay for Equal Work** – Businesses to adopt gender neutral compensation and benefit structures to reduce pay gap and discrimination.
4. **Incentivize organizations toward Equal Opportunity:** Grant tax credits to organizations/employers that have a workforce comprising 15% women or more. Build on the SECP's requirement for having at least one female director on the board of directors of public listed companies by increasing diversity across the company by building a talent pipeline for females to progress to leadership/ directorial roles.
5. **Invest in long-term Female Education:** Invest in public-private partnerships in education to increase the school enrollment of girls, and for technical skills training for women. Improve access by building schools with female toilets in remote areas, and set up gender based scholarships for women in top universities.

THEME 2: MITIGATING WORKPLACE HARASSMENT IN PAKISTAN

Harassment, under section 509 of the Pakistan Penal Code is a criminal offence. Protection of Women against Harassment at the Workplace Act of 2010 (“WAHW Act”) as the names suggests, was enacted to protect women from harassment at the workplace.

Actions for Government:

1. Introduce uniformity and ease in Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for cases related to harassment in line with the best practices.
2. Review of WAHW Act is required. Scope of the WAHW Act must be broadened and also include self-employed persons and others working in the same space, members of the informal and agricultural sector; regardless of whether there is a contractual employment relationship between the parties.
3. Sensitize judiciary and police force members to remove biases and deal appropriately, and effectively, to protect the victims of harassment.
4. Free legal counsel to be provided to women, men and transgender individuals seeking access to harassment rights/ information via a government operated helpline with anonymity enabled/privacy protected.
5. Legal support to labor unions that wish to take legal action against employers for non-compliance.
6. Government mandated sensitization trainings to be conducted before year end 2021 by employers/companies in Urdu and English for people to understand the resources available to them in case of instances of harassment.
7. Make Public Transport Safer: Improve transport infrastructure, ensure safety on roads. Introduce female only buses in all cities, or designate at least 25% of space in public buses for female passengers. Government should support and promote transport services such as Uber and Careem, which promote gender diversity.

8. Educate about Childhood Harassment: It should be mandatory part of the school curriculum to teach students/children to identify inappropriate behavior and to inform an adult in case of impropriety.

9. Empower Women to Report Harassment & raise awareness amongst men

- Monitor workshops conducted by organizations for educating employees on sexual harassment.
- Ensure cases reported to government are promptly handled with care and diligence.
- Public awareness campaigns must be rolled out – “Say No to Harassment and Abuse”.
- Independent and transparent reporting facility with a committee, including at least 50% women, to be made available in workplaces with more than 50 employees.

10. Appropriate punishment for malafide reporting to ensure transparency and fair use of policy framework.



THEME 3: BUILDING INCLUSIVE WORKSPACES FOR PAKISTANI WOMEN

Unsuitable working conditions reduce female workforce participation. Amenities such as daycare centers or mobile crèches should be explored. Organizations must ensure separate toilets, encourage remote working, increase maternity leave, introduce paternity leave, facilitate commutes and relocation, and train employees in gender-sensitivity and inclusivity.

Actions for Government:

Bring Amenities to Global Standards

1.Mandate creation of daycares in workplaces with at least 50 employees.

- Offer subsidies to businesses for amenities such as daycare centers and hostels for working parents or develop public private partnerships to offer safe and affordable solutions.
- Pass uniform legislation in all provinces in Pakistan, notify requisite rules, regulations etc., and establish public bodies and officers to govern provision of and monitor day care centers.
- All working women should be compensated on money spent for daycare expenses where the employer has not provided the daycare facility.

2.Increase federal maternity leave from a bare minimum of 16 weeks to 6 months paid leave before resuming work.

- Offer tax credit to employers that give 6 months of maternity leave.
- Pass uniform legislation in all provinces in Pakistan and notify requisite rules, regulations etc., to govern provisions of maternity and paternity benefits to employees.

3.Revise Factories Act 1934

- Review clause disallowing work post sunset, to enable women to work at factories in both day and night shifts to create greater inclusion and employment opportunities.

ENDNOTES

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