Working with the Private Sector to Empower Women: How to Build the Business Case for Change

Date: July 24, 2019
Time: 8:30 – 9:30 am (EDT)

SPEAKERS

Julia Hakspiel, Learning Manager, *Arab Women's Enterprise Fund* & Managing Consultant, *MarketShare Associates*
Margaux Yost, Manager, HERproject, *BSR*

MODERATOR

Adriano Scarampi, MRM Adviser, *Arab Women's Enterprise Fund* & Advisory Practice Lead, *MarketShare Associates*

QUESTIONS

Julia's Presentation

Women's empowerment is low in Arab countries, what challenges did you face to promote WEE?

> One of the main challenges is the prevalence of social norms regarding women's economic participation – whether women should work and what types of professions are seen as appropriate for women. Before we start working in a particular sector we carry out a detailed analysis to identify how social norms might hinder or constrain women's participation in the sector. As a result of this "deep dive" analysis, our interventions might involve challenging social norms directly or helping the private sector find new ways of working that counter limitations created by social norms. For example in the ready-made garments (RMG) sector, firms struggle to hire and retain female workers due to negative social norms relating to perceptions of women working in a factory setting. One of our interventions focused on the provision of gender-sensitive recruitment events. The recruitment events catered only to female job applicants and the women were invited to

bring their husband or male guardians along to the event so that they could get to know the employer and feel assured that the factory was a safe place of work for women. Such gender-sensitive recruitment events had much higher placement and retention rates for women than traditional recruitment events. AWEF is also working on shifting social norms relating to women's workforce participation through more broadly targeted communications and advocacy campaigns.

Do you charge the companies for the assessments?

No we don't. The business case is usually developed at two stages of a program lifecycle.
- A light touch assessment/business case is usually developed during the pre-engagement analysis phase (the deep dive analysis described in the questions above), which helps the programme engage with companies in meaningful, informed ways. This analysis is only paid for the the programme, as it's part of its inception phase analysis.
- Once companies agree to collaborate with programs such as AWEF, interested by the potential business case pitched, more detailed business cases are usually developed in collaboration between the program and the private sector partner. These are usually co-creative processes where the program facilitates discussions with the businesses to understand how the empowerment objectives of the program align with their business needs, and develop jointly metrics for tracking it.

What incentives were provided to the companies to try out the pilots on WEE business case and the TA provided by the market actor?

Programs should approach prospective private sector partners having conducted some preliminary analysis, with a clear business case pitch. The stronger the business case pitched, the more willing private sector partners are to pilot new ideas, and commit their own funds.

In some cases, we pitch initial ideas, and then carry out additional market research with the private sector partner to test the viability of a business plan. We adopt this approach when we notice hesitancy from the private sector partner to move forward. Carrying out research jointly, funded by the program, is a useful learning curve during which a company's incentives and commitment to a longer-term partnership is tested. On AWEF, for example, we were in a partnership discussion with an e-learning provider of Arabic content. Before moving forward with a possible partnership, we agreed to fund some additional consumer research, which included a series of focus group discussions with the users of the e-platform, to understand what the gaps in the current offering was, and what the e-platform could do to improve outcomes for its students.

Once we have a strong business pitch, and the private sector shows commitment, our approach generally is to always start small, providing small amounts of funding/cost-sharing to cover some of the start-up risk of new pilots.

We usually aim to cover no more than 30% of the costs of a new initiative, although in some cases we have had to go above these targets. How this funding is used varies, depending on the priorities of the partner. We have used these funds to cover the operational costs of new product distribution strategies, or to hire marketing experts to make marketing strategies more gender-friendly.

Is data shared solely with brand/company contracting supply chain services?

More detailed and commercially sensitive data is only shared with the partner firm we directly work with. General findings from the business case might be share with other firms in the sector/supply chain in order to encourage replication and crowding in.

Beyond the performance of partners- how successful have you been in scaling this business models up to wider systemic changes in the market they operate in?

On AWEF, we have been most successful at scaling up business models beyond the first mover when the first mover takes ownership and advocates for regulatory change to facilitate its further uptake. We have experienced this in several instances, such as:

- In Jordan, where AWEF collaborated with Greater Jerash Municipality to design a series of guidelines that operationalized a new municipality-level licensing process for home-based micro enterprises. The mayor of Greater Jerash Municipality, who championed the pilot of the new licensing process, lobbied the Ministry of Municipality Affairs to endorse the new licensing guidelines and disseminate them further across the country, leading many more municipalities to crowd-in.
- In Palestine, where AWEF worked with the Bank of Palestine (BoP) to relax the rules for opening current accounts, so that these are not only restricted to formally employed people (which is a big barrier to financial inclusion, since many women in Palestine, and especially in the Gaza strip, are informally employed). AWEF worked on a pilot with the BoP and a small number of online freelancers to understand the impact that relaxing the rules for opening current accounts would have on the bank. Following this initial pilot, satisfied with its outcome, the BoP heavily lobbied the Palestinian Monetary Authority (PMA) to relax the regulation at the national level. In April 2019, following extensive consultations with all Palestinian banks, the PMA published a new regulation that allows all banks to issue bank accounts to individuals who are not formally employed. Banks are currently complying with the regulation and are crowding-in.

Margaux's Presentation

Does BSR use any particular frameworks or tools as part of your work with companies? Great presentation! Thank you. What does it cost to do a business case?

HERproject recognizes the multi-dimensional layers and context specific nature of women's empowerment. In order to capture the impact of HERhealth, HERrespect and

HERfinance, a specific framework has been developed to meet the thematic needs of each pillar. Hence, each program pillar comes with its own M&E framework. The approach and structure of each framework stays consistent from one pillar to the next. This protocol outlines the composition of each framework and, separately, delves into the distinct concepts and elements for each individual pillar.

Data is collected digitally (using structured interviews and collected with tablets) and synced to our impact portal.

The cost for a business case is contingent on so many variables. Consider:
- Who is the business for?
  - The type of data that you need to collect is going to be dependent on who you are making a business case to. Are you speaking to producers/manufacturers, business associations, buyers, donors?
- Do you have access to the workplace in question? Is management willing to share HR information with you? Are they willing to give you time to collect data?
  - All of these factors need to consider in the time you invest in building a relationship that grants you access to the very data that will enable you to build a case.
- What framework (from the brief) are you using?
  - The "before/after" framework, for example, is our standard HERproject impact evaluation approach. It is not very expensive for us to conduct baselines and endlines because we've trained our partners to be able to do so.
  - The ROI or benefit to cost ratio frameworks are much deeper studies that require a third party – and hence are more costly…

Would you elaborate more on impact of cultural mores on behavior/choices made by women in work/business sector?

Within our M&E framework, we have an agency dimension which helps us assess the level of self-efficacy and self-esteem that women feel across all three pillars. To complement this information, we are also looking to gather information about gender and social norms attitudes, which may perpetuate societal, cultural or family power imbalances. The five agency modules that are included throughout the M&E framework are:
- Decision Making
- Self-Esteem
- Confidence & Communication
- Worker-Manager Relationship
- Equitable Behavior
  - HERhealth – Health Equitable Behavior
  - HERfinance – Financial Equitable Behavior
  - HERrespect – Positive Gender Attitude

Gender and Decision-making attitudes give a sense of whether both women and men uphold traditional gender norms that perpetuate gender inequality.

What is the level of awareness regarding gender-based violence that you found during course of your study with the target groups?

I'm not sure to which study you are referring. We have a lot of data from different countries around level of awareness toward GBV. Since our realm of operation/implementation is the workplace, we start with Workplace Violence (WPV) – which is quite understudied. However, according to research, the workplace is perceived as the second most likely place for women to experience violence (after the household) in Bangladesh. Fair Wear Foundation, for example, found that 75% of workers had experienced verbal violence at work, 20% physical violence, and 30% psychological violence.

Female workers are susceptible to violence both at work and at home. In the RGM setting, the use of violence is often normalized. The most common forms of violence facing female garment workers include name-calling, shouting, yelling, teasing, rough behavior, being referred to using slang and propositioning. As such, one of the many indicators we focus on for WPV is acceptability/normalization of shouting in the workplace. In a major industrial park, we conducted a large baseline with 423 workers and found the below acceptance of verbal violence in the workplace from women, men and managers.

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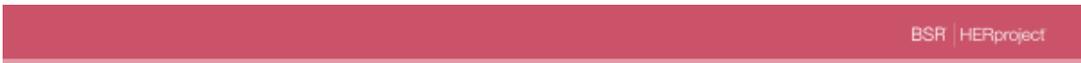
Acceptance/normalization of violence (attitude)

There are times when a worker deserves to be shouted at by his/her supervisor (women)

5%	Strongly agree	39%	Agree
35%	Agree		
52%	Disagree	61%	Disagree
8%	Strongly disagree		

There are times when a worker deserves to be shouted at by his/her supervisor (men)

4%	Strongly agree	29%	Agree
25%	Agree		
63%	Disagree	71%	Disagree
8%	Strongly disagree		

There are times when a worker deserves to be shouted at by his/her supervisor (managers/HR)

35.7%	Strongly agree	62.6%	Agree
26.9%	Agree		
19.5%	Disagree	37.4%	Disagree
17.9%	Strongly disagree		

10

Margaux, can you share a bit more about how investing in health results in improvements in business benefits and women's economic empowerment?

I could probably write a book at this point (if I had the time) about this. In a nutshell, workplace health promotion interventions such are HERproject are recognised as beneficial for both employees and employers. (Baicker, Cutler, & Song, 2010; Baiker et al, 2010; Rongen et al, 2013)

In the past eleven years of delivering HERhealth we have learned the following:

- Health is amongst one of the most approachable subjects that workplaces are willing to invest in.
- Workplace programming allows for scalable improvements to health outcomes for women workers. Thus far, over 850,000 low income women workers have been reached in global supply chains, which means huge potential for spreading health information and access to products and services.
- The peer education model works. Our programming is adapted to the local context and delivered through trusted peers. Key product usage changes we have documented include: - 11% increase across 26 factories in five countries in the number of women using family planning - 49% increase across 10 factories in Bangladesh in the number of women using sanitary pads during menstruation

In terms of pure business indicators that support HERhealth, see the below slide:
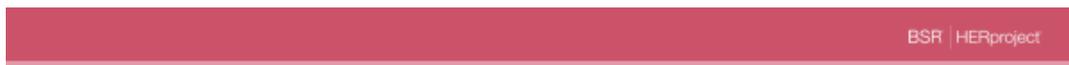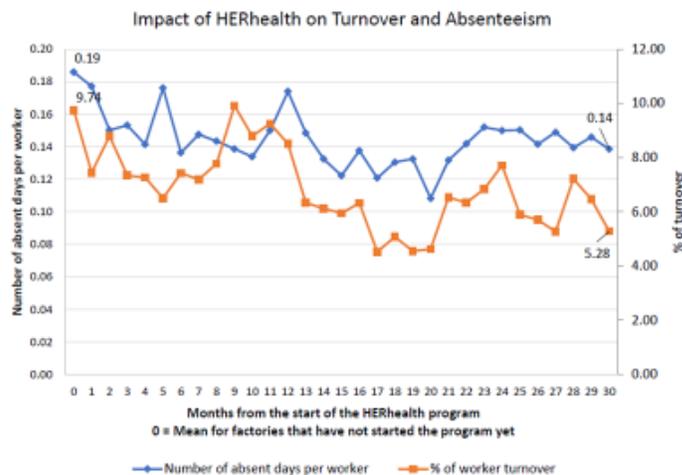
We heard about convincing brands, suppliers, business associations, do you see an opportunity to convince investors of the importance of workplace women's health and empowerment as well?

Great question and one that I wish I could answer. I think there is potential in using many forms of data to convince investors to invest in women's health. HERproject has no case studies (yet) on whether we could make that case. But I think it is worth a try!

To what degree, is any, is mobile technology utilized?

HERproject uses tablets to collect data and directly syncs the data onto our online impact portal.

What percentage of women are in management roles? Thoughts on obstacles/barriers?

That is contingent on the industry, country and often all the way down to the workplace itself.

On the "scale-up" or deepening of adoption of those changes that the business case supported? Do the private sector partners intend to continue to gather the data and reassess the business case on their own over time, post collaboration?

Absolutely! The only difficulty is building up workplaces to:
1. Understand what quality data looks like and its added value in linking it to health and gender status to its business performance
2. Establish a workplace system for data to be collected on a regular basis and record keep this data
3. To build the workplaces' capacity to analyze and utilize this data as a reference for setting objectives, action plans and evaluate its progress and improvement