P@SHA

Pakistan Software Houses Association for IT & ITES

Diversity & Inclusion Framework

FOR PAKISTANI IT COMPANIES

Table of Contents

Message from the Committee Chair

The mission of the D&I committee has been to improve the current inclusion ratios in Pakistani IT companies by creating awareness, collecting data and providing support, wherever possible. During the effort of creating this framework, we saw that there is not only a lack of available data but also, lack of understanding and awareness about gender inclusion in the tech sector. We started the process by talking to experts around the globe and also conducting interviews and surveys with local companies.

This framework is an effort on our part to help create awareness and strategize that transition towards a more inclusive tech ecosystem. The framework gives a number of actionable items, including an action plan and an assessment tool for companies to get started on this mission. We also plan to launch a certification program by P@SHA to further consolidate the efforts.

In the end, I would like to thank everyone who helped us with this, including the committee members and volunteers, D&I experts, companies who provided us with time and data, and also, the team at P@SHA Secretariat for their commitment and fantastic output.

To a more inclusive tech sector & a better world.

Shamim Rajani
COO, Genetech Solutions
Chair, P@SHA D&I Committee

P@SHA D&I
Committee Members

Amin Ansari
CEO, Stewart Pakistan

Ammara Masood
CEO, NDCTech

Faiza Yousuf
Founder, WomenInTechPK

Mujeeb Zahur
MD, S&P Global PK

Sadia Khan
CEO, AutoSoft Dynamics

Samar Hasan
Founder, Epiphany

Sana Hussain
Director Talent Acquisition,
10Pearls

Pakistan's IT Sector

Pakistan's IT sector has shown exponential growth in the past couple of decades and has the potential to bring in more revenue by providing IT services to countries all around the globe. According to an estimate shared in 2020, Pakistan's information technology sector has the potential to increase its exports by $10 billion in the next three years.

Even during the current Covid19 pandemic, the sector has shown immense growth and manifested further potential to bring in more revenue. During the current financial year, we have seen consistent growth of above 40 percent in exports between July 2020 and February 2021.

The sector employs over 100,000 people and, according to an estimate, 29% of them are women. The number of registered companies is over 1500 and this excludes all the operations running in the informal sector. Pakistan also ranks number 4 in the freelancing industry for providing freelance technology and creative services to clients all over the world.

The technology sector has the need and opportunities for all kinds of people, from all genders, backgrounds, and exposures and we need to work on making it more inclusive and welcoming for everyone.

This will not only bring more revenue but will also create the space for more innovative products and services that can be offered to both local and overseas customers.

The discussion around representation and diversity and inclusion, referred to as D&I henceforth, has started picking up in Pakistan, as more and more initiatives are popping up and conversations are happening. Initiatives like WomenInTechPK, Pakistani Women in Computing, Women Engineers Pakistan, TechKaro, and CodeGirls have been pivotal in the shift. In 2019, a roundtable was held on this topic during the annual 021Disrupt conference, the whitepaper was published post-conference highlighting the discussed challenges, recommendations, and the way forward.

Later, in 2019, P@SHA decided to establish a committee for D&I and this framework is the result of the work that came from this committee. The committee members started with building case studies, conducting interviews, and collecting data to understand both the international and local context. The committee is in its 2nd year of operations and is planning to release this framework and related assets by mid-2021.

Introduction to Diversity & Inclusion

With this immense potential in the industry, what is needed right now is to ensure that everyone gets an opportunity to learn and then utilize the skills required to thrive in this industry. Lack of gender diversity and inclusion in the tech industry is a global problem and we have seen numerous initiatives trying to encourage more women, trans, and nonbinary folks in this highly lucrative industry.

Globally, initiatives like TechWomen, AnitaB.Org, GirlsWhoCode, ProjectInclude, Girls in Tech, CodeGirls, and BlackGirlsCode are doing excellent work to solve this problem of lack of gender diversity in tech.

The terms diversity and inclusion are not new to the discussion. These are debated and have been actively discussed by the experts and mentors on various platforms. There are various fields where male members are actively dominant. For instance, tech, banking, engineering, construction, and architecture, etc. are notoriously male-dominated fields, having negligible representation of women.

This problem is not specific to developing countries like Pakistan, but also exists in the developed and highly civilized nations. Consider that the percentage of women employed in technical positions at Apple, Google, and Facebook is only 23%, and it is only 20% at Microsoft. Additionally, a study by Uptime Institute observed that about 25% of tech companies had no women employees in drafting job specifications involving system development, construction, or technical processes in 2019.

The above stats reflect the lack of diversity even in the top tech firms of the world. Many organizations claim to have a diverse workforce, but sometimes the reality is quite the opposite of their claims.

When we talk about inclusion, it simply means that all the workers employed by the organization must be treated equally irrespective of their biological or claimed gender, caste, color, religion, exposure, abilities, etc. Furthermore, it implies hiring more diverse people in the team without being hindered by any unconscious biases.

Innovation & Diversity of Thoughts

No business can survive for long in a competitive market if it fails to be innovative. When a team includes people of different genders, ages, races, abilities, and backgrounds, many new ideas and perspectives are sure to emerge. Having different perspectives and ideas leads to doing things differently i.e. innovatively. We need a more diverse workforce to foster creativity and innovation within our teams and in the overall ecosystem.

Increased Profit and Market Share

A Harvard Business Review study found that companies who demonstrated diversity traits in their leadership were 45% more likely to report market share growth over the previous year, and 70% more likely to capture a new market.

The success or failure of the business depends upon its customers. If the product or service offered by the business suits their needs, the customer will be willing to pay for it. Having a diverse workforce will also help in understanding the point of view of different customers in the market.

Creating a diverse workforce and providing everyone with the right to participate equally can do wonders for the organization. Treating employees the right way, irrespective of their gender, caste, abilities, race, ethnicity, etc. will not only increase the profit share of the business but will also earn the loyalty of their talented staff members.

Global vs. Local Diversity Goals and Strategies

Globally, a significant number of technology companies are committed to creating a more inclusive workplace, where every great idea can be heard and where everybody belongs. There are different dynamics that can help us in setting and measuring the Diversity & Inclusion goals for our organization. Most companies prefer to have an overall goal of increasing diversity in their organization by focusing on one or more factors, like gender, abilities, etc. These goals should also include policy-making and reinforcement around diversity and inclusion to strengthen overall organization processes and creating a long-term strategy and solution.

Diversity is the <u>coexistence of people</u> with different characteristics (e.g. race, age, gender, sexual orientation), skills and personality traits. For example, at work, we can talk about a diverse team when employees come from various cultural, academic, and professional backgrounds and when there is a balance in gender, age, and race.

In most remote-first, remote-only, or large-scale multinational organizations, you will see goals related to gender, race, ethnicity, abilities, age, nationality, religion, sexual orientation and the education background/exposure. A diversity index (DI) is used to assess the organization's current state of diversity and can also be used to set a goal. DI is applied at different HR functions, including hiring, promotion, compensation & benefits, leadership level, performance management, etc. We also see a position called Chief Diversity Officer in most medium to large-scale companies. These professionals steer the organization into a truly diverse and inclusive place by creating policies and a culture where all people feel safe and welcomed.

In Pakistan's context, we should start with creating policies and fostering a culture of inclusion for gender, religion, abilities, age, and educational background/exposure.

Companies can set aside a budget and work on creative solutions to reach out to the right talent. For example, at S&P Global, there is a high referral bonus to refer female applicants to encourage diversity. Initiatives like these can really make a difference.

Diversity Stats in Pakistan

The following statistics discovered through a survey study conducted by P@SHA, in which a total of 132 Pakistani companies shared their data for diversity ratio.

National Gender Diversity Ratio

The Gender Diversity Ratio at the National level is 16.70%. Regionally, the ratio has been found to be 16.60% in the **North**, 15.03% in the **Center** and 17.20% in the **South**.

	South	Center	North
	17.20%	15.03%	16.60%
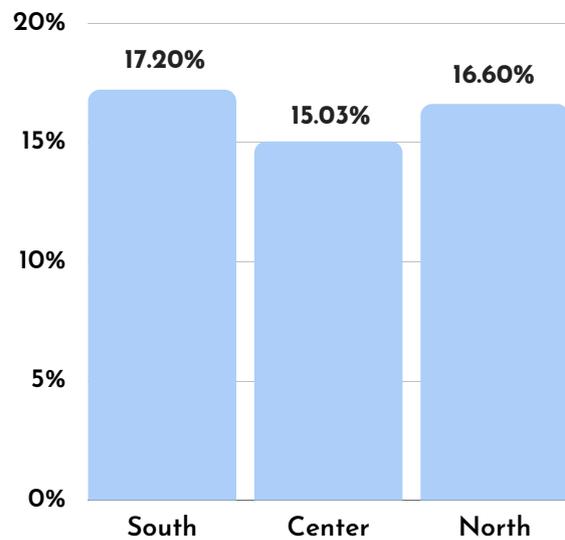
Local & Multinational companies

The research conducted showed results that multinational companies have slightly better gender diversity ration compared to local companies.

Local Companies — 16.04%

Multinationals — 17.06%
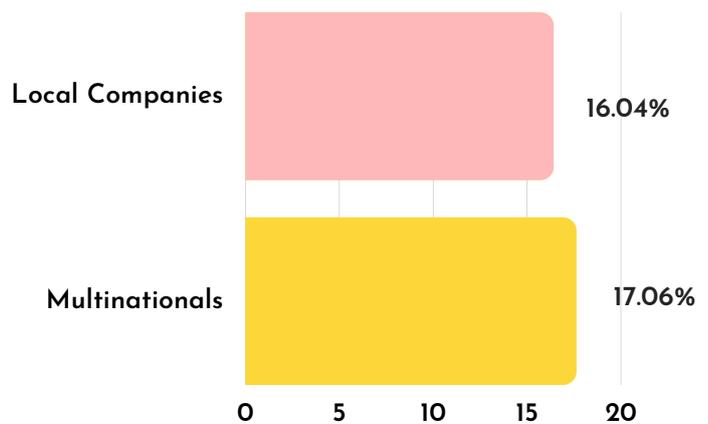
Gender Balance

Based on the research conducted, 62% of the participating companies practice a strategy to maintain gender balance at the workplace while 38% do not.

No
38%

Yes
62%
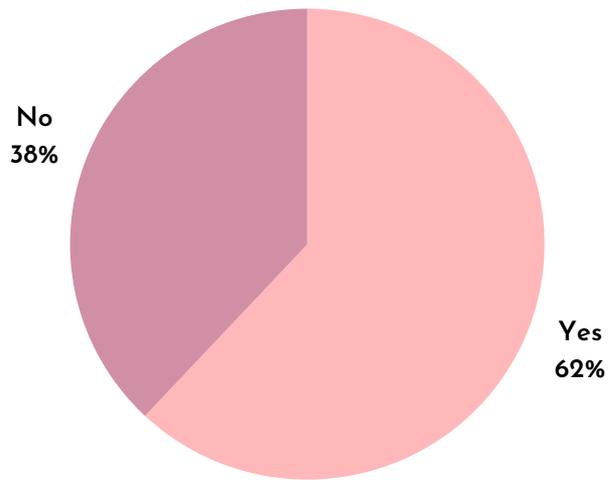
Diversity Levels
Across Companies

It has been observed that majority of the companies (54%) fall under category 2 with a gender diversity ratio between 10-40%. Whereas, around 40% of companies fall in the gender diversity category 1 with a gender diversity ratio between 0-10%. Only a small proportion of companies (around 6%) fall in the category 3 with gender diversity ratio between 40-70%. Unfortunately, no company could fall in the category 4 and attain a gender diversity ratio above 70%.

CAT 3
6%

CAT 1
40%

CAT 2
54%
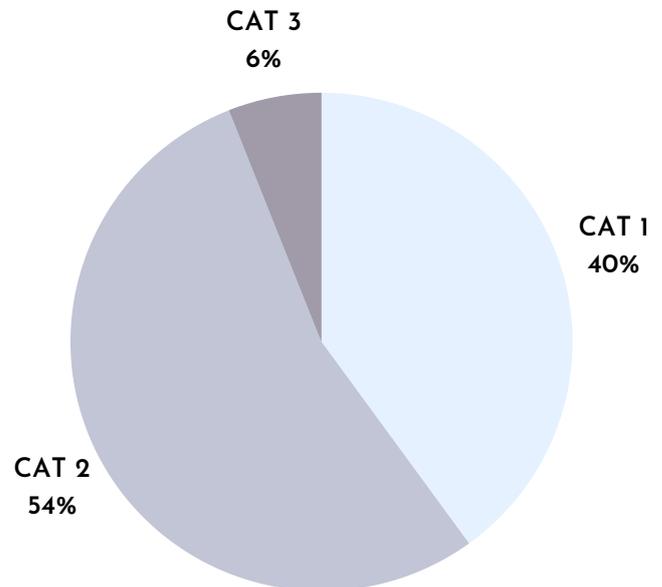
Proposed Diversity Action Plan

Following is the proposed Diversity Action Plan that can be used by IT companies to build themselves up as D&I leaders.

1. Evaluate & Reflect

Assess companies' current D&I State using D&I benchmark tool.

2. Analyze Gaps

Identify weaknesses on the basis of the benchmarking scorecard.

3. Collect Data

Collect and maintain data repositories for your company - this includes demographic and background data of employees.

4. Define Objectives

Define D&I goals and metrics for your company.

5. Define Monitoring Framework

Divide targets on a quarterly and annual basis and define a monitoring mechanism.

6. Appoint Diversity Lead

Assist and hire D&I staff and consultants such as diversity committee, employee resource groups, diversified mentors, leadership, BOD, and HR committee. Appoint a leader within your team to lead the D&I initiatives.

7. Establish Processes

Streamline processes and align them with D&I policies. Ensure effective integration of D&I vision in day-to-day operations.

8. Create Policies

Introduce employee-centric policies and work towards their successful implementation.

9. Awareness and Enablement

Work on capacity building of leadership and management against biases and important matters related to D&I. Introduce training plans and mentorship for employees.

10. Employee Engagement

Engage employees and make them part of the D&I drive. It is important to take their input so your D&I plan can be customized to meet the needs and demands of your company and its employees.

11. Advocate and Promote

Advocate and promote D&I practices and initiatives at department, company, and later on, at the national level.

12. Determine Business Impact

Evaluate the impact of D&I practices and policies on business (revenue) and employees (retention/productivity).

13. Annual Status

Reevaluate your D&I Status at the end of the year and reflect upon the progress you have made so far!

14. Empower Others

Share findings from your journey with other companies, and P@SHA to highlight your progress and challenges.

15. Celebrate

Re-evaluate your D&I Status at the end of the year and reflect upon the progress you have made so far!

Diversity Assessment

Before setting D&I goals for your organization, doing a detailed assessment of your organization is an excellent way to see where you stand and what should be the next steps in your journey towards becoming a truly diverse and inclusive workplace.

An example of this assessment can be seen here. We have also developed a contextualized version of this assessment and benchmarking toolkit for the local IT companies. Please see our Diversity Benchmarking Tool here.

This asset is a work in progress and you are more than welcome to send us any feedback or improvements.

Guidelines for Diversity Benchmark Tool
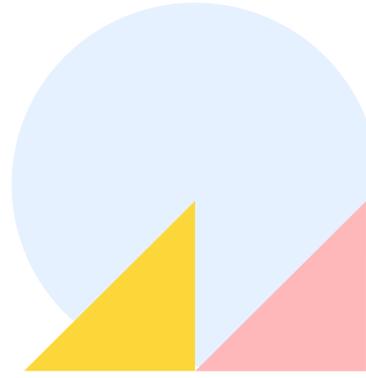
Diversity Benchmarking Tool will help you assess the current state of your company with respect to D&I. It is very important to assess the current level before formulating D&I policies for your company.

Go through each D&I category one by one and their checklist

Before embarking on this self-evaluation journey, give yourself a pat on your back because you are one of those few visionary leaders who knows how important D&I policies and practices are at the workplace.

Evaluate the D&I scope of area for your company through given checklist

After evaluating yourself against each category, do not forget to give yourself credit. Only companies with a great vision and urge to constantly improve have the strength to put their practices under the microscope.

Give your company a score on the basis of % of initiatives you have taken for each scope area

Try to stay as honest and transparent as possible because eventually, this score will help you in planning. Over & underestimation of a score cannot enable you in creating a concrete plan.

Upon rating against each category, you get a cumulative score. Use the Benchmarking Framework to see your level

If company X is doing 1 out of 6 listed items for an area, then they will give themselves '2' as score.

Do not lose heart if your company did not manage to score high! You should be proud of yourself that you have taken first step to evaluate your efforts toward D&I policy and practices. You are already on a right track. Kudos on that!

P@SHA's D&I Certification Plan

Based upon companies' self-evaluation of their D&I practices using 'Diversity Benchmark', P@SHA will provide D&I certification for different D&I levels.

D&I Certification Process

- You will be able to assess various D&I areas using the 'Diversity Benchmark' which will provide a cumulative score representing its overall D&I score.
- Once you have obtained the current D&I score, you can evaluate the current D&I level using 'D&I Framework'.
- Internal Evaluation: You can share your D&I score along with your D&I assessment of your company using 'Diversity Benchmark' with P@SHA.
- Third Party Verification: P@SHA will arrange an online meeting with you to discuss your D&I status.
- Once your evaluation estimation meets the D&I assessment criteria set by P@SHA, you will receive a confirmation email from them. You will also be provided D&I certification and badge based upon your D&I score.

Use Diversity Benchmark to calculate your D&I score

P@SHA will arrange an online meeting

You will receive a confirmation email from P@SHA

Rate yourself against each D&I category

Share you D&I score and level with P@SHA

Receive your D&I certificate & badge from P@SHA

Add up your individual category score to get overall company score

Evaluate your D&I level using D&I framework

D&I Scorecard

Following is the scorecard of some of the D&I certificates in reference to score and levels.

LEVEL 1

<25 score

BEGINNER

LEVEL 2

25-40 score

AWARE

Bronze Badge

LEVEL 3

40-60 score

COMMITTED

Silver Badge

LEVEL 4

60-80 score

LEADER

Gold Badge

LEVEL 5

80-100 score

CHAMPION

Platinum Badge

Diversity-Based Hiring Practices
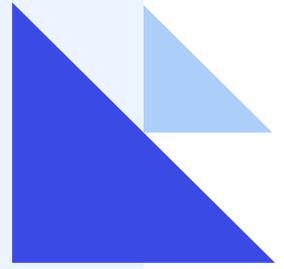
As a first step, mindful organizations looking to set up a D&I policy must closely inspect their hiring practices. It is essential that the hiring strategy for the organization incorporates tools that diversify the pool of candidates to ensure meaningful outcomes for the organization. Diversity in hiring means a balanced gender ratio, and giving opportunities to women, differently-abled people, transgenders, people from different regions, ethnicities & religions, and much more.

A lot of companies around the globe implement different strategies to diversify their talent pool, such as, diversity quotas, referral programs, hiring from boot camps and vocational training programs, reaching out to diversity focused initiatives, using gender-balanced communication, and having a diverse hiring or interviewing panel, etc.

Identify your end goal & set targets

To make diverse hiring a reality there has to be an identification of the end goal, which will start with a self-assessment of the organization's current metrics and then a vision setting for the deficit. It is important to have conversations about the kind of diversity, gender, ethnicity, socio-economic balance that is needed to add value to the workplace. The number is also an important factor- how many of which segments do you need to meet your D&I targets. For example, a company having 25% female employees may decide to up that number to 30%, for which they also need to map the number of females to be hired given the overall projected headcount. Similarly, how much the company's facility supports temporary or permanently differently-abled people, pregnant women, etc. It should also be clear how the companies are designing their initiatives and practices around giving equity to women on their board. Setting these targets should be part of a company's annual or biannual strategy meetings. After assessing the current numbers, a target should be set for each segment alongside the high-level plan to achieve the numbers. These targets should also have an owner, which means a committee or a senior manager/executive must be responsible for meeting these targets.

Rethink your communications

What are the visuals that are displayed through your social media platforms or company website? This is an important aspect to consider. Just branding yourself as an "equal opportunity employer" is not enough - diversity should be represented in what you are choosing to display as well. Are the right demographics represented in your photos? Do you actively show diversity in leadership roles in your organization? It is important to embrace the D&I practices as a whole and make sure that you have the right measures in place, as well as, have the right optics. DotZero also has special recruitment messaging for females; that it is a safe place for women. They also do a few posts on social media every year in the context of women's day, mothers' day, etc. The same practices are being followed by other companies, such as 10Pearls and Contour Software.

Inclusive Sourcing Methods

First and foremost, all job descriptions must be converted to gender-neutral language with a special focus on any verbiage that may prove to dissuade any group.

An ideal job ad or description will focus on the results an individual is expected to deliver rather than just focusing on skill set or culture fit. Move beyond traditional advertising means and rely on your internal pool of potential referrals as well. Task your employees to bring up the diversity numbers by rewarding them with referral programs that are exclusive to your D&I goals. It should be closely observed that all social media posts are showing the best practices under the umbrella of D&I.

Hold events/meetups targeted especially towards diverse groups. These networking/mentoring events can be free of cost and will give your company access to a variety of demographics. Similarly, you can also partner with organizations aligned with underrepresented communities in tech like ConsulNet's CodeGirls and CIRCLE's Tech Karo program to hire their graduates. Having internship and trainee programs can also help in improving the D&I targets. Almost all participating companies in our survey mentioned the presence of internship or trainee programs in their organizations.

Unbiased Screening & Shortlisting

Various studies show that an unconscious bias may exist when screening the resumes

or shortlisting during interviews based on the ethnic background or gender of the applicant. Blind screenings (removal of name or any identification markers) from the resume can help in tackling this issue. Similarly, investing in structured interview processes enables a higher quality hire by giving a consistent and comparative data set to the hiring manager rather than relying on the gut-feel hiring strategy. Another important tool can be ensuring a diverse interviewing panel, allowing under-represented groups to be a part of the hiring process can actually speed up your diversity hiring. This will get easier if a goal or policy is assigned to it for example at Asana, a leading tech company, they have created an interviewing policy under IDEAL (Inclusivity, Diversity, and Equity for Asana Leadership) to interview at least one candidate from an underrepresented group and one non-male candidate for every leadership role.

In our data collection, we learned about a practice adopted by S&P Global. Hiring Managers there are required to be certified to be able to conduct an interview. Interviewees have to fill a survey post their interview so that their experience is recorded and suggestions are implemented.

At RapidCompute and SunBonn, they have a diverse hiring committee to minimize unconscious bias against women.

Infrastructure Support for a Diverse Workplace

A solid infrastructure support network is essential to facilitate a diverse workplace, such as, company policies, culture, core values which results in higher revenue, more innovation, better decision making, higher rates of job acceptance when you make offers to qualified candidates, and better performance than competitors. A diverse workforce, however, is just the first step. An infrastructure support network is important e.g. when hiring differently-abled people, ensure that the building is equipped with facilities to accommodate the employee, having separate restrooms for female employees, celebrating holidays or minor religion employees. For instance, at S&P Global, there are Employee Resource Groups to support diversity in the workplace; there is a group for women in the organization, a group for veterans, a group for black employees, etc.

Look for Pakistan laws on infra requirements

To ensure a happy workspace for the employee, companies must pay attention to how inclusive their infrastructure is. Create spaces that convey safety, mobility, and comfort to employees irrespective of their demographic, physical or cognitive challenges and social norms.

Universal Design

Companies are revamping their physical space to further promote inclusivity and equality, referred to as "universal design."

This design is adaptable to nearly everyone's needs and abilities. It is also essential that the design of the workplace does not segregate any employees based on their special requirements and needs or draw attention to them in any way.

A universal design gives all employees flexibility and autonomy over their workspace to simulate their preferred and most productive working environment. It may encompass small changes as well like smart desks and ergonomic furniture that allow people to customize their workspace for example the option of standing desks.

Ease of Access

The office space must be easily accessible for all groups of people, special attention can be paid here to differently-abled individuals by accommodating wheelchair ramps into the design or ensuring a workable lift provides access. DotZero has its office in a wheelchair accessibility building, however, they are not aware of what happens in case of a fire.

Safety Management

The office space must be equipped with surveillance systems in all key areas. This becomes especially important when there are diverse groups within the organization and monitoring may also be required to tackle any claims of harassment.

Accommodation & Privacy of Work Style

Every individual has a different workstyle. However, as most organizations veer to an open floor plan, that work environment is not conducive to all employees. To encourage productivity for a diverse group of people the layout must include small break-out rooms where employees may work in isolation or conduct one-to-one meetings in privacy.

Visual Communication

The signage and visual decorations around the office space must identify and promote the values the organization wants to inculcate. For example, respect is a common company value, images with various demographics can show that each employee irrespective is due that.

Separation of Spaces as per Cultural Norm

While most companies now provide facilities such as the prayer area, lunch area, common room, recreation area, etc., it is important to provide everyone the ease of utilization as per socio-cultural norms. For example, at 10Pearls, lunch timings are started 15 mins prior for hijab observing ladies or simply women who may not be comfortable eating lunch in a mixed setting. Similarly, timings can be observed for all employee facilities according to diverse groups. Having female-only restrooms and common areas must be the norm to ensure that women are comfortable at the workplace.

Facilities to Support Diversity

While providing designated spaces for children may not be possible for most organizations, it has been proven to ensure gender diversity especially with female to male ratio improvement if some kind of on-site child care is provided. This may be in the form of a dedicated space or simply just the allowance to bring in your child to work by your seat. For example, at Autosoft Dynamics' in case an employee has an emergency situation and is without a caretaker for that particular day they may bring their child to work. Contour Software, 10Pearls, Rapid-Compute, and Netsol Technologies have onsite childcare facilities. Meanwhile, S&P Global has partnered locally in Islamabad with daycare centers. Costs are covered for both men and women if anyone wants to use this facility.
At Contour Software, during the pandemic, when parents were struggling, they had their child care specialists start delivering remote sessions to the children so the parents could have a few hours of relief from parenting and they could concentrate better on office work.

Remote Work & Flexible Work Hours

Due to the current pandemic, most companies have created remote work policies for their employees and we have seen a trend where companies are hiring for remote only positions. Remote work is not only important for health and safety in the current times but can also help increase your D&I ratios as women generally prefer remote and flexible work hours due to care/work responsibilities at home and lack of public transportation facilities. Companies are also allowing new mothers to rejoin the workforce on a part-time basis first and then shift to their full-time role when possible.

Almost all companies that we surveyed allow remote and flexible work, some as primary work culture and some on need-basis. Systems Limited is hiring for both part-time and full-time remote-only employees to facilitate gender diversity and to hire talent without location restrictions.

A Diversity-First Inclusive Culture

Employee experience and retention are greatly shaped by the organizational culture. Therefore, a large part of the D&I initiative of the company is driven by the culture within and how day-to-day things can enable employees to experience a more inclusive workspace. To do this there are various norms, aspects and policies that can be established.

Robust Learning Mechanism

Training plans should be holistic and have established targets for the ratio of resources to undergo them based on company demographics. Managers should encourage equal participation, with HR ensuring that communication for registration of those trainings is inclusive. Regular training on unconscious bias for managers or harassment for general employees should be on the agenda to consciously push the D&I initiatives.

For example, Systems Limited, Stewart Pakistan, and 10Pearls conduct unconscious bias training for hiring committees/HRs. Multiple companies, like RapidCompute, Stewart Pakistan, Autosoft Dynamics. Systems Limited, Contour Software, SunBonn, and 10Pearls conduct Workplace Safety Training sessions for their employees.

Companies should also conduct training sessions around core skills, managerial skills and also do formal and informal mentoring sessions for advancing the careers of their employees, especially the underrepresented groups. HR can also specifically design dome learning and development workshops that may be targeted towards special groups to refine their non-technical skills. It is also recommended to develop buddy or mentorship programs especially for women in the IT sector, where they can get one-on-one coaching for career development and skill-building. 10Pearls have a buddy system for their new hires to ensure smooth integration into the workforce.

Engagement Across the Board

A very easy-to-do for HR is to set up an annual engagement calendar where-in they

celebrate holidays and events for under-represented groups for example having a Christmas party or celebrating events like Women's, Men's, or differently-abled days. This engagement should also become part of the company's optics. Another important aspect is to ensure sensitivity towards other people's religious or nonreligious dietary restrictions on company events. For example, DotZero pays special attention to this as some of their employees are vegetarians.

Frequent Cultural Surveys

A quick and easy way to have a pulse on the environment and also get feedback on any engagement or cultural strategies is through surveys. These should be specially designed keeping in mind the D&I goals of the company and once every quarter the efficacy should be measured.

Policies for Employee Protection

Employee safety and wellbeing practices are a huge contributor to ensuring that organizational diversity is maintained. While there should be a fair and unbiased general complaint mechanism for employees, it is imperative that rules also be implemented as per the laws of Pakistan especially in association with harassment of individuals in the workplace.

General Complaint Mechanism & Disciplinary Committees

A comprehensive and confidential reporting tool should be available to assist management and employees to work together to address fraud, abuse, harassment, and other misconduct in the workplace, as well as matters related to company policies, procedures, and other standards. Employees may file their grievances or report concerns through a portal either with or without revealing their identity. An independent and diverse disciplinary committee must review these cases on an immediate basis and start the investigation process. After 5-6 business days, a primary report should be formed. Within 25 business days, the case should be resolved (may vary on a case-by-case basis).

Implementation of Workplace Harassment Laws

A good example is that of Contour Software, they localized the Canada US employee handbook that they had. In 2011, they localized and rebuilt their employee handbook and especially the protection against the harassment of women at the workplace. Companies like Rozee.PK, RapidCompute, Systems Limited, NdcTech, Genetech Solutions, etc, have anti-harassment policies.

Also, some of them have anti-harassment committees to resolve issues regarding workplace harassment. This includes, Rapid-Compute, Systems Limited, and Stewart Pakistan. Disciplinary committees are also quite common and part of Contour Software, Sunbonn, and Genetech Solutions.

The Benefits Program

We ran a survey with nine leading companies in Pakistan of different sizes to see their benefits and perks that create a conducive environment for a diverse workforce. We are listing down the ones that can have a direct impact on their D&I targets.

- Work from home - 8 out of 9 companies have work from home.
- Flexible work hours - 9 out of 9 companies have flexible work hours.
- Paid Maternity Leaves - 7 out of 9 companies have paid maternity leaves.
- Paid Paternity Leaves - 5 out of 9 companies have paid paternity leaves.
- Religious holidays for minorities - 8 out of 9 companies have religious holidays for minority employees.
- Daycare - 3 out of 9 companies have an onsite daycare facility.
- Pick and Drop - women only - 4 out of 9 companies offer pick and drop facility.
- Remote-only positions - 3 out of 9 companies have remote-only positions.
- Wheelchair accessible building/premises - 3 out of 9 companies have wheelchair accessible premises.
- Diverse hiring committee - 1 out of 9 companies have a diverse hiring committee, which means the committee has at least one woman in it.
- Disciplinary committee - 6 out of 9 companies have a disciplinary committee.
- Employee handbook/rulebook - 8 out of 9 companies have an employee handbook.
- Anti-harassment policy - 8 out of 9 companies have an anti-harassment policy.
- Female common room + prayer area - 7 out of 9 companies have a female common room and prayer area.
- Female-only restrooms - 9 out of 9 companies have female-only restrooms.
- Formal mentoring and leadership programs - for everyone - 6 out of 9 companies have programs for all employees.
- Formal mentoring and leadership programs - women only - 2 out of 9 have programs for women only.

Additional benefits mentioned by the surveyed companies include transportation allowance (Contour Software), opportunities to relocate to other company offices (AutoSoft Dynamics), opportunities to travel (10Pearls), on-premises childcare specialist (Contour Software), etc.

Other suggested benefits can be:

- Offer flexible Paid Time Off (PTO). Empower your employees to decide when it's the right time for them to take a break. Update your sick leave policy to cover <u>mental health</u> days. Allowing employees to use their sick days when they need to take a mental breather shows your company prioritizes their mental health. This small change to your policy can also help you prevent burnout and loss of productivity.
- <u>Policies to support parents</u> and caregivers can play a huge part in making a workplace more inclusive especially in Pakistani culture.

Equitable Career Advancement & Pay Equity

Organizational policies need to ensure performance-driven metrics for the evaluation and progression of employees. Due to a variety of structural and societal barriers, women are significantly less likely to hold high-level, high-paying jobs. And even if they manage to get there, they will be paid significantly less than their male counterparts. Once on-board due to their lack of networking ability or inability to showcase their performance they may remain overshadowed by male counterparts when it comes to career progression. It is therefore the responsibility of the organization to ensure a balance.

Transparent Evaluation & Promotion Criteria

<u>Annual evaluations</u> are often subjective, which opens the door to gender bias ("Tom is more comfortable and independent than Carolyn in handling the client's concerns") and confirmation bias ("I knew she'd struggle with that project"), among other things. <u>Women's preference</u> is more likely to be attributed to characteristics such as luck or their ability to spend long hours in the office, perceived as a real commitment to the firm, rather than their abilities and skills. As such, they often do not receive due credit for their work.

The performance management process should outline the steps that employees and managers take to define and measure success on the job. With proper performance evaluation criteria, 360 feedback mechanism, and mandated performance reviews to ensure employees are aware of their performance through the performance cycle.

The promotion criteria (level to level) should be linked with the performance management process. promotion criteria should be visible to all employees. To ensure employees are being promoted for roles they are qualified to execute successfully while meeting the business needs.

Criteria for All Grade Level Promotions:
- Documented performance/achievements evident in the performance management tool.
- Performed exceptionally for last 2 cycles performance cycles .
- Respected by colleagues (peers, managers, direct reports).
- Has already taken on some if not all the responsibilities (per job family matrix) at the next career step and/or grade level and performs them with consistent proficiency.
- Has demonstrated role model behavior and strengths in leadership essentials competencies.

No Negotiation Compensation/ Increment Policy

Men tend to achieve better economic results in underline negotiation than women, according to negotiation studies. Such gender differences are generally small, but evidence from the business world suggests that they can add up over time, and if you want to narrow the gender gap in negotiation, there are strategies you can employ. If men ask for and receive slightly higher starting salaries than women, for example, and continue to negotiate more assertively for themselves over the course of their careers, the gender gap can add up to millions of dollars over time. Therefore, it is increasingly important for organizations to have transparent and equitable salary bands for each position. In case that is not possible then there should

be a no negotiation policy so that all demographics are paid fairly and there is no pay gap. Companies can also include pay brackets to ensure that they pay fairly and as per the current market rate. It is also advised to encourage companies in making their entry-level pay scale publicly available.

Equal Access to Mentorship

The Mentoring Program helps to develop the broad leadership base needed to succeed in an increasingly competitive global business environment. Mentees and their mentors are matched in dynamically reciprocal, long-term partnerships that focus on professional development. Having a formal mentorship program as well as encouraging employees to reach out for informal mentorship will help employees
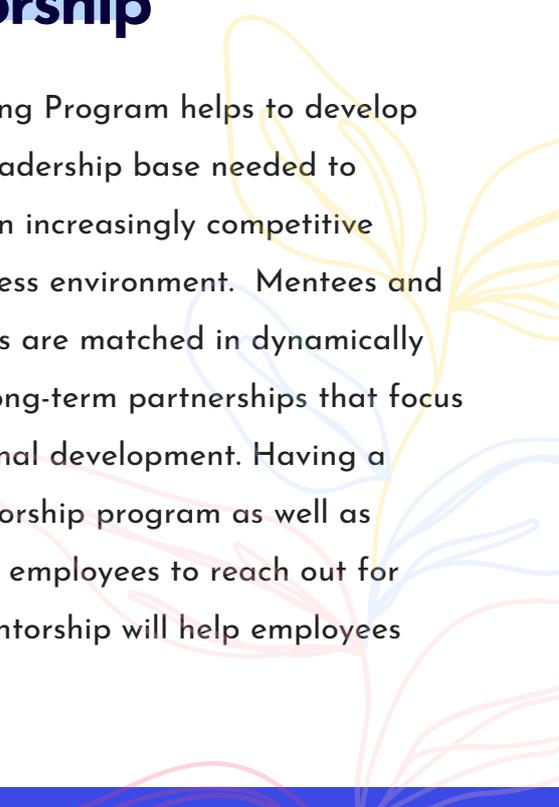
especially launching female mentorship. Mentoring Program Suite can be one-to-one mentorship, group, and or mutual/informal mentorship.

Equal Opportunity to Perform

All employees must be given an equal chance to showcase their skills. Under-represented demographics may in particular be encouraged to participate in meetings, client interactions, and customer-facing initiatives. Projects or assignments should be awarded on the basis of documented capabilities and not on the perceived notion of someone's capabilities. Managers should be made aware of different biases at play and ensure that work distribution is happening as fairly as possible. Also, the same applies to performance appraisals.

Recommendations

Below are the recommendations we would like to make after our research and interactions around diversity and inclusion with experts, relevant organizations, and businesses, both locally and globally.

Company Processes

Organization-wide D&I Assessment

The first step is to always do an assessment to understand the current state and also to see how far the organization has to go to reach the industry-best. Measure the current status by identifying the employee diversity ratios and relevant policies that the organization currently has or that are in the pipeline. Summarize the findings and create recommendations to improve.

Have a D&I Committee

Building a competent and diverse committee can expedite the process. Below are some practices to follow:

- The committee should have 3 or more people in it. At least one of them should be a woman.
- The committee should have at least one CXO, one senior manager from operations, and one from human resources.
- The committee should agree on a decision-making process and also on areas they want to tackle first.
- The committee should meet at least twice every month to review progress on action items.
- Meeting minutes should be recorded and shared with all relevant stakeholders.
- External help can be enlisted by hiring D&I and talent management experts from the industry.

Set specific and time-bound goals with metrics to measure the progress periodically. These goals should reflect the overall organization's trajectory and strategic goals. Some examples of excellent D&I goals can be seen <u>here</u>.

Do a Bi-annual or Annual D&I Audit

A bi-annual or annual audit and meeting with the company CXO should be part of the process. Here all the goals and progress will be reviewed and new/updated goals will become part of the plan.

Company Policies

Company policies should reflect the D&I goals by making an inclusive workplace by adding the policies discussed above. Some highlights are below.

- Flexible Work Hours
- Remote Work
- Paid Parental Leaves
- Child Care Facilities
- Religious Holidays for Minorities
- Pick and Drop
- Anti-harassment & Disciplinary committees

Employee Engagement Initiatives & Policy Initiatives

Recognizing Employee Behavior

It is very important to recognize and appreciate the employee for his great work. Following are some of the ways to show appreciation to your employee for their efforts and hard work.

- Thank you, cards: This is a great way to appreciate and acknowledge their exemplary behaviors. It is also important to make them realize how their work is contributing to the company's vision and goals.
- Events: An event can be scheduled to show recognition to employees for their work. These events can highlight their work and how it is helping the organization deliver on its mission and work toward its vision. The company can set the frequency of these events.
- The work heroes: People can post stories of how their co-workers have gone above and beyond to help them. The wall should be centered where everyone can see it and read about the great work of their colleagues.
- The Honor wall: Companies can keep an honor wall or board to mention their 'Employee of the month' to show recognition for their great work. They can be further divided into various categories so everyone can be part of this monthly recognition activity.

Stay Interviews

'Stay interviews' are a way of re-engaging with employees who are at risk of leaving. The purpose of these interviews is to encourage employees to discuss their career development needs as well as any hurdles they are facing at the organization

Employee-led Teaching Programs

Learning from co-workers is an excellent way of creating a positive environment while enhancing work productivity. Employees should be encouraged to learn from each other. Companies can make use of employee led teaching programs where employees conduct classes and workshops for their fellow colleagues to teach skills essential to their roles. It will also nurture collaboration and team spirit.

Customer/Client Success Stories

There is nothing like seeing the impact of your work and listening to people whose lives have been touched by your actions. Companies should encourage clients to share their feedback through surveys, interviews, customer panels etc. These can be shared with employees to show how powerful their actions can be. The benefits of this approach will be two pronged. On one hand it will uplift the spirits of your employees. Whereas, on the other hand you will have feedback from your customers which can be used for product/service improvement.

Breaking Down Silos

Organizational silos are usually the root cause of many problems at the workplace. Therefore, it is necessary to get rid of them to ensure and encourage collaboration and problem-solving culture across departments. Companies can arrange 'Breaking the Silos' sessions where the current challenges and future goals can be discussed. In these sessions, the first 30 minutes can be given to employees to share their challenges and their possible solutions.
At the end, the managers/director of the department can conclude the proposed solutions by showing how a collaborative and positive problem-solving approach will enable them to achieve their company goals. This practice has multiple benefits. Firstly, employees will feel that they have been heard. Secondly, brainstorming is an excellent way of coming up with innovative solutions. And lastly, resolving their problems and linking solutions to company goals and vision will inculcate company's values and vision.

Better work-life balance

Provide your employee with work flexibility by initiating projects such as half-Fridays, flexible work hours, work from home, and 10% passion work hours etc. People need flexibility so they can work with ease while enhancing their productivity and creativity. Employees with good work and life balance are generally happier and show greater work productivity.

Recreational Activities for Employees

Plan fun activities with your team such as scavenger hunt, outdoors, hiking, paint-balling or bowling. These events will help people to bond with others who they don't usually get to interact with. Moreover, it will also build a community culture within your organization. You can also incorporate interesting team building activities as well.

Invest in an Employee Experience Platform

Invest in an effective and engaging recognition and award platform. Platforms such as Nectar, Kudos, Motivosity and Qarrot can provide a great employee experience. By using these platforms, you will be in a better position in managing your employee performance. These platforms provide systematized recognition and award mechanisms for appreciating your employee's great work. You can also involve your employee in encouraging and uplifting their fellow colleagues for going above and beyond.

Exclusive Perks

Nowadays, employees prefer a job that makes them happy and makes them love what they do. A company can come up with different perks and benefits packages to show them that they are not only investing in their overall health but their future as well. Such as dental and health checkups, therapy sessions, recreational clubs' memberships, death benefits to deceased employees' families, and car/house insurance loans.

Devising policies around H.A.P.P.I.N.E.S.S Factor

The happiness of your employee is directly proportional to customer satisfaction and business success. To ensure that, make sure your D&I employee engagement policies are carefully drafted around the Happiness factor. The **H.A.P.P.I.N.E.S.S** factor stands for:

- **Health:** Caring for employee physical and mental health
- **Autonomy:** Providing employee ownership of their work
- **Purpose:** Giving purpose to their work
- **Progress:** Appreciate them for making progress
- **Incentives:** Provide them incentives to make sure they love what they do
- **Network:** Provide networking opportunities to help them build their skills and knowledge
- **Environment:** Provide them a positive work environment
- **Security:** Employees must feel secure about their job
- **Satisfaction:** Run periodic employee satisfaction surveys

Government Policies

Labor Rights in the 1973 Constitution

The 1973 Constitution of Pakistan contains a range of provisions with regards to labor rights.

- Article 11: of the Constitution prohibits all forms of slavery, forced labor and child labor.
- Article 17: provides for a fundamental right to exercise the freedom of association and the right to form unions.
- Article 18: proscribes the right of its citizens to enter upon any lawful profession or occupation and to conduct any lawful trade or business.
- Article 25: lays down the right to equality before the law and prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of sex alone.
- Article 37(e): makes provision for securing just and humane conditions of work, ensuring that children and women are not employed in vocations unsuited to their age or sex, and for maternity benefits for women in employment.

For example, Systems Limited, Stewart Pakistan, and 10Pearls conduct Unconscious bias training for hiring committees/HRs. Multiple companies, like RapidComputer, Steward Pakistan, Autosoft Dynamics. Systems Limited, Contour Software, SunBonn, and 10Pearls conduct Workplace Safety Training sessions for their employees.

Labor Rights' Articles

Non-Discrimination (Article 17 of 1973 constitution)

Safeguard against Discrimination in Services

- No citizen otherwise qualified for appointment in the service of Pakistan shall be discriminated against in respect of any such appointment on the ground only of race, religion, caste, sex, residence, or place of birth.
- Provided that, for a period not exceeding [forty] years from the commencing day, posts may be reserved for persons belonging to any class or area to secure their adequate representation in the service of Pakistan.

Though it is for public jobs only. No such provision is available for private sector jobs.
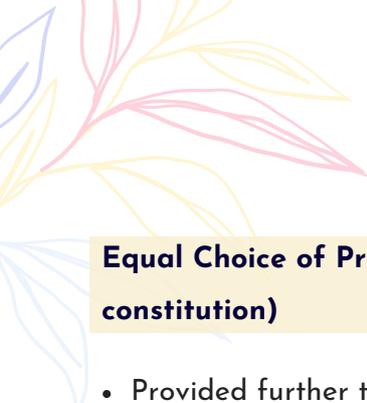
Equal Choice of Profession (Article 17 of 1973 constitution)

- Provided further that, in the interest of the said service, specified posts or services may be reserved for members of either sex if such posts or services entail the performance of duties and functions which cannot be adequately performed by members of the other sex.
  Though it is quite contrary to article 18 of the Constitution.

Freedom of Trade, Business or Profession (Article 18)

- Subject to such qualifications, if any, as may be prescribed by law, every citizen shall have the right to enter upon any lawful profession or occupation, and to conduct any lawful trade or business.
- Provided that nothing in this Article shall prevent:
  - The regulation of any trade or profession by a licensing system; or
  - The regulation of trade, commerce, or industry in the interest of free competition therein; or gives every citizen the right to enter upon any lawful profession or occupation, and to conduct any lawful trade or business subject to qualification and licensing requirements.

Parochial & Other Similar Prejudices to be Discouraged (Article 33)

- The State shall discourage parochial, racial, tribal sectarian and provincial prejudices among the citizens.

Full Participation of Women in National Life (Article 34)

- Steps shall be taken to ensure full participation of women in all spheres of national life.

Promotion of social justice and eradication of social evils (Article 37)

The State shall:

- Make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work, ensuring that children and women are not employed in vocations unsuited to their age or sex, and for maternity benefits for women in employment.

Promotion of social and economic wellbeing of the people (Article 38)

The State shall:

- Secure the well-being of the people, irrespective of sex, caste, creed, or race, by raising their standard of living, by preventing the concentration of wealth and means of production and distribution in the hands of a few to the detriment of general interest and by ensuring equitable adjustment of rights between employers and employees, and landlords and tenants.
- Provide for all persons employed in the service of Pakistan or otherwise, social security by compulsory social insurance or other means.
- Reduce disparity in the income and earnings of individuals, including persons in the various classes of the service of Pakistan.

Disabilities Law

- C159 of ILO title of Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment (disabled persons) is in enforcement in Pakistan.
- In section 10 of Disabled Person Employees and Rehabilitation ordinance 1981 which is related to establishments to employ disabled persons.
- Clause 1 of section 10 emphasizes that in any establishment, minimum 3% of representation should be from disabled people.

Harassment Laws

- Section 2C of the protection of women harassment at workplace act 2011 provides guidelines of behavior to all employees including the owner to make a harassment free environment for women at work.

Applications Job Ads

- These laws start implementing while making advertisements for the vacancy. If the job is related to the office work, then. There should not be any discrimination based on gender, caste, color, religion, and disabilities unless disabled person cannot perform the job.

C.V Screening

- There should be no screening on the gender basis Screening should not be done on the basis of minorities and religion. The Selection should be purely on the basis of actual requirement of job There should not be any discrimination related to disabled person and woman.

Advice for HR Managers

- Under all the laws related to the equal employment opportunities as mentioned earlier the HR managers are advised to follow them strictly and base all their policies upon them.
- They should mention that they are "equal opportunity employers" on the boards in the organization, on its website and the job ads they give for filling the vacancies. Any biases like based on gender, religion, race, color, etc. should not be shown throughout the recruitment and selection process.

Sexual Harassment

- In accordance with the Protection Against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2010, sexual harassment of the employees is
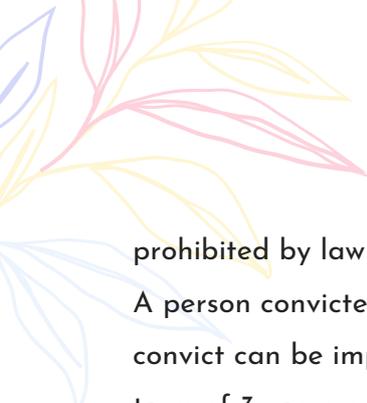
prohibited by law and is a punishable offence. A person convicted of sexual harassment convict can be imprisoned for a maximum term of 3 years or fined with a maximum sum of PKR 5 Lakh (0.5 million) or with both. (Section 509 of Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898).

Maternity Leave

- Female employees are entitled to a maximum of twelve weeks (or 3 months) of maternity leave with full pay. The six-week postnatal leave is compulsory. (Section 4 of West Pakistan Maternity Benefit Ordinance, 1958). The maternity leave in the public sector is also 90 days (3 months) and during this time, wages are paid in full.

Income

- The maternity leave is awarded with full pay. The qualifying condition is that the woman must be working in enterprise at least four months prior to the date of delivery of her child. (Section 4 of West Pakistan Maternity Benefit Ordinance, 1958).

Free Medical Care

- In accordance with section 38 of The Provincial Employees Social Security Ordinance, 1965, a woman is entitled to pre-

natal confinement and post-natal medical care, if she is entitled to maternity benefit under section 36.

Minimum Wage

- Minimum Wage is the wage level (set by Government, either after consultation with the social partners i.e. worker organizations and employer associations or unilaterally) below which it is illegal for the employer to pay his/her employees.
- Minimum Wage in Pakistan is set by the following two acts:

  - The Minimum Wages Ordinance, 1961 (applicable in ICT and Balochistan).
  - Pakistan Minimum Wages for Unskilled Workers Ordinance, 1969 (no longer in use after the 18th Amendment).
  - The Minimum Wages Ordinance, 1961 (adapted in Punjab by 2012 Amendment Act).
  - The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minimum Wages Act, 2013.
  - Sindh Minimum Wages Act, 2015.

Work Injury Benefits

- Work injuries are divided into four categories:

  - Permanent total incapacity
  - Permanent partial incapacity
  - Temporary incapacity and
  - Fatal injury leading to death of a worker

- In the case of permanent total incapacity/disability, the amount of compensation paid is 75% of an insured worker's average earnings in the 12 months before disability began (this amount is 100% of the previous average wage in Punjab).
- In the case of permanent partial disability, the amount of compensation depends on the assessed degree of disability. Partially disabled workers are paid up to 66% of total disability benefit in accordance with a schedule provided in Provincial Employees' Social Security Ordinance.
- In the case of temporary disability, 60% (100% in Punjab) of the average wage is paid after a waiting period of 3 days up to 180 days. The benefits are paid until worker's full recovery or certification of permanent disability
- In the case of fatal injury, dependents (widow /widower/minor children/parents) receive the survivors' benefit.

Paternity Leave

- There is no provision in the law on paid or unpaid paternity leave for the private sector workers. Paternity Leave is provided under Revised Leave Rules, 1981 in the Punjab province. New fathers are granted a maximum 7 days of paternity leave on or immediately before the birth of a child. This leave is admissible only two times during the entire service.

- In line with the National Commission on the Status of Women Employees (Recruitment and Conditions of Service) Rules, 2018, male employees in regular service are entitled to 10 days of fully paid paternity leave outside his leave account from the date of spouse's confinement. Similarly, Sindh Police has also issued notification of 10 days paternity leave outside leave account for all officers and officials immediately on or after birth of a child.

Pakistan's Penal Code

- Pakistan's Penal Code prohibits constitutional violations and defines penalties against perpetrators of such action. Following are the two examples amongst many others:

  - Section 153(A) of the Pakistan Penal Code criminalizes promotion of enmity between different groups, based on race, religion, language, caste or community or any other ground. Anyone found promoting such differences, is liable to imprisonment and heavy fines.
  - Section 505 (2) of the Pakistan Penal Code criminalizes publication of any material that may incite group differences.

Conclusion

Diversity and Inclusive are imperative for true innovation and progress and it is time that we all should realize this and work for building an ecosystem that works for everyone. This framework is one of the most important milestones in our journey towards a truly diverse and inclusive tech ecosystem. The resources and tools given here are to be used by organizations to start or progress in their D&I journey. The framework is by no means complete and will require constant revisions as things change, both globally and locally. We also need to do a data collection drive to get real numbers of D&I in Pakistan and also assess the state of local companies.

P@SHA is committed to bringing positive change to the local tech ecosystem and this is one of the major steps towards maximizing opportunities for business and revenue growth.

Acknowledgements

We would like to sincerely thank the following companies for participating in the Diversity & Inclusion Framework and sharing their experiences and best practices to facilitate the completion of this report.
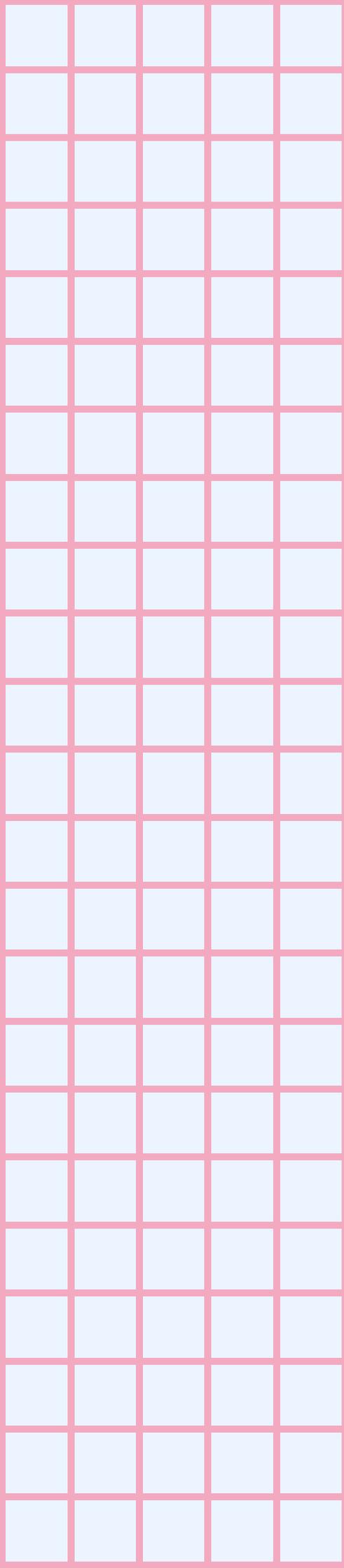
- <u>Diversity Benchmark Tool</u>

- <u>021Disrupt Diversity and Inclusion Roundtable Whitepaper</u>

Appendix

Contact Us

P@SHA Secretariat

secretariat@pasha.org.pk

+92-51-8736624-5

Composition by:
- Afsheen Iftikhar
- Faiza Yousuf
- Mahnoor Suhail
- Muhammad Amjad
- Sana Hussain
- Shamim Rajani

Compilation by:
- Hira Zainab
- Rida Sajjad
- Samar Hasan

Design by:
- Noman Shahid