

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT PRINCIPLES

AUGUST 2022

WEPs IN ACTION



PRINCIPLE 2

Treat all women and men fairly at work – respect and support human rights and nondiscrimination

Contents

1. Context
2. Actions
3. Challenges
4. Results
5. Recommendations

CASE STUDY: DIGI TELECOMMUNICATIONS EXTENDED MATERNITY LEAVE: AN OPPORTUNITY FOR MOTHERS AND COMPANIES

LESSONS LEARNED

- Investing in female employees before, during and after having a child proves beneficial for new mothers and the company itself.
- While diversity is crucial in an organisation, inclusivity is where real difference is made – in recognising the different needs of a diverse workforce

CONTEXT

Digi is a leading digital connectivity and services company, empowering societies and connecting customers to what matters most by prioritising connectivity delivery safely, reliably and efficiently across Malaysia. Shaped by a culture of innovation, Digi has solid fundamentals in digitalisation, workplace & people development, and responsible business practices.

Digi aspires to build an organisation with a friendly and conducive workplace, providing their “Digizens” (employees) equal opportunity to contribute and freedom to do their best for the company and their families. Diversity & Inclusion is a key driver & basis across all levels in accelerating business performance in Digi and is one of the core pillars under its Responsible Business strategy. According to Bloomberg’s Gender-Equality Index 2020, Digi Telecommunications is the first Malaysian corporate in global indices for exemplary gender equality and inclusion stan-

dards with 100% disclosure score, above global and country average.

While diversity is crucial in the organisation, inclusivity is where real difference is made – in recognising and adapting to the different needs of their diverse workforce, which includes working mothers.



ACTIONS

6-month maternity leave

Digi demonstrates their responsibility by investing in their female employees while supporting them at a crucial point in their lives - becoming mothers. As part of empowering and supporting female employees, Digi instituted a 6-month maternity leave policy in 2016, being the first of its kind in Malaysia, especially as the national Employment Act only stipulated 60 days. Digi regards that new mothers would need more than the typical 2 to 3 months to truly bond with their baby, take care of themselves and fully recover post-delivery.

This initiative, alongside other flexibilities and benefits, enables mothers to care for their newborns in the critical first few months and reduce stress and anxiety of separation from their baby, while having job security and the opportunity to return to work refreshed.

While there was no particular challenge, gap or limitation per se that inspired this initiative, Digi saw this as a big opportunity that would contribute towards retaining women in the workforce and attracting top talent. Even with the statutory 2-months maternity leave prior to 2016, Digi offered its employees an option of extending their maternity leave by another two months, with the company covering this additional leave at half-pay. The positive feedback and benefits the company saw from this optional extension inspired them to go a step further and launch the new 6-month leave policy.

CHALLENGES

The biggest challenge was in operationalising the policy and ensuring business continuity for the teams whose members would be away for 6-months. It required a lot of discussions with employees and leaders to understand different scenarios, unique challenges, and overall feasibility. These factors were all taken into careful consideration, notably for leaders who required considerable assistance in planning ahead for their teams.

Upon thorough discussions with various stakeholders, Digi conquered the challenges with substantial planning on the available support and potential redistribution of tasks to existing team members, as well as cross-collaboration efforts within different departments and divisions.

RESULTS

For the female employee going on maternity leave, this presented her the assurance that her responsibilities would be managed and planned for, while at the same time she could be fully immersed in

Knowing well ahead that operational challenges would arise from deploying the new initiative, several key aspects were considered in advance, such as the process for hiring replacement employees and the operational costs that would entail, as well as the necessary support and guidance for smooth transition of business.

It took considerable planning and coordination, but the foundation started with the top leadership's commitment in building a workplace culture that prioritises diversity and inclusion. While the initiative was driven by the Human Resources department, different stakeholders contributed towards its shaping, especially when first launched. Insights were acquired from Digi's leadership teams, people managers, and other employees including mothers.

The initiative has been running successfully since 2016, proving its long-term sustainability. Upon launching, the teams in charge monitored the operation to ensure that the mothers, their teams and people managers received adequate support.

For example, every team plans well in advance for reassignment of tasks and provides capacity or capability building for the employee who will take on the roles of the mother-to-be. Progress of the initiative was thoroughly monitored when first launched to identify any underlying gaps and develop potential solutions, and success measured through the ability of stakeholders to execute it in a coherent manner with minimal operational disruptions.

Where that wasn't a considerable internal option for work cover, Digi brought in external hires on a contract basis to ensure the workloads of other teams were carefully considered. This unique solution presented the opportunity for "Digizens" to engage with external talents who brought fresh industry perspectives.

"I was able to have plenty of rest and be carefree while caring for my baby. This benefit allowed me to fully breastfeed and bond with my baby for 6 months and at the same time, I was stress-free from thinking about our finances."

– Gurdeep Kaur, Senior, Accounting & Finance Transformation.

her new role as a mother without having to worry about work. It also meant that there was an additional peace of mind knowing that she would still have a role in the organisation upon her return.

TIMELINE



Apart from directly benefiting mothers, this policy accelerated collaboration among teams in Digi, providing an opportunity for colleagues to be agile, step in as a substitute and elevate their learning experience and exposure to different scopes of work.

Approximately 135 mothers in Digi have benefitted from this policy since its inception in 2016, with 116 of them continuing to grow in their careers to-date. A total of 21 mothers have since been promoted in their roles, a testament that Digi is a place in which women can build careers, fill the ranks of the organisation's leadership and play key roles in the business, all while building and supporting their own families.

Upon the initiative's introduction, 45% of Digi's workforce were women while the company's Board had 43% female representation,

exceeding Malaysia's target of 30% women participation in Boards of Public Listed Companies (PLCs).

As of June 2022, the initiative contributed to Digi's achievement of a 50-50 gender balance in their workforce. Additionally, the leadership team (up to C-2 level) comprises 45% females while the Digi Board is gender-balanced with 50-50 representation.

Digi acknowledges that there's always room for continuous improvement and seeks to enhance the initiative by strengthening the handover process and increasing the support given for replacement employees.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Incorporating Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) into the organisational philosophy. Driving the D&I agenda and building awareness across the organisation has helped Digi's business growth, attracted a diverse talent pool and facilitated the implementation of new, relevant initiatives.

Acquire participation of the top management. The company decision makers play key roles in advocating for the investment and building a diverse and inclusive culture.

Shaping a corporate culture invested in D&I is one of the contributing factors to the success of the policy. The whole organisation has to play a role through their support and buy-in, without which implementing such initiatives would be impossible.

Digi acknowledges the **importance of knowledge transfer and building capacity for organisational agility** - especially for the expectant mother going on leave and returning post-maternity. For the manager, their team and the business, it allows them to become comfortable with the abrupt changes, assist the substitute employee in taking over to reduce potential gaps, and support the mother once she returns.

The systematic transfer of knowledge becomes crucial in providing all parties the necessary information and skills to support the mother's needs without much strain to fill in the gaps.

Operationalising the 6-months maternity leave policy.

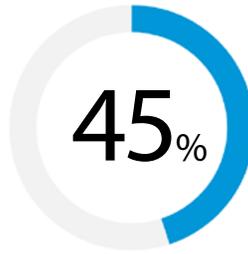
Ensuring business continuity for the teams whose members will be away.

Substantial planning on the available support and redistribution of tasks to existing team members.

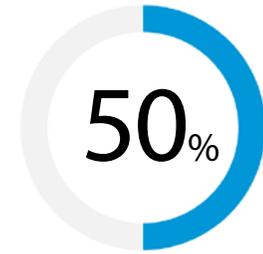
External hires on a contract basis were introduced to ensure work loads of other teams are managed.

127

Approximate number of mothers in Digi's workforce have benefitted from this policy



Percentage of women in Digi's leadership team (up to C-2 level)



Percentage of women in Digi's Board of Directors



THE ROLE OF WEPs

Signing the WEPs further reinstates Digi's continuous commitment to gender equality in the workplace, which has been their strength. It reinforces an important message that Digi will continue their responsibility towards Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) for employees, customers and society at large. As a WEPs Signatory, Digi plays the role of advocates who continuously work to do better and cultivate an organisational culture that appreciates Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DE&I), thus creating an equal, engaged and empowered workplace

- Principle 1  Establish high-level corporate leadership for gender equality.
- Principle 2  Treat all women and men fairly at work– respect and support human rights and nondiscrimination.
- Principle 3  Ensure the health, safety and well-being of all women and men workers.
- Principle 4  Promote education, training and professional development for women.
- Principle 5  Implement enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practices that empower women.
- Principle 6  Promote equality through community initiatives and advocacy.
- Principle 7  Measure and publicly report on progress to achieve gender equality.

#WeEmpowerAsia



weps.org



Women's Empowerment Principles



@WEPrinciples



weps@unwomen.org



United Nations' Women's Empowerment Principles



@UNWomenAsia

Funded by:



European Union

Produced by:



Funded by the European Union



In support of:

**WOMEN'S
EMPOWERMENT
PRINCIPLES**

Established by UN Women and the UN Global Compact Office

DISCLAIMER: The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the European Union, UN Women or the United Nations