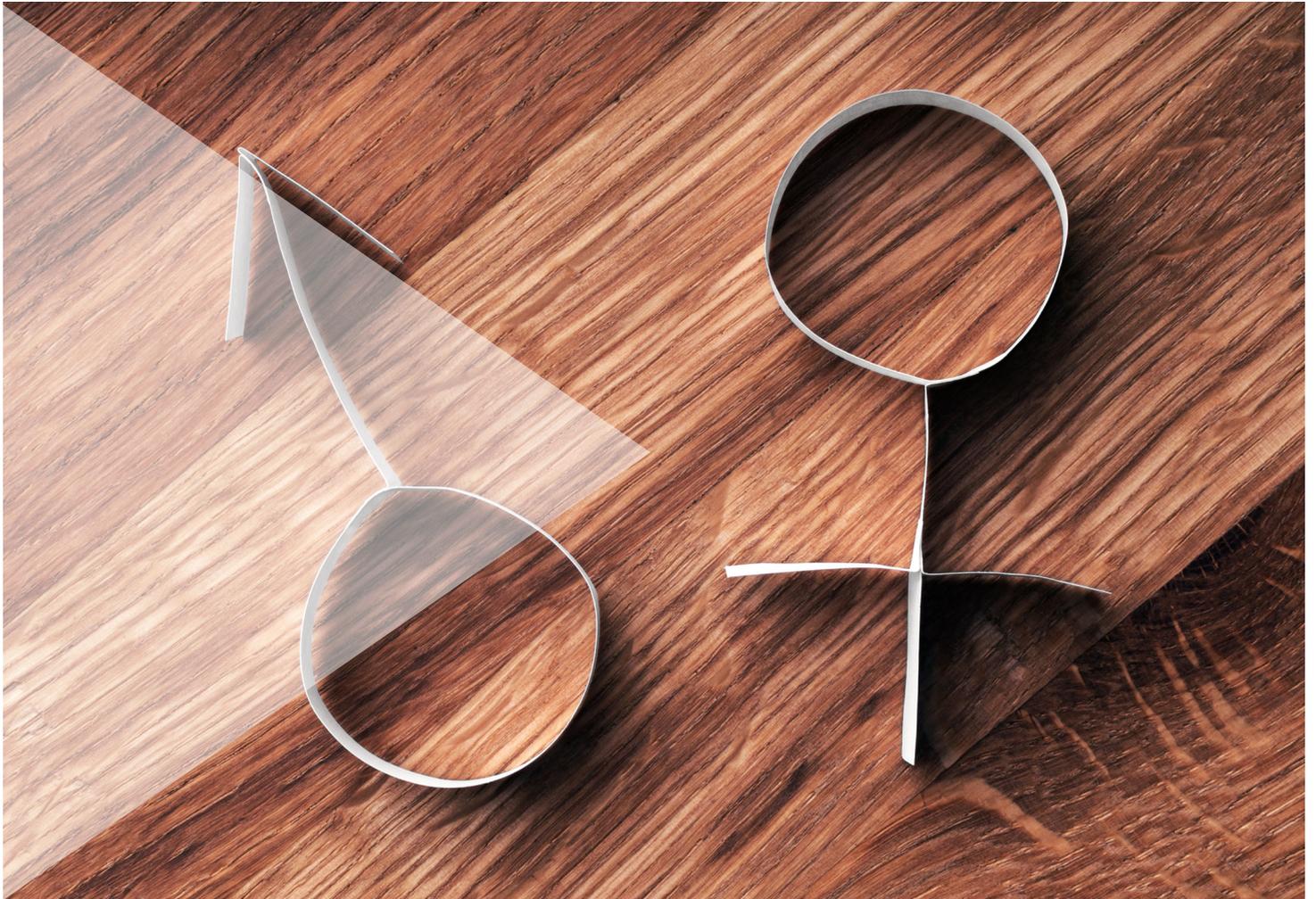


Global Agenda

Closing the Economic Gender Gap: Learning from the Gender Parity Task Forces

June 2016



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Contents

3	Introduction
4	The Task Force Model: Public-Private Collaboration to Advance Economic Gender Parity
7	Overview of Gender Parity Task Forces
7	Turkey Gender Parity Task Force
10	Japan Gender Parity Task Force
13	Mexico Gender Parity Task Force
16	Korea Gender Parity Task Force
18	Lessons Learned and Next Steps
20	Acknowledgements

Introduction

In the 10 years since the World Economic Forum began measuring the global economic gender gap it has narrowed by only 3%. This slow progress means that today the global economic participation and opportunity gap still stands at approximately 40%. The educational attainment gap, however, stands at only 5%.

Higher levels of female participation in education are not leading to commensurate employment opportunities for women – many barriers to entry and progression still remain along the female talent pipeline. This disparity is particularly evident when looking at different levels of education and employment. For example even though more women than men are enrolling at university in the majority of countries covered by the Forum's Global Gender Gap Report (97 out of 145) and the average gender gap in tertiary education is less than 10%, men still outnumber women in skilled jobs; the gender gap in senior management roles is over 70%. This suggests that, though countries are ideally poised to maximize opportunities for women's participation in the labour market, many have failed to reap the returns from this investment in education due to inhibiting and unaddressed cultural, structural and workplace factors.

The Forum's Gender Parity Initiative, therefore, brings together businesses, governments, civil society and other stakeholders to create partnerships that aim to integrate more women into the economy. In particular, the initiative serves as a partner in global, regional, national and industry transformations through a sustained flow of activities to shape, advance and monitor gender parity.

To meet the increasing demand from business and governments for benchmarking tools, best practices and policies that can effectively narrow the economic gender gap, the Forum produces the annual Global Gender Gap Report, which quantifies the magnitude of gender-based disparities and tracks their progress over time. In addition, the Forum's repository of company best practices supports those seeking to implement such initiatives in their own organizations. The Forum also works directly with the private sector to encourage inter-and-cross industry collaboration on gender parity, supporting companies and sectors to implement effective practices to narrow their gender gaps and monitor their impact.

In 2012, the Forum built on existing practical and analytical tools as well as on a widespread appetite for country-level action by launching Gender Parity Task Forces in Mexico, Turkey and Japan. A further task force followed in 2014 in the Republic of Korea*. These task forces have sought to generate collaborations between public and private sector stakeholders with the capacity to bring more women into the economy. The overall objective has been to understand the barriers to female economic participation and progress, to collaboratively explore and implement solutions in each country, and to provide a neutral platform for dialogue and action.

This report outlines the task force model, provides an assessment of the action and progress made in each country, and explores what lessons can be learned from these pilot projects. Looking across the experiences of each task force, it is clear that national and local policy efforts to address gender gaps must be complemented by private sector action to be more effective. Collaboration, shared goals and ongoing communication between the public and private sectors are crucial for maximizing the impact of action to advance economic gender parity.

Looking to the future, and as the official mandate of the task forces comes to an end in Japan, Mexico and Turkey (and with a year remaining in Korea), members have committed to building on the infrastructure created and continuing their collaborative efforts. There is also a great deal of potential for this model to be rolled out elsewhere, in partnership with regional and other actors or to be taken up independently by governments and domestic organizations wishing to pursue country-level action. As such, this report provides a guide for others looking to lead collaborative activity, including a consolidation of the key lessons learned from these initial task forces.

The Forum would like to express its deep appreciation to the Gender Parity Task Force co-chairs for their leadership and vision, as well as to the Forum's Gender Parity Initiative's Stewards, the project teams that have supported this work inside the Forum, and the many stakeholders that have contributed to this work and continue to do so in Mexico, Japan, Turkey and Korea.

* From this point on referred to as 'Korea'

The Task Force Model: Public-Private Collaboration to Advance Economic Gender Parity

Task force background

The competitiveness of an individual economy or organization is determined by the skills and productivity of its workforce and the opportunities individuals have to integrate into the labour market. Ensuring the development and appropriate use of half a nation's available human talent is therefore critical for determining how successful a country or company will be. There is clearly also a strong values-based case for gender equality; women and men should have equal access to health, education, economic participation and earning potential, and decision-making powers.

In recent years, an increasing energy and momentum around gender parity issues has typically been focused within companies or on single-issue awareness raising, collaborations between civil society organizations and the private sector and/or partnerships between public sector bodies. For example, increasing numbers of businesses are making policy changes, such as extending family and paternity leave and introducing unconscious biases training. Companies at the forefront of this agenda are also attempting to create an impact that extends beyond their own business, for example, through mentoring and leadership programmes or influencing their value chain. In addition, many national governments have sought to lead progress on gender parity through goals or targets for women's participation in civic and business leadership

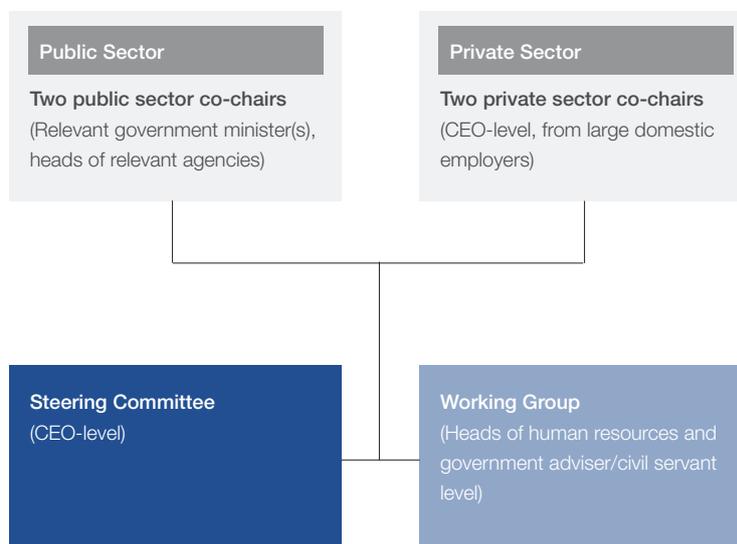
roles and through reforms to the care economy. Growing numbers of civil society organizations have also been launched to promote gender parity domestically and internationally, many backed by corporate partners, and international organizations such as UN Women and the World Bank have established partnerships with governments and businesses to support public information campaigns and training on gender parity.

Despite the growing interest in gender parity issues, however, initiatives focused on building public-private collaborations with a specific industry or country/regional focus are scarce. Analyses of local barriers to female economic participation, constructive dialogues, shared objectives and unified action between the public and private sectors are rare, if non-existent, in many countries. Given that government policies and leadership together with company action across talent pipelines, corporate cultures and accountability structures are all critical, the lack of infrastructure to facilitate public-private collaboration remains a major obstacle preventing accelerated progress. Similarly, an on-going scarcity of intra- and cross-industry collaborations is denying companies the benefits of shared learning and best practices and opportunities to pursue shared goals and initiatives.

To help meet this need for collaboration on economic gender parity the Forum and its constituents launched the Gender Parity Task Force model. The structure, focus and experience of this model are set out below.

Task force model

Figure 1. Task force governance structure



The task force model supports the analysis of gender gaps in the local workforce and the development and implementation of shared strategies to narrow these gaps. The four pilot task forces – in Mexico, Japan, Turkey and Korea – have sought to enable interactions among businesses and between business and government and serve as a neutral platform for dialogue and the launching, sharing and accelerating of new or existing initiatives on a range of employment issues. Such issues include hiring, retention and promotion, wage inequality, workplace culture, national and corporate policies around parental leave, and the integration of women-owned businesses along corporate value chains.

The governance structure of the task force model is designed to encourage the co-leadership of activity by public and private sector leaders, supported by a steering committee of committed businesses and a working group of actors with the capacity to implement and help design new initiatives, such as heads of human resources and strategy and senior civil servants.

Figure 2 plots the Global Gender Gap's Educational Attainment subindex against the Economic Participation and Opportunity subindex. The data reveals four broad groups of countries:

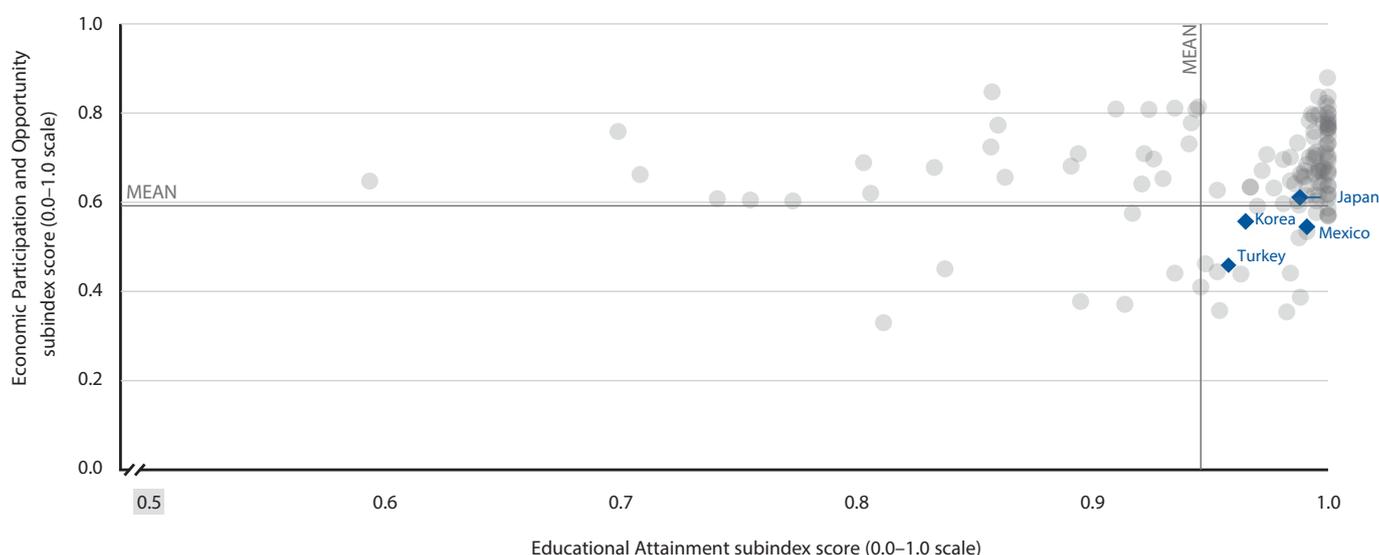
1. Countries that have closed or are generally closing education gaps and show high levels of women's economic participation
2. Countries that have closed or are generally closing education gaps, but show low levels of women's economic participation
3. Countries that have large education gaps as well as large gaps in women's economic participation
4. Countries that have large education gaps, but display small gaps in women's economic participation

In the first broad group are countries that have made investments in women's health and education, and generally see the returns on this investment in terms of women's economic and political participation. These countries include the Nordic countries, the United States, the Philippines, Canada, New Zealand and Australia. These countries have not, however, fully closed economic and participation gaps; in particular, the gaps in senior positions, wages and leadership levels still persist.

In the second broad group are countries that have made key investments in women's education, but have generally not removed barriers to women's participation in the workforce and are thus not seeing returns on their investments in the development of one half of their human capital. This group includes the task force countries of Japan, Mexico, Turkey and South Korea, as well as the United Arab Emirates, Chile and Brazil. These countries have an untapped but educated talent pool and would have much to gain through women's greater participation in the workforce.

In the third and fourth groups, the most basic investments in girls' and women's education still need to be made, and fundamental rights – including legal frameworks around inheritance, reproductive rights and violence – are often inadequate. The third group contains countries such as Yemen, Pakistan, India and Mauritania, which have large education as well as economic gender gaps. The fourth group contains countries such as Guinea, Chad, Mozambique and Burundi, which have large education gender gaps but small economic ones, primarily due to high levels of participation by women in low-skilled work. Compared with the third group, women in these countries have greater access to income and decision-making. However, a substantial body of literature has shown that investing in girls' education is one of the highest-return investments a developing economy can make and, for these countries, closing education gaps will remain an important factor over time.

Figure 2. Economic Participation and Opportunity subindex vs Educational Attainment subindex 2015



Source: World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report, 2015

Given its ability to generate a focus on gender parity within the workforces of large companies, the task force model is well suited to those countries with relatively high rates of female educational attainment and a clear economic rationale for women's economic integration, groups one and two described above. The four pilot task force countries were selected based on their desire to take action coupled with their relatively low levels of economic participation, which gave them substantial potential to make progress through workplace and care economy focused solutions.

Initial three-year timeline

The three-year engagement plan for the task forces, developed by the Forum at the outset of this work, broadly followed three stages, as set out in Figure 3 below. In phase one, private and public sector co-chairs are established and leading employers and public sector actors are identified to form the membership base. An assessment should then be undertaken to understand the local context and where significant gender gaps existed. The overall objectives of the task force are then defined and individual or collective commitments to action made by members. To help build momentum, the task forces shared an ambition to narrow economic gender gaps by up to 10%, to be worked towards over the three years of the project and beyond.

In phase two, the task force platform is used to design and exchange successful interventions and stakeholders are encouraged to share information regarding their activities and progress. The co-chairs' role includes leading efforts to coordinate and monitor task force activity at this stage, and to ensure accountability and the implementation of the commitments. In phase three, commitments should be updated to reflect progress, and key lessons from each task force should be shared to inform plans for future action and to allow for a cross-task force exchange of best practices. At the end of the third year, an infrastructure for collaborative action has been created and future activity is then developed and carried forward by relevant and engaged local constituents.

The model engagement plan outlined above was largely followed in the first three task forces – Mexico, Japan and Turkey – and continues to be used by Korea, although in all cases there have been adaptations, due to country and member-specific circumstances.

Future task force model

Across all four countries the Gender Parity Task Forces have made a significant positive impact on economic gender parity. The task force model has proved successful at engaging businesses and encouraging them to collaborate on gender issues, building knowledge of the practices that can advance female economic participation and providing a platform for public-private dialogue, as highlighted for each task force below. The Korea Task Force, with one year of partnership with the Forum left to go, looks set to continue creating positive change in 2016.

It is important to note that these were pilot projects however, and as such this report also details some of the limitations of the original task force model, makes suggestions for how it could be improved and gives some initial recommendations for future work of this kind. It is clear though that the principle of developing cross-sector and cross-industry efforts to advance economic gender parity is effective.

This report sets out some initial strategic thinking on where Mexico, Japan and Turkey may wish to focus their gender parity efforts in the future now that the formal three-year life cycle of the project is complete. This assessment is based on Forum data gathered for the Future of Jobs report,¹ which highlights the industries predicted to grow or stay stable over the next five years in each country.

As the Fourth Industrial Revolution takes hold in different industries and job families, it will affect female and male workers in distinct ways and pose both opportunities and risks to women in the labour force. An understanding of these issues and knowledge of how gender gaps are predicted to change in growth industries should inform the initiatives and resources dedicated to advancing economic gender parity. Targeting gender parity efforts on industries that are likely to grow and offer new employment opportunities will help ensure progress is sustained and women and economies continue to benefit into the future.

¹ World Economic Forum, *The Future of Jobs*, 2016, http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Future_of_Jobs.pdf.

Figure 3. Task force model three-year timeline



Overview of Gender Parity Task Forces

Turkey Gender Parity Task Force

Context

The World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Education and Health subindexes show that since 2006 Turkey has been among the top three climbers from the Europe and Central Asia region. The evolution of Turkey's performance on the Economic Participation and Opportunity subindex over the last decade has been more complex, decreasing between 2006 and 2010 and then climbing again. The 2015 Global Gender Gap data places Turkey at number 131 (out of 145 countries) on this economic subindex, highlighting the high level of progress still needed. Action is required at every employment level in Turkey given the gender gap is wider than average at entry level, with only 43% of the labour force participation gap closed (compared to the sample average of 67%), and in management roles where women are profoundly underrepresented and only 15% of the gap has been closed (compared to an average 27%). Wage equality once women are in the workplace also needs to be addressed as only 39% of this gap has been closed, against a sample average of 54%.

Over the last three years, however, considerable advances have been made in Turkey. Analysis of post-2012 Global Gender Gap index data shows that Turkey has narrowed its economic participation and opportunity gender gap by a substantial 10.8% relative to the task force's starting point. This improvement exceeds the ambition of the task force to

contribute to a narrowing of the gap by up to 10% over this period. A look at the indicators that make up the Economic Participation and Opportunity subindex suggests that this recent progress is largely due to advances in total female labour market participation and in perceptions of wage equality for similar work.

An enhanced legislative framework and government policies aimed at strengthening the role of women in society have contributed to the focus on gender parity in Turkey. In an effort to mainstream gender issues across public policy and to strengthen the socioeconomic status of women, the country's National Action Plan for Gender Equality, covering the period 2008-2013, was produced. This government plan set targets for ministries and national agencies to promote gender equality and develop policies addressing gender issues. In 2009, equal opportunities legislation was adopted in the national parliament, which led to the establishment of an Equal Opportunities Commission in the Grand National Assembly of Turkey to be responsible for promoting gender equality in legislation and investigating violations of gender equality in public life. The commission was designed to give a government-level institutional focus on gender parity, in particular on shifting the social norms and rules that still inhibit progress.

This government activity, along with specific measures such as the decision in 2008 to publically fund social security premiums for women above 18 years of age for five years to stimulate female employment, occurred shortly before the task force was established in 2012. More recently, legislation

Turkey

Economic gender gap

54%

Gap closed 10.8%, relative to 2012

Sub-indicator gaps

Wage equality for similar work 38%
 Estimated earned income 61%
 Tertiary education enrollment 14%

Labour force participation



Unpaid work per day Part time employed

6.3 hours
15%

1.9 hour
7%

Professional and technical workers



Legislators, senior officials and managers

13

was introduced in 2014 to increase pre-primary school services, a lack of which can pose a significant obstacle to parents attempting to juggle work and childcare.²

Across many countries, public sector measures such as these have demonstrated a capacity to generate practical positive change and help focus minds on gender parity issues, thus creating momentum for action in other sectors. It is therefore important that a political and public sector focus on gender parity is maintained and advanced across public life.

Since 2012, many private sector actors in Turkey have made narrowing the gender gap a strategic priority. At the forefront of these efforts have been the business members of the Turkey Gender Parity Task Force who have championed positive action over the last three years.

The task force experience

The Turkey Gender Parity Task Force was launched in 2012 in partnership with the Ministry of Family and Social Policies of Turkey, Güler Sabancı, Chairman and Managing Director of Sabancı Holding, and Ferit Sahenk, Chairman of the Doğu Group. Known locally as the “Equality at Work Platform”, this task force consisted of about 80 of the largest employers in the country. Business members of the task force came mainly from the financial services industry (17%), the mobility industry (11%), the consumer industry (12%) and cross-industry conglomerates (12%). The task force also included numerous civil society leaders, making it a truly multistakeholder collaboration.

Following an initial analysis of economic gender parity in Turkey, a “Declaration of Equality at Work” was developed by the task force co-chairs, which set out 11 principles to combat gender-based discrimination in the workplace, including pursuing equal wages for equal jobs and company practices that better balance work and family life.³ This declaration formed the basis of the task force’s work, with members pledging to promote these principles across Turkey. A best practice document on gender parity – “Manual for Establishing Corporate Gender Equality” – containing recommendations and best practice examples of the human resources policies members had successfully put in place was also produced and discussed.

In the first 18 months of the task force, members adopted a number of effective practices, such as leadership training for women, tracking systems to monitor rates of female recruitment and the inclusion of gender data in bids for supplier contracts. Mid-way through the three-year task force more than half of the members reported having increased female employment at all company levels. In its final year, the task force focused on strengthening its collaboration with leading firms in Turkey and expanding its reach to new employers and stakeholders.

A great deal of momentum on gender parity has been created among companies in Turkey, with many taking action to narrow the gender gaps in their particular company and industry. For example, as part of its involvement with the task force, Brisa, a major tyre manufacturer and part of the

Sabancı Group, chose to focus on female participation in its workforce by tracking the employment and recruitment rates of women at all levels in the company. Through holistic, company-wide attention to the principles laid out in the task force’s “Declaration of Equality at Work”, significant progress has been made – between 2012 and 2014 the female recruitment rate increased from 21% to 40%. The Eczacıbaşı Group, which employs nearly 12,500 people, also chose to concentrate first on its recruitment gender gap. Through an “Equal Opportunity Targets” programme, HR practices were adjusted to shift recruitment decisions and encourage an increase in the number of successful female candidates.

Other task force companies have focused their efforts further down the talent pipeline in order to promote more women into middle management roles. Dogus Group, for example, began developing a mentoring programme to advance career development for female employees in 2014. Dogus chose this intervention after finding that despite a nearly equal percentage of male and female employees throughout the company, a gender gap existed among managers and senior managers. Following necessary groundwork to identify and train mentors and to assess how best to target the programme, the first phase of the mentorship programme is ready and will run for six months, following which Dogus intends to roll it out from three initial companies to across the entire Group.

A lack of women in senior leadership roles is also evident in many companies in Turkey and elsewhere. Some members of the task force therefore chose to concentrate their efforts at this end of the talent pipeline, where gender gaps are often largest. For Energisa, a large energy company employing around 8,500 people, a lack of potential female successors ready to take on top management positions within its distribution companies was of strategic concern. As such, the company developed a women’s leadership programme to encourage more women to aim for leadership roles and to cultivate their potential. To ensure this programme’s success, Energisa’s talent management team and distribution managers worked to secure the support of the company’s senior management and male colleagues at all levels, in what is a traditionally male-dominated sector.

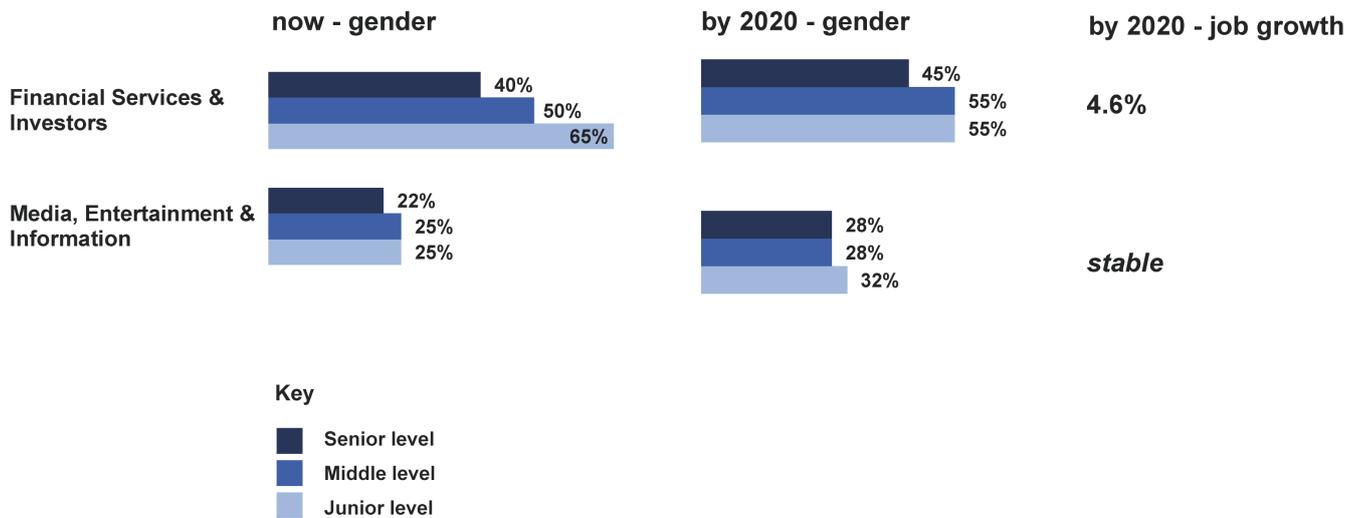
The workplace environment, including attitudes present within the workforce together with the level of commitment to gender parity at the top of an organization, is also a major factor affecting how easily women are able to enter an industry and progress. Several task force companies therefore chose to focus on impacting workplace cultures and norms. Garanti, Turkey’s second largest private bank, in an effort to understand and begin removing gender biases from the workplace, introduced a regular survey of female employees to assess their levels of satisfaction, identify any concerns and adapt HR practices based on this feedback. GroupM, a media planning and buying agency, also worked on creating an environment that supports employees to balance work and family life – nursery facilities have been introduced and maternity leave extended to encourage women to return to work following childbirth.

Although the formal three-year term of the Turkey task force is now complete, momentum has been created as has an effective infrastructure of collaboration, including the sharing of best practices and gender parity principles. Discussions are now taking place regarding the next steps for this successful collaboration.

² World Bank Group, *Women Business and the Law 2016*, 2015, <http://wbl.worldbank.org/~media/WBG/WBL/Documents/Reports/2016/Women-Business-and-the-Law-2016.pdf>.

³ Sabancı Holding, *Equality at Work Declaration*, <https://www.sabanci.com/en/social-responsibility/our-commitments/equality-at-work-declaration/i-3354>.

Turkey



Source: World Economic Forum

Data obtained from the chief human resources officers of major employers in Turkey in 2015 helps predict how jobs in different industries and women’s participation in the Turkish workforce will change up to the year 2020. The snapshot of this data presented above highlights two industries which expect to grow or stay stable in terms of employment over the next five years and which could therefore be a strategic focus for future efforts to advance economic gender parity.

The financial services and investors industry is expecting job growth of 4.6%. Currently, this industry’s talent pipeline follows a familiar pattern – although there are more women than men in entry/junior level roles, the proportion of women decreases as the job levels become more senior, with only 40% of senior roles belonging to women. By 2020, this ratio is predicted to shift in favour of women, however, with more than half of junior and mid-level roles expected to be filled by women and a 5% rise in the number of women in senior roles is predicted. Continued intra-industry action will be required to achieve these gains though, including sustained efforts to promote parity at the top of financial services and investor companies.

The media, entertainment and information (MEI) industry is expected to experience stable recruitment in Turkey over the next five years. This industry faces a greater gender parity challenge, with only a quarter of junior and mid-level roles and 22% of senior roles currently filled by women. If this industry is to maximize its potential to thrive in the Fourth Industrial Revolution it needs to adapt in order to utilize more female talent. Although Forum data predicts the gender gap will have narrowed in the MEI industry by 2020, it is not expected to make large gains, with women only expected to fill under a third of jobs at all levels. This prediction could be improved if additional assertive action is taken now, building on the positive work already taking place and learning from best practices shared by task force members, other industries and countries.

Japan Gender Parity Task Force

Context

Japan is currently ranked 101st in the World Economic Forum's 2015 Global Gender Gap Index, a rise of three places from 2014 in large part due to a near doubling of women in ministerial positions (from 11% to 22%). Japan also has a high level of female education attainment, having closed the gender gap in primary and secondary education and 90% of the gap in tertiary education. Considerable progress towards female economic gender parity is still required, however, if Japan is to meet the demographic challenges of low birth rates, an ageing population and labour force decline that threaten its economic growth.

The Forum's data shows that although Japan has been making progress on economic gender parity it slightly decreased its score on the Economic Participation and Opportunity subindex between 2014 and 2015 and now stands at 106 (out of 145 countries), with 61% of the gap closed. Japan needs to address its low numbers of female senior managers – only 10% of the gap on the Female Legislators, Senior Officials and Managers subindex has been closed, compared to a sample average of 27%. Women do not appear to be adequately promoted or supported to progress in the workplace. Wage equality for similar work also needs to be improved as, although over the average, only 65% of this gender gap has been closed and it actually widened slightly between 2014 and 2015.

Since 2012, however, when the Japan Gender Parity Task Force began, the economic gender gap has narrowed by a considerable 6.2%. The pace of positive change has also doubled during this time, suggesting increasing momentum and action leading to impact. Between 2014 and 2015, Japan improved its female labour force participation gap by 11% highlighting the growing numbers of women entering employment.

There has been a considerable amount of political attention placed on gender parity in Japan in recent years. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has endeavoured to place the economic gender gap at the heart of his programme for government,

pledging at the 2013 UN General Assembly to “create a society in which women shine.”⁴ A private meeting between the prime minister and global women leaders held at the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting 2014 in Davos also led to the creation of an annual high-level symposium, the World Assembly for Women (WAW).

Government focus on these issues has stimulated efforts to create a policy and legislative framework for gender equality. Japan's Gender Equality Bureau within the Cabinet Office states a commitment to achieving a gender equal society and the country's Third Basic Plan for Gender Equality (2010)⁵ is aimed at accelerating progress through a strong policy framework and concrete action plans. A Council for Gender Equality and four Specialist Committees focus on specific areas of gender equality in Japan, one of which is now developing the Fourth Basic Plan for Gender Equality to help ensure sustained momentum on these issues. The government seeks to regularly monitor and measure progress against objectives laid out in its Basic Plan. Ministers have also sought to develop robust public sector structures for the advancement of gender parity and to collaborate with women's groups, the media, educational bodies and local government to maximize impact.

Recent government white papers have emphasized the centrality of women's economic empowerment for creating sustainable economic growth. The paper, “Women's Active Roles will Revitalize Japan's Regions” from the White Paper on Gender Equality 2015,⁶ outlines the need for policies which support women to work, including improved childcare infrastructure and fiscal policies which give women more choices. Recent legislation also promotes female employment, including the 2015 Act on Promotion of Women's Participation and Advancement in the Workplace.

⁴ Statements by the prime minister of Japan and his Cabinet, 2016, http://japan.kantei.go.jp/96_abe/statement/201409/waw140913.html.

⁵ Government of Japan, Gender Equality Bureau Cabinet Office, 2016, http://www.gender.go.jp/english_contents/about_danjo/toward/progress/index.html.

⁶ Government of Japan, Cabinet Office, *Women's Active Roles will Revitalize Japan's Regions*, White Paper on Gender Equality 2015 Summary, 2015, http://www.gender.go.jp/english_contents/about_danjo/whitepaper/pdf/ewp2015.pdf.

Japan

Economic gender gap

39%

Gap closed 6.2%, relative to 2012

Sub-indicator gaps

Wage equality for similar work 35%
 Estimated earned income 39%
 Tertiary education enrollment 10%

Labour force participation



Unpaid work per day
 Part time employed

5 hours
 33%

1 hour
 10%

Professional and technical workers



Legislators, senior officials and managers



Source: World Economic Forum

As of 1 April 2016, this law requires government agencies, local government and companies with more than 300 employees to devise action plans for the hiring and promotion of women and to improve opportunities for staff to balance work and family life.⁷

Such policies and government programmes have begun to create an enabling environment for the advancement of economic gender parity in Japan; sustained and well-implemented collaborative action will now help accelerate progress. Operating within this context, the Japan Gender Parity Task Force has provided useful best practices, in particular from the private sector, some of which are highlighted below.

The task force experience

Over 70 leaders from business, the public sector and international organizations launched the Japan Gender Parity Task Force in November 2012 in Tokyo. Departing from its initial structure, over time the task force evolved into a broader leadership base of business leaders and representatives from relevant ministries, led by Yukako Uchinaga, Chairman of J-Win, Japan, and Sakie T. Fukushima, President of G&S Global Advisors, Japan and Chair of Keizai Doyukai. A variety of stakeholders contributed to the direction of the task force, including Kathy Koll Matsui, Vice-Chair and Co-Head of Macro Research Asia, Goldman Sachs, Japan, and Yoko Ishikura, Professor Emeritus at Hitotsubashi University, Japan. Working together the above leaders created a platform for the exchange of relevant local initiatives, developed best practices and collaborations and helped to monitor progress.

To help structure and focus this collaborative action on gender parity in Japan, two leading industry associations worked in collaboration with McKinsey and the Forum to undertake a survey of over 300 companies to better understand the gender parity outlook in the country. The findings of this work were published as an Insight Report on Closing the Gender Gap in Japan,⁸ providing business leaders with a guide to action. This report found that although Japanese companies often have policies in place to support women and men with caring responsibilities, such as flexible working hours, these policies are often underused by employees. To make progress, companies need to increase the acceptance of such policies by all employees, which will require a change in workplace cultures. In addition, more initiatives to support the progression of women, such as skills development and leadership training, are still required. There is a large role for human resources here. The survey also found that the HR function is perceived to focus mainly on systems and administration as opposed to talent-development and the reform of corporate practices.

A new Japan Diversity Network grew out of this work, headed by the private sector task force co-chairs. Keizai Doyukai continued to conduct an annual survey of members throughout the duration of the task force, assessing progress and promoting accountability for commitments

made by each company at the outset. This sharing of information has sparked the development of joint initiatives, for example a CEO training seminar for women (60%) and men (40%). One of its purposes was to ensure male business leaders were brought into the conversation on gender parity. Feedback from a 2015 survey indicates that this has generated a greater awareness of the barriers facing aspiring female leaders in Japan, including the challenge of combining caring roles with a working culture of long hours. This awareness has engaged the leadership of participating companies in finding solutions. Two advisory committees were also established – the Human Resources and Development Committee, to support the implementation of company initiatives, and the Employment and Labour Market Committee, to inform companies on government and regulatory issues, chaired by Sakie T. Fukushima.

Many companies involved in these efforts to advance economic gender parity have focused on introducing new policies and practices that target specific gender gaps along their talent pipelines. Lixil, a major manufacturer and seller of building materials and housing equipment and employer of approximately 20,000 staff, implemented a new initiative in 2014 focused on increasing the number of female managers. After evaluating the gender balance within the organization and finding that only 0.9% of managers were women, Lixil introduced a target to promote 30% or more females into managerial positions. Lixil met its target in 2014 and 2015, and its “WeDo Action” initiative has, the company estimates, directly impacted 570 newly recruited female managers and those benefiting from new leadership programmes and created a more positive working culture for the 3,800 female employees at the company. The company attributes much of the success of this initiative to strong leadership at the CEO and HR executive level, the setting of quantitative targets, and an HR department with the skills and commitment to implement such an initiative.

Other companies have used their leverage to influence gender parity outside of their own company. A leading investment firm specializing in Japanese mid-cap companies has this year introduced new policy and procedures into their investment decision-making and monitoring process. When selecting potential investees the firm assesses the degree of the diversity in the companies and after investing it works to enhance diversity and gender parity within them as a strategy for ensuring business sustainability and success. This initiative is in its early stages, but the company is currently evaluating how best to monitor progress, including potentially through tracking the numbers of women in senior management and the turnover rate for female employees.

It is widely acknowledged among the Japanese companies involved that there is an urgent need to shift workplace norms. A working culture of long hours can make it difficult for women and men with caring responsibilities to enter or progress within an industry; traditional expectations of female roles still influence some hiring and promotion decisions, even if unconsciously. Lixil note that both male and female attitudes were barriers that needed to be overcome for their efforts to be successful. Similarly, a leading Japanese geospatial information and services company engaged with the task force chose to focus on shifting perceptions of its industry, perceived by many women to be male-dominated. By working to adapt and strengthen HR recruitment and promotion practices, it is now successfully building the numbers of women entering the company.

⁷ Government of Japan, Gender Equality Bureau Cabinet Office, *The Act on Promotion of Women's Participation and Advancement in the Workplace*, 2015, http://www.gender.go.jp/english_contents/about_danjo/lbp/pdf/promotion_of_woman.pdf.

⁸ World Economic Forum in collaboration with McKinsey & Company, *Closing the Gender Gap in Japan*, 2014, http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_ClosingGenderGap_Japan_Report_2014.pdf.

The mix of public and private sector momentum on narrowing the economic gender gap in Japan bodes well for the future. However, the pace of change needs to be increased and for this to be achieved more collaboration between sectors is essential. A legislative framework for gender parity coupled with collaborative industry efforts should spark further progress. Positively, there is clear commitment from companies who have engaged with the Forum on gender parity to continue to advance these issues. For this potential to be realized, more needs to be done to change attitudes and workplace norms so that new policies and initiatives have the necessary impact.

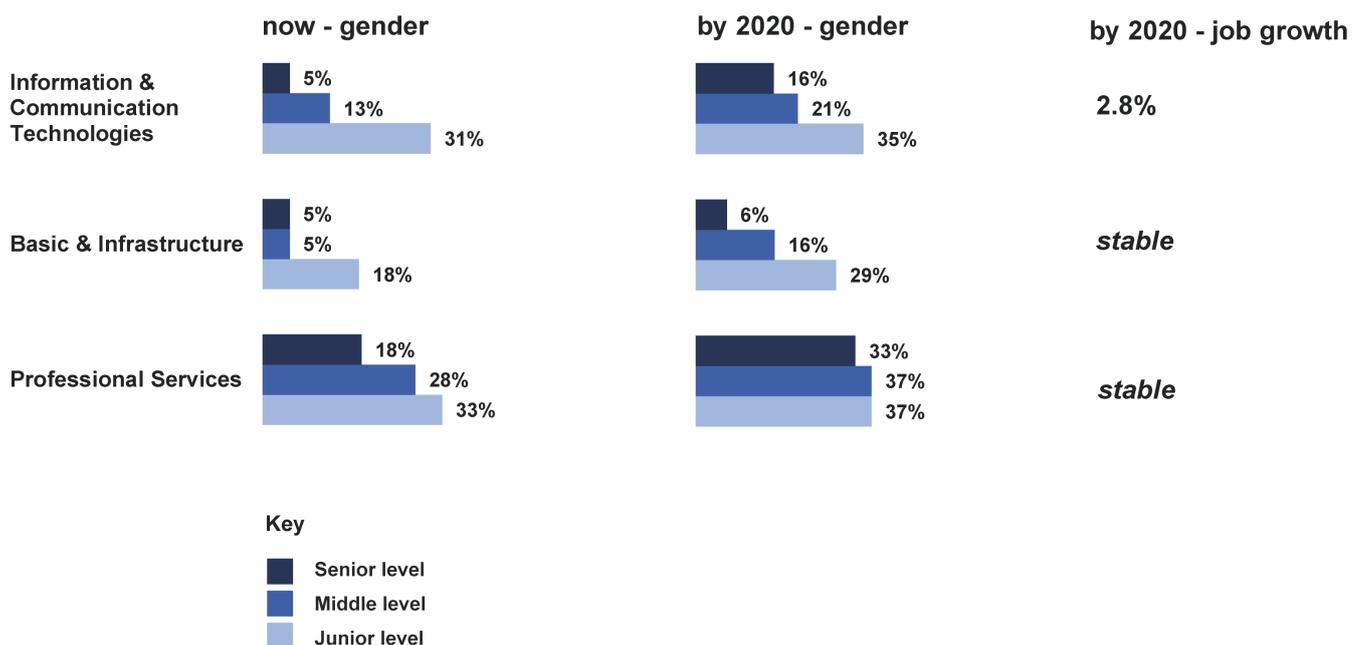
Highlighted above are three key industries predicting stable or increased job growth in Japan over the next five years, and where large gains could be made in economic gender parity if targeted efforts are made. The industry predicting the largest job growth is the Information, Communication and Technologies (ICT) industry, with an estimated increase of 2.8% by 2020. For this industry to effectively grow as predicted, much more work is needed to improve the gender balance in of its workforce; currently there are major gender gaps in mid- and senior-level roles. The recruitment of women at entry level in the ICT industry is well under 50% and this proportion shrinks further as women move along the talent pipeline, down to 13% in mid-level roles and 5% in senior-level roles. The picture is expected, however, to improve considerably by 2020, particularly at the top of these companies, suggesting a confidence in strategies being implemented now and in those planned for the future. But, the positive shift predicted in this industry still falls far short of gender parity, highlighting the need to maintain

focus on addressing skills gaps and workplace practices that prevent women from entering ICT.

Two industries that are predicted to stay stable in terms of employment over the next five years are basic industries and infrastructure and professional services. Globally, the basic and infrastructure industry has low female representation in junior-level roles, which becomes more pronounced along the pipeline. This industry in Japan is no exception, with only 5% of mid- and senior-level roles filled by women. Entry-level recruitment is expected to improve somewhat by 2020, but again much more progress is required if this industry is to build its female talent base and grow effectively. The professional services industry in Japan has more moderate differences in the proportion of women at each stage of the talent pipeline and these are predicted to narrow further. Professional service companies will need to ensure they foster the required shift in promotion practices and attitudes within their workforce to deliver on these expected gains.

The future of gender and work in Japan

Japan



Source: World Economic Forum

Mexico Gender Parity Task Force

Context

Mexico ranked 71 overall on the Forum's 2015 Global Gender Gap Index, an improvement of nine places from 2014, which can largely be attributed to an increase in the number of women in parliament. Over the last decade, Mexico has fully closed its health and survival gender gap and now ranks among the top five most-improved countries in the Latin America and the Caribbean region on both the overall Index and the Political Empowerment subindex.

Mexico, however, remains the region's lowest-ranked country on the Economic Participation and Opportunity subindex (126), with less than 55% of its economic gender gap closed. Action is sorely needed to generate employment returns on the investments made in women's education – Mexico has closed its gender gap in primary and secondary education and is above the sample average when it comes to closing the gap in tertiary education (which has closed by 96%, compared to the average of 92%).

Mexico's economic gender gap is present at the entry level of employment, with a lower than average female participation in the labour market (only 58% of this gap has been closed, compared to the sample average of 67%). On wage equality for similar work and estimated earned income measures, Mexico is also below the sample average. Once in employment women in Mexico are relatively more able to progress, with 56% of the leadership and management gap closed, far higher than the sample average of 27%, but too few women are entering employment or being financially rewarded equivalent to men.

Between 2012 – when the Mexico Gender Parity Task Force began – and 2015, Mexico has moved in the right direction, experiencing a small positive shift in its economic gender gap of 1.3%. Although more work is clearly required to improve the level and pace of change, it is important to recognize the positive advances that have been made over the last three years, including a 25% positive change in the number of female legislators, senior officials and managers relative to 2012.

In recent years, a number of government measures have been undertaken to narrow gender gaps in Mexico as legislators become more attuned to the moral and economic case for economic gender parity. Equal opportunities policies were included in the National Development Plan 2007-2012 as a key pillar of government reforms and to act as a catalyst for national action. The National Institute for Women (INMUJERES), created by the federal government and responsible for addressing gender disparities in Mexico, launched the National Programme for Equality between Women and Men (2008-2012) in response to this National Development Plan with the aim of enhancing women's economic participation.⁹ Central to the work of INMUJERES has been the promotion of gender issues within the workplace in order to influence workplace culture and enhance women's opportunities.

Recent practical measures taken in Mexico include reforms to federal labour law in 2012, which included modifications to increase flexibility in employment arrangements, and public policies introduced to support increased professional development opportunities for women in the workplace.¹⁰ In addition, legislation making childcare payments tax deductible and providing for equality between men and women when accessing goods and services (helping to facilitate women's access to credit) has been introduced.¹¹ Mexico's National Employment Service now also has specific programmes aimed at benefitting women. In 2015, the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, INMUJERES and the National Council to Prevent Discrimination, worked together to develop the Mexican Standard on Fair Employment and Non-Discrimination. Now written into law, this "standard" promotes respect and inclusion while facilitating women's

⁹ Pérez, L R and Massa Roldán, R, The Sloan Center on Aging & Work at Boston College, *Mexico Public Policy*, Global Policy Brief No.15, 2011, https://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/research_sites/agingandwork/pdf/publications/GPB15_Mexico.pdf.
¹⁰ Secretariat of Labor and Social Welfare Mexico, *STPS committed to improving the working conditions of Mexican women*, 2016, <http://www.gob.mx/stps/articulos/stps-comprometida-con-mejorar-las-condiciones-laborales-de-las-mujeres-mexicanas?idiom=es>
¹¹ World Bank Group, *Women Business and the Law 2016*, 2015, <http://wbl.worldbank.org/~media/WBG/WBL/Documents/Reports/2016/Women-Business-and-the-Law-2016.pdf>.

Mexico

Economic gender gap

46%

Gap closed 1.3%, relative to 2012.

Sub-indicator gaps

- Wage equality for similar work 49%
- Estimated earned income 51%
- Tertiary education enrollment 4%

Labour force participation



Unpaid work per day
Part time employed

6.2 hours
29%

1.9 hour
14%

Professional and technical workers



Legislators, senior officials and managers



access to the labour market.¹²

Such government efforts to advance economic gender parity have been important for the promotion and facilitation of progress but more needs to be done to link these efforts to the private sector. Some of the best practices generated by companies associated with the Mexico Gender Parity Task Force are highlighted below.

The task force experience

Launched in 2012, the Mexico Gender Parity Task Force was initially led by Co-Chairs Margarita Zavala, then First Lady of Mexico and President of the Council of the National System for Integral Family Development, Angelica Fuentes, President, Angelica Fuentes Foundation, and Carlos Danel, Chairman of Genera. Following political change in Mexico, from 2013 the task force was spearheaded by Angelica Fuentes and Carlos Danel alone, with the involvement and support of around 50 of Mexico's largest companies.

To better understand the current state of gender parity in the workforce and to shine a light on the major barriers to progress, the task force began work by undertaking a survey among participating companies. This survey established that the share of women on the boards of participating companies was just above 10% and that women who reached senior levels of responsibility experience a high degree of difficulty making work compatible with marriage and motherhood. The majority of companies reported having policies already in place or in the process of being introduced to reduce gender gaps, but most also felt that leadership commitment was the critical factor for the successful implementation of such practices. Responses to the survey also suggested that path-dependency was a major barrier to progress within a company and the sharing of best practices and collaboration on gender issues across companies and industries would be beneficial.

This initial survey therefore supported the future direction and focus of the task force, and based on these results a workshop was organized for the HR directors of task force members' companies to analyse the range of corporate policies that could be implemented and shared to narrow the economic gender gap. Companies then committed to introducing a number of initiatives, including new recruitment practices, capacity building for managers to help them identify and progress female talent, and increased transparency around career progression. A follow-up survey conducted in late 2014 provided an indication of action being taken. Between 2013 and 2014, over 80% of companies reported that they had implemented a programme to foster work-life balance and more than 60% were making provision for flexible working.

Genera, the major financial inclusion and services group based in Mexico City, is one example of a company that chose to focus on adapting workplace culture and practices – identified as a major barrier to progress. In 2012, Genera began a programme to improve employee experiences of work-life balance which involved the creation of an indicator on “satisfaction of work-family integration”. This company

programme involves auditors posing standardized questions to a random sample of employees every three months to assess staff perceptions and experiences and how these are changing over time. Genera has set goals for the scores it hopes to achieve against this indicator and questionnaire results are reported back to administrative staff managing the initiative. On the basis of this analysis, Genera devises strategies to support employees to balance work and family life. This programme has proved successful at influencing workplace culture and promoting an environment that supports both men and women with family and caring responsibilities. Since 2012, reported experiences of work-life balance have become more positive and staff retention rates have improved.

Similarly, ManpowerGroup in Mexico have also focused on retaining women in their workforce, acknowledging the difficulties women can face returning to work after childbirth. Although ManpowerGroup typically attracts more women than men to work in their offices, the company has focused on incentivizing women to continue working following their maternity leave. Manpower is now offering women flexible working hours and opportunities to work from home in order to make work more compatible with new caring responsibilities. Recognizing the importance of also allowing male employees to fulfil their roles and responsibilities as fathers, Manpower provides similar flexible work benefits to fathers, which in turn helps create a working culture that values the family and time spent out of the office. The company now intends to pursue initiatives to increase the number of women in leadership positions in Mexico.

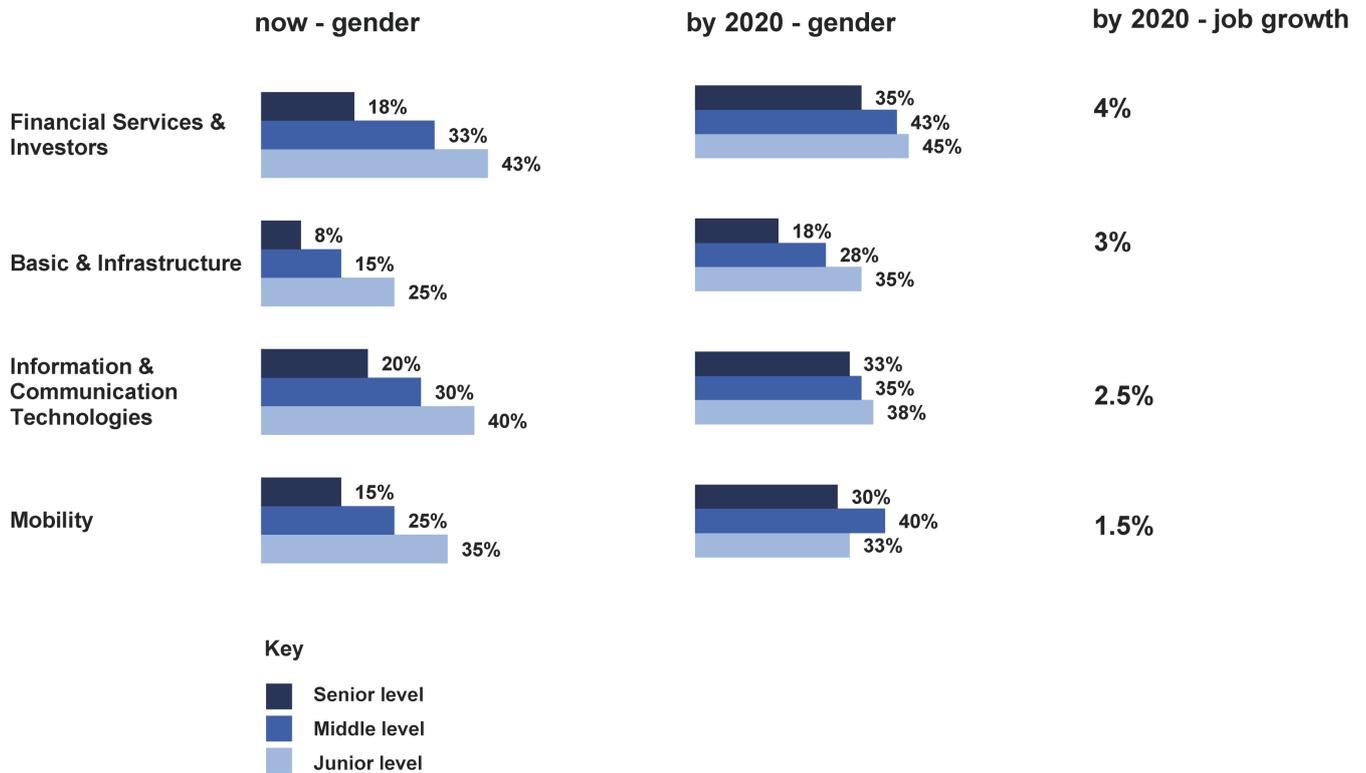
Since the initiation of the task force, proactive and vocal engagement of the co-chairs and committed members has helped to raise awareness of the economic case for gender parity across business. For example, executive search firm Heidrick & Struggles has adopted gender parity as a key part of its business engagement strategy, promoting the benefits of gender equality to client companies. This action is helping to ensure equality in recruitment and is also supporting and encouraging companies using Heidrick & Struggles' services to do more to narrow the gender gap within their workforce.

The Mexico Gender Parity Task Force has generated a greater exchange of knowledge and successful practices between businesses and it has helped spark a dialogue on the cultural norms that can hinder progress on economic gender parity. However, as commented by Task Force Co-Chair Angelica Fuentes, more needs to be done in Mexico to build the commitment and active participation of companies in efforts to advance gender parity. Although awareness has been raised, a greater understanding of the business case for narrowing the gap is still required. In addition, a higher degree of collaboration between the public and private sectors is needed. The task force provided a model for this, but greater involvement from the public sector in such collaborative efforts would help create an environment in which progress is accelerated.

Both task force co-chairs have committed to continuing action on gender parity this year and beyond, and with more collaborative action forecast for the future, Mexico can continue to make progress to narrow the economic gender gap.

¹² Secretariat of Labor and Social Welfare Mexico, *President Enrique Peña Nieto presented the new Mexican Fair Employment and Non-Discrimination Law*, 2015, <http://www.gob.mx/presidencia/articulos/mexican-fair-employment-law>.

Mexico



Source: World Economic Forum

Highlighted above are four major industries expected to grow in Mexico up to 2020: financial services and investors, basic and infrastructure, ICT and mobility. Interestingly, across all of these industries companies predict that the proportion of women progressing up the corporate ladder will increase, suggesting an expectation that cultural norms will change and talent development and promotion practices be improved. The large job growth predicted in financial services bodes well for women in Mexico, with over 40% of entry-level roles currently filled by women and a predicted rise in the proportion of women in senior roles between 2015 and 2020 of 17%. Sustained action will need to be taken to deliver on these predictions, but if realized – although parity will not have been achieved – this industry could provide a useful guide to others who currently predict a less positive shift and are looking to improve their talent strategy.

As witnessed in many other countries, the basic and infrastructure industries in Mexico face a particular challenge recruiting and progressing women. Given this industry is predicting job growth of 3% by 2020, now is the time for concerted action on these issues. There is great potential for intra-industry collaboration here, given basic and infrastructure companies within and outside Mexico are attempting to deal with shared barriers to female participation and many have best practices that could be shared.

Korea Gender Parity Task Force

Context

The Forum's Global Gender Gap Index demonstrates that over the past decade the Republic of Korea has made steady progress on gender parity, with improvements across the health, education, political and, in particular, economic subindexes measured. Although more progress is needed to raise the country's overall ranking of 115, Korea has now closed 65% of its overall gender gap, with continued progress demonstrated in 2015 when the country climbed two places on the index.

As noted in the Gender Parity Task Forces' interim report, investing in women's economic integration is one of the highest return-on-investment opportunities for Korea. According to several international organizations, greater female labour supply would stimulate economic growth; a full convergence in the participation rate between men and women over 20 years could boost the GDP per capita growth rate, with increases of more than 0.5 percentage points.¹³

Currently, Korea has closed its economic participation and opportunity gender gap by 56%. Although the country still has a sizeable economic gender gap to close, it is important to note the advances that have been made in recent years. In particular, the country has achieved accelerated progress since 2014 when the Korea Gender Parity Task Force was established – the economic gender gap has narrowed by 9% during the first year of the task force, more than 10 times the rate of progress prior to 2014. Korea appears to be on a positive trajectory of change. Future efforts should remain focused on points along the talent pipeline where economic gender gaps are still comparatively large, for example, the low number of women in senior management positions (only 12% of this gap has been closed).

Recent legislative and policy developments in Korea build on a relatively longstanding foundational commitment to advancing economic gender parity.¹⁴ Park Geun-hye, the

¹⁴ UNRISD, *The Political and Social Economy of Care: Republic of Korea Research Report 3*, 2009.

nation's first female president, has made increasing female economic participation a goal of her administration, pledging to lift the female employment rate from 53.5% to 61.3% by 2017 and to enhance women's representation; the public sector is taking the lead on this by setting a target ratio of female managers. Korea's Ministry of Gender Equality and Family has a five-year plan to promote gender parity, which includes enhancing work-life balance and addressing the gender gap in employment as goals. Specific policies include expanding the number of female public officials by 2017, supporting the career development of young women, fostering women leaders and the expansion of female managers, and support for the reemployment of career-interrupted women. Evidence suggests that such measures are helping to narrow the economic gender gap, with marked increases in the number of women receiving job offers.¹⁵

The legislative framework for gender equality in Korea also requires government to undertake gender impact assessments of policies and report the results to the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, to help ensure that gender parity is a focus across government. Assessments aim to identify often unintended gender biases in policy; for example, in 2015 a gender impact assessment of youth employment programmes analysed the participation of young people by gender and suggested policy amendments to address inadvertent gender inequality in the programmes.¹⁶

¹⁵ Republic of Korea Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, *Utilization of Women Resources*, 2015, http://www.mogef.go.kr/eng/policy/index06_02.jsp.

¹⁶ Soon-hie Kang, Kyu-Yong Lee, Junki Ahn, Sei-hyoung Cho, Sun-kyung Choi, Abstract, *The Gender Impact Analysis and Assessment on the Employment Programs for the Youth*, Republic of Korea Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, 2015, file:///C:/Users/SWI/Downloads/The%20Gender%20Impact%20Analysis%20and%20Assessment%20on%20the%20Employment%20Programs%20for%20the%20Youth.pdf.

Korea

Economic gender gap

44%

Gap closed 9%, relative to 2014.

Labour force participation



Unpaid work per day
Part time employed

4.6 hours
15%

0.8 hour
7%

Professional and technical workers

45

Legislators, senior officials and managers

11

Sub-indicator gaps

Wage equality for similar work 45%
Estimated earned income 44%
Tertiary education enrollment 25%

Source: World Economic Forum

Korea has also recognized the importance of childcare legislation to women's economic participation; for example, maternity and paternity legislation enables mothers and fathers to take leave for up to one year. The Act on the Promotion of Creation of Family-Friendly Social Environment, launched in 2012, similarly aims to help harmonize work and family life through a family friendly environment that encompasses flexible working, support for childbirth and childcare, and systems for supporting dependents and workers.¹⁷ Korea is seeking to build an increasingly favourable policy environment to support women's economic participation. To ensure the success of such measures, there needs to be a continued focus on these within both the public and private sectors – without both the impact of such policies will be limited.

Over the last two years the Korea Gender Parity Task Force has been successfully working to ensure the public and private sectors work collaboratively to narrow the economic gender gap, as detailed below.

The task force experience so far

Launched in 2014 under the leadership of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family (MOGEF) and the Korea Chamber of Commerce & Industry, the Korea Gender Parity Task Force – locally named the Task Force on Gender Parity and Empowerment of Women – is the country's first public-private collaboration established to promote gender parity. With a year left to go of its formal three-year lifecycle the task force already benefits from the participation of 142 public and private corporations, including 30 major conglomerates and accounting for more than 5.6 million employees. Institutions focused on gender parity are also involved in the task force, such as the Korean National Council of Women and the Korean Women's Development Institute.

The specific collaboration model utilized by the task force is founded on private corporations and institutions making specific commitments to take action to narrow the gender gap and receiving in return customized support from the government. Participating institutions are encouraged to declare an "implementation pledge" to advance gender parity across various areas, including female recruitment, work-life balance and female representation at different levels within the organization.

Each member of the task force makes tangible commitments after establishing their own voluntary action plan, with the aim of generating progress that can be measured. For example, a leading oil and gas company in Korea has chosen to focus on increasing the representation of women at the entry level and in management, introducing quotas for both. The company reports that skepticism among staff regarding these measures and concerns that they could lead to biases against men are both barriers they are attempting to overcome with the support of the senior leadership, which is viewed as crucial for the ongoing success of this action. A major ICT industry employer has also chosen to focus on progressing women along the talent pipeline

and into senior positions through the development of a leadership programme to provide new training, development opportunities and mentoring targeted at female staff. The company reports a successful impact with this programme, but challenges remain – notably traditional attitudes to gender roles in the family, which can deter women from taking on increased workplace responsibilities. Companies involved in the task force also report that a lack of infrastructure and facilities for working parents, such as convenient childcare, can be a further barrier to the participation of women.

During the first 18 months of the task force, MOGEF held 10 seminars for task force members and supported a total of 30 consultations on gender practices. Progress report sessions have also been held to ensure the tracking of commitments and action. These activities have been advertised through various outlets such as the task force's homepage, the media, newsletters and via the publication of case studies. To assess the impact being made by task force a survey of participating institutions was undertaken in 2015, which asked for feedback regarding any changes they had witnessed in their organization before and after joining. The survey suggested that the proportion of women being promoted within organizations had grown from 15.6% to 29.9% and the ratio of family-friendly certified companies had increased by 26.1% (up to 82.5%).

MOGEF also reports that the task force is proving to be an effective catalyst for change in society at large. Along with other national efforts, it is helping to increase awareness of gender parity and providing a useful resource of best practices for others to learn from. In Korea, take-up of parental leave has largely increased, especially with regards to men, passing the 5% mark for the first time, and the employment rate of women in their 30s has steadily increased to its highest ever level. More than 80 best practices have been identified through the task force process so far and a guidebook has been created, which provides information on these and on the customized support members can draw on to assist with the implementation of such initiatives.

Recognizing that more progress is needed in Korea to narrow the economic gender gap, the task force leadership is planning to focus in future on shifting cultural norms around work-life balance and helping to ensure more women are supported to return to work following career interruptions due to childbirth and caring responsibilities. In particular, the task force intends to concentrate more of its efforts on encouraging small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to join the task force and pledge action. MOGEF has identified that communicating the business case for such reforms to SMEs must be a priority in addition to developing tailored support for these smaller companies to implement best practices, understanding the unique constraints and tough business environment these companies often face.

The task force also has plans to build on the solid foundations it has built so far and the Forum anticipates a productive year of partnership ahead. Once the formal three-year lifecycle of the Korea Gender Parity Task Force is complete, a greater focus on growth industries in Korea may provide a strategic approach to gender parity efforts in the future, as companies look to their talent strategies to help them meet the challenges and opportunities posed by the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

¹⁷ Republic of Korea Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, Act on the Promotion of Creation of Family-Friendly Social Environment, 2012, http://elaw.klri.re.kr/kor_service/lawView.do?lang=ENG&hseq=24743.

Lessons Learned and Next Steps

Gender equality is critical to the growth of nations and the development and stability of societies. In addition, there is a strong moral case for closing gender gaps. Although the barriers to female participation differ depending on the context, clear themes can be observed across countries according to the relative degree to which women are participating in education and the opportunities they have to apply their skills in employment.

The Gender Parity Task Force model was designed for countries with relatively high rates of female educational attainment and relatively low levels of female economic participation, i.e. countries with an abundance of talent to be integrated into the labour market. These countries will benefit economically by increasing female participation at all levels of employment, thereby generating a greater labour market return on their investment in female education. The four pilot task force countries were selected because they currently sit within this category.

The model, however, could equally be applied to countries which have already attained relatively high levels of female economic participation, and where the business case for advancing gender parity is focused on specific points along the talent pipeline; for example, increasing the number of women leaders to obtain a 'diversity dividend'¹⁸ or the numbers of women entering growth industries. In countries such as these, a task force tailored towards collaboratively closing the stubborn and specific workplace gender gaps that remain would be most effective.

For countries with low female educational attainment rates, however, an approach strongly targeted at improving access to K-12 and tertiary education is critical given a lack of skills acts as a major initial barrier to economic participation. This education and skills-focused approach would also apply to countries with low female educational attainment and high female employment, as women in these countries are often caught in low-wage, low-skill jobs and would first require additional education and training to progress along the talent pipeline.

Although each of the Gender Parity Task Forces has tailored its approach to suit its particular needs, the basic infrastructure and principle of building collaboration between the public and private sectors and across and within different industries has proved effective. As these were pilots, the Forum has sought to assess what aspects of this

model have worked well so far and where improvements could be made, and is making these lessons available here:

Key lessons learned

- 1. Communicate the economic case for gender parity:** To maximize a task force's impact, the economic and social rationale for increasing female economic participation should be clearly articulated from the start and throughout. Although today the business case for gender parity is more widely understood, many employers have yet to turn awareness into action, suggesting a lack of urgency. Providing a company's senior leadership, its employees and society at large with a strong economic case for narrowing the gender gap supports a company's transition to action and helps reduce resistance to change. Many of the companies involved in the four pilot task forces reported that maintaining focus on the business case and working to overcome scepticism from existing employees was important for the success of their initiatives.
- 2. Define task force objectives early and create a shared sense of mission:** Generating impact is linked to developing a clear plan of action in the initial stage of the task force. This plan should be based on a sound understanding of the particular issues and barriers affecting female economic participation in the country and in the companies and industries involved. The Forum's ongoing gender and employment analysis and insights can contribute to this understanding. Building a shared sense of mission among those involved in the task force, both public and private sector, allows members to feel they are taking action within a supportive environment. Ensuring members coalesce around a defined set of goals also increases the likelihood of members advocating for the task force and its ambitions externally, thereby attracting new members and raising awareness of the issues.
- 3. Ensure objectives are measurable and progress is systematically tracked:** Pledging to support efforts to narrow the gender gap is a good first step, but on its own is not enough; significant change comes from linking such company and public sector pledges to measurable and realistic objectives. Increasing female participation and progression within a company or industry requires a holistic approach and an honest assessment of current business and HR practices. This can be done effectively within the framework of the task force, but it needs to be encouraged. Similarly, the ongoing monitoring of progress being made through the

¹⁸ Companies with top quartile representation of women in executive committees in general perform better than companies with no women at the top, by some estimates with a 47% average return on equity. Links exist between having more women directors and corporate sustainability, as well as with economic growth. See: World Economic Forum, *The Case for Gender Equality*, 2015, <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2015/the-case-for-gender-equality>.

implementation of commitments and practices helps to ensure impact, through these actions themselves and through the sharing of knowledge regarding what works.

- 4. Structure the task force to withstand political and business cycles:** Initial decisions regarding key positions within the task force (such as co-chairs) should be taken with a consideration of business cycles and upcoming political events and elections. Care should also be taken to form a committed and influential steering committee and working group comprising public and private sector figures, because these groups, if well-constructed, can play a crucial role in driving the task force forward and implementing agreed initiatives. These groups can also provide useful continuity should the leadership of the task force need to change.
- 5. Build a broad base of support and stakeholders:** Although the task forces are formally structured to bring together public and business leaders, it is important not to underestimate the importance of other actors in the gender space, notably the media, academics, civil society and labour organizations. It is recommended that the task force steering committee and/or working group contains representatives of these groups in order to ensure activity is transparent, awareness is raised and grassroots organizations can feed in their views and experiences to allow for a richer discussion of the task force's chosen objectives.
- 6. Encourage sector-level collaboration and learning:** Just as the task force model offers a platform for public-private collaborations, it also offers a valuable opportunity for companies within an industry to share experiences and learn from each other. Companies working in the same sector in the same country very often face similar challenges when it comes to attracting, maintaining and progressing female talent. By sharing strategies and working together to devise and implement new approaches, a greater impact can be achieved. To be effective, this requires companies to set aside notions of competitive advantage and instead to recognize the shared benefits that can be achieved by working collaboratively to meet their current and future talent needs.

Next steps

As highlighted above, the task forces have provided a much needed infrastructure for collaboration across sectors and industries and a neutral platform for the discussion and exploration of strategies to advance economic gender parity. In all cases, the pilot task forces have had a positive effect and it is clear from those involved that the work begun over the last three years (or two years in the case of Korea) will continue in those countries. In each case, the task force model has been applied differently, with Korea favouring a structure of pledges in return for advice and support, Turkey developing a guide and set of principles for each member to follow, Mexico focusing on shifting workplace culture and attitudes and the tracking of commitments via surveys, and Japan opting for a looser structure led by business associations with a broad reach and specific expertise. The unifying principles, however, have been leadership from the

public and private sectors, collaboration, the sharing of best practices and building common objectives.

To answer the growing demand for progress on economic gender parity, the task force model offers an effective and proven approach for taking action. Learning from the lessons identified above, there is now a huge opportunity for this model to be scaled in new regions and countries. The World Economic Forum is now engaged in discussions with other actors to apply this model in partnership elsewhere, using the expertise and presence on the ground of multilateral development banks combined with the Forum's support at the outset of a task force through guidance on leadership and membership, structure, action plans and best practices.

The Gender Parity Task Forces have demonstrated that through country-level collaboration real, positive change can occur. The Forum now looks forward to working with others to realize the potential of this model, to help move the needle on economic gender parity, and to prepare countries for the new opportunities for female employment presented by the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

Acknowledgements

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