



## Women in Business and Management

The **International Labour Organization (ILO)** recently released its **second global report**, titled **Women in Business and Management: The business case for change**.

- This report has shared the findings of enterprise survey on women in business and management. Salient issues on gender diversity with the benefits and implications for enterprises.

### Findings of the Report

- The average global **labour force participation rate** of women in 2018 stood at 48.5 % while that of men was 75 per cent. This equates to a **26.5 percentage point gender gap** in labour force participation.
- Just for Asia and the Pacific, the average female labour force participation rate has declined from 52.9 in 1991 to 45.3 per cent in 2018, dropping by 7.6 percentage points.
- If the global gender gap in labour market participation is closed by 25 per cent by 2025, an additional \$5.3 trillion would be added to GDP globally.
- The enterprises with gender-inclusive cultures are over 60 per cent more likely to have improved profits and productivity.

### Some key messages derived from the report are:

- A changing world is changing the economic and business environment, technologies. With the calls for sustainable development, the composition of global and national labour markets is also changing.
  - **Gender stereotypes:** are being challenged in many societies, with women and men taking on a more diverse range of jobs in all sectors and at all levels.
- **Occupational segregation:** is broken down in few countries and it represents a departure from the traditional expectations of employers and society.
  - Women are increasingly employed in traditionally male-dominated areas, for example, airline pilots, engineers and information technology specialists.
  - More women are managers even though they tend to be concentrated in management support functions such as human resources and administration.
  - Women have moved into professional, managerial and entrepreneurial roles in significant numbers.
- **Women's talent and skills:** are recognised and they surpassing men in country after country in their level of education.
  - Women's possesses some of the essential human centred skills such as relational skills, communication skills, empathy and emotional intelligence.
- **Undervaluing of women's work:** Numerous studies are contributing to a growing awareness that the undervaluing of women's work and skills leads to a loss of resources for the economy.
  - It is strongly reflecting the positive relationship between greater gender diversity and profit margins, as well as a wider range of business outcomes.

## Potential Outcome

- **Gender balance:** at all levels of an organization, especially at the top decision-making level, leads to **improved business outcomes**.
  - More women in the workplace can directly boost profitability, but increasing the representation of women can also contribute to the bottom line indirectly by enhancing the image and reputation of the enterprise.
  - It also boosts other aspects of business such as **employee loyalty and commitment**.
  - Women's increased labour force participation contributes to higher levels of GDP.

## Way Forward

- Many enterprises still need to recognize and seek out the benefits of a gender-balanced workforce at all levels, including decision-making and board membership.
- There is no "**one size fits all**". Employer play a key role in guiding their member companies to the right tools and advocating the message that gender diversity. It is good for business development and sustainability.
  - This is all the more urgent, in view of the anticipated disruption, change and complexity of labour markets associated with the future of work.
- To a large extent, the gender pay gap is related to the segmentation of the labour market along gender lines and how women's and men's jobs are perceived and valued.
  - Governments and private institutions can work together to remove traditional barriers for women.
- **Reaping the gender diversity dividend:** There are many ways enterprises can begin to leverage the benefits of gender diversity.
  - Introducing a set of **strategic gender initiatives** and practices in an enterprise can go a long way in effecting positive change.
  - Reviewing procedures for **merit-based recruitment and promotion** and controlling for gender bias is one of the most effective ways of ensuring that men and women are placed on an equal footing in their career paths.
- The goal of working towards a gender diverse and inclusive business needs to be a strategic one for the entire company and not limited to human resources management alone.