

TOGETHER WE CAN+



Economic Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities & Sexual and Gender Minorities

Together We Can Plus (TWC+) benefitted 12 companies in Sri Lanka through concrete actions on inclusion of persons with disabilities and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) people. The partnership offered an opportunity for a group of leading Sri Lankan companies to learn, share knowledge, and make commitments to promote more inclusive workplaces, products, and services.

Over the course of 18 months, IFC, through the TWC+ partnership, supported 12 companies to take 65 actions to advance opportunities for persons with disabilities and/or LGBTI persons. Actions ranged from raising awareness on disability and/or LGBTI inclusion, adapting company policies and procedures on recruitment, to partnering with community organizations to build a pipeline for inclusive hiring. In doing so, 66 percent of the companies realized positive business impacts. These included increased employee satisfaction, increased employee safety at work, access to new markets, and reduced absenteeism.

In partnership with





Image courtesy: MAS Holdings

Participating Companies

TWC+ companies represent diverse sectors including manufacturing, financial institutions, software and digital services, IT and business operations.

Participating companies were: Brandix Lanka Limited, Ceylon Biscuits Limited, DFCC Bank PLC, Fortude (Pvt) Ltd, Heineken Lanka Limited, HSBC Global Service Centre Colombo, IFS Sri Lanka, John Keells Holdings PLC, MAS Holdings, Nestlé Lanka PLC, SLASSCOM and Unilever Sri Lanka.

Image courtesy: MAS Holdings



Disability and LGBTI Inclusion: The Sri Lankan Context

Persons with disabilities make up around 15 percent of the world's population. Estimates suggest that the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) population is a similar amount.

In Sri Lanka, persons with disabilities make up approximately 8.7 percent of the population. Despite Sri Lanka's 2016 ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), persons with disabilities in Sri Lanka continue to face significant obstacles accessing education, health, transport, economic participation and employment. As a result of systemic physical, informational, communication and attitudinal barriers, 84 percent of persons with disabilities are economically inactive.

LGBTI persons have historically faced significant barriers, including in Sri Lanka. However, we are seeing progress such as the Sri Lankan Supreme Court's recent ruling on a proposed bill seeking to decriminalize homosexuality. The Supreme Court's decision that the proposed bill is not unconstitutional is a significant step in the direction to realize the rights of LGBTI persons and clears the path for lawmakers to legislate the decriminalization of homosexuality.

The business and development case

for inclusion of persons with disabilities and LGBTI persons points to significant impacts on corporate culture and performance including:

Increased business performance: Disability inclusive companies see a **28 percent higher revenue, double net income and 30 percent profit margin increase**¹, whilst LGBTI-inclusive companies consistently outperform the equity market.

Untapped talent pool: Given the estimated proportion of persons with disabilities and LGBTI people in Sri Lanka who are unemployed, the size and potential of the untapped talent pool is significant. In addition, diverse and inclusive workplaces are more innovative, productive and have higher retention rates.

Market sizing:

- Consumers with disabilities constitute a market of **\$1.9 trillion USD in annual disposable income globally**²
- A conservative estimate of five percent of the global LGBTI population is estimated to deliver \$4-5 trillion USD in purchasing power (LGBT Great, 2021).³
- Accessible and inclusive products appeal to and benefit multiple consumer groups including older people, persons with temporary injuries, pregnant women and children.

The development case: Access to goods and services and inclusion in the workforce enable persons with disabilities and LGBTI persons to be active in the economy, generating value to individuals, companies, and societies, and creating a win-win-win for all involved.

¹ Accenture. Getting to Equal 2018: The Disability Inclusion Advantage. Pg 6.

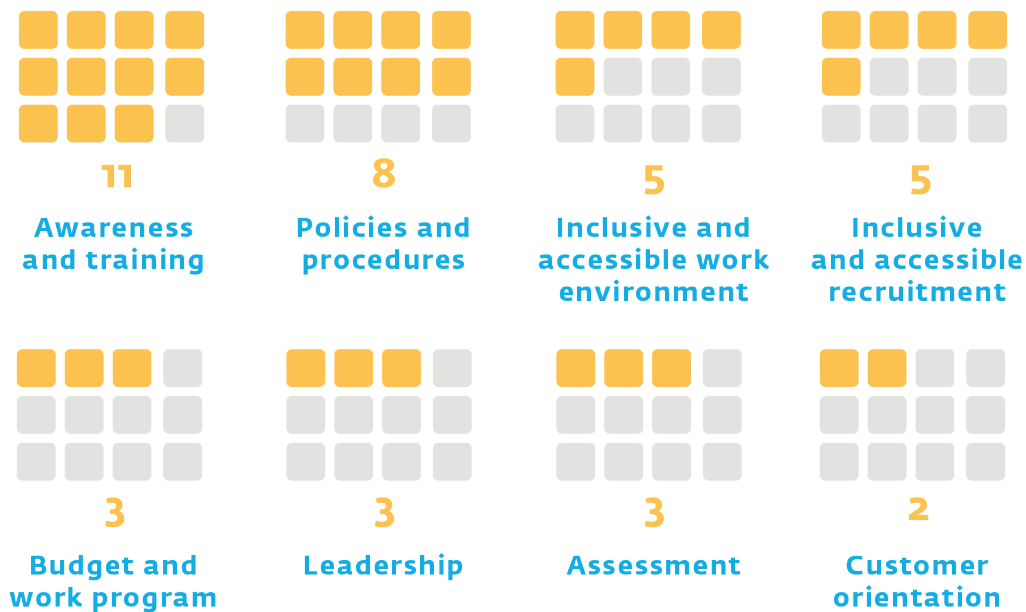
² Return on Disability. 2020 Annual Report: The Global Economics of Disability. Pg 12.

³ LGBT Capital. 2020. Estimated LGBT Purchasing Power: LGBT-GDP.

Company Actions to Advance Disability and/or LGBTI Inclusion

Through the TWC+ partnership, companies made progress on a minimum of three actions to advance the inclusion of persons with disabilities and LGBTI persons, collectively progressing 65 actions across eight priority areas:

NUMBER OF COMPANIES TAKING ACTION IN EACH PRIORITY AREA



01. Internal Assessments

Three companies conducted internal assessments to identify gaps and opportunities for strengthening workplace inclusion. For example, John Keells Holdings PLC conducted an Employee Needs and Perceptions Assessment which supported the development of the Disability Inclusion Roadmap. Action was also taken by Fortude (Pvt.) Ltd to conduct an internal gap analysis on LGBTI inclusion.

“As a member of TWC+, Fortude **was able to venture into the LGBTI aspect of D&I (diversity and inclusion) for the first time.** We were able to take this step, despite the challenging local environment due to the panel of knowledge experts that IFC had on board to help us meet the selected commitments and provide guidance.”

Fortude (Pvt) Ltd

“Further to the learnings from the TWC+ program, we have now set out a formalized roadmap to help us better understand the expectations of our businesses, our people, and our future talent and also to find solutions to address any identified gaps to provide reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities to be recruited, retained and supported, so that they can perform at their best.”

John Keells Holdings PLC

02 ■ Raising Awareness

Eleven companies took action to increase awareness and train staff on the inclusion of persons with disabilities and LGBTI persons. These actions included:

CBL Group conducted awareness sessions for Human Resource (HR) personnel to strengthen inclusive recruitment of persons with disabilities

Development of an E-Learning module by DFCC Bank for disability inclusion training of its employees.

Brandix conducted awareness training sessions for all staff to increase understanding and address unconscious bias and discriminatory attitudes towards LGBTI persons

IFS Sri Lanka engaged with community organizations to raise awareness and help their employees understand the challenges faced by LGBTI persons

03 ■ Leadership Commitment

To ensure the success and sustainability of inclusion efforts, three TWC+ companies took steps to secure commitment from leadership. Research by Accenture points to the business benefits seen by companies led by leaders engaged on disability inclusion. These benefits include growing sales 2.9 times faster and profits 4.1

times faster than their peers.⁴ During the course of the partnership, SLASSCOM, Brandix and Unilever each identified a senior leader to drive inclusion within the company and be internally visible to staff on their commitment to inclusion.

04 ■ Enhancing Policies and Procedures

Eight TWC+ companies introduced policies and procedures to foster the inclusion of LGBTI persons and persons with disabilities. During the partnership, companies took steps to identify gaps and opportunities in existing policies and procedures or establish new policies and accompanying processes to build more inclusive workplaces. In the case of DFCC, during the TWC+ partnership, the bank formulated a diversity, equality and inclusion policy and took steps to disseminate it internally on their intranet and via the development of an E-learning module. Fortude developed an Equal Employment Opportunity statement which was incorporated into job advertisements across the company's website and social media platforms. Building on this action, Fortude also plans to update their existing regional employee handbooks to ensure the inclusion of persons with disabilities and LGBTI persons.

“

Partnering with IFC's Together We Can Plus initiative and peer learning collaboration helped us understand where we are in our journey to build an inclusive and equitable environment throughout our value chain. The program supported us to review our policies and procedures and to identify the distance that we need to go to achieve our goals.”

Ceylon Biscuits Limited

⁴ Accenture. *Enabling Change, Getting to Equal 2020: Disability Inclusion*. Pg 15.

05 ■ Budget and Work Program

Three companies took steps to ensure that their commitments to inclusion were supported with adequate budget and resources and monitored through the development of work programs.

One example includes MAS Holdings' efforts to ensure that a significant budget for the inclusion of persons with disabilities was set aside. This enabled the engagements with sign language interpreters to increase accessibility in the workplace for employees who are deaf or hard of hearing. The company's budget allocation also facilitated the provision of outbound trainings for employees with disabilities and Supported Employment Officers. The object

of these trainings were to equip staff with the expertise needed to support recruitments of persons with disabilities, accessibility audits, vocational profiling, and inclusive career progression at MAS Holdings.

Another success story comes from Unilever who was able to secure a dedicated budget for activities to advance the inclusion of persons with disabilities and LGBTI persons, despite the business challenges resulting from COVID-19 and the economic situation in Sri Lanka. The company's budget allocation facilitated the development of a strategy on the inclusion of persons with disabilities and the rollout of a survey on disability inclusion.

06 ■ Inclusive and Accessible Work Environment

TWC+ supported five companies to grow their understanding and take action to establish more inclusive and accessible work environments through the use of inclusive language, provision of reasonable

accommodation and ensuring accessible physical and digital workplaces. During the partnership, the following actions were taken by companies:

DFCC Bank conducted accessibility audits of their main buildings

John Keells Holdings PLC developed a road-map which included identifying infrastructure changes, and identifying job roles that can be performed by persons with disabilities when provided with reasonable accommodation across all industry sectors.

Fortude offers LGBTI-friendly measures and benefits, including senior management's public advocacy for LGBTI persons in conferences and forums, and usage of inclusive language across internal and public-facing communications material such as job advertisements and website.

An Employees with disabilities Resource Group (ERG) was launched to create a mutually supportive company culture by one TWC+ company.

07 Inclusive and Accessible Recruitment

Five companies took action to make their recruitment policies and processes more inclusive and accessible for persons with disabilities and LGBTI persons.

As an employer with over 450 persons with disabilities within their inclusive and diverse workforce, MAS has taken significant steps to improve their recruitment practices. To achieve this objective, MAS has partnered with Enable Lanka, a community organization dedicated to empowering persons with disabilities in Sri Lanka. This partnership aims to enhance the recruitment process and create better opportunities for individuals with disabilities. Additionally, MAS has made a strong commitment to providing systematic support to employees with disabilities. They have implemented a Supported Employment (SE) Process, which involved the training of approximately 15 SE Officers. These officers play a crucial role in closely collaborating with employees with disabilities, offering support from the recruitment stage all the way through to on-boarding and throughout their employment journey.

To ensure that jobseekers with disabilities are aware of and able to access the company's online platform, SLASSCOM worked with Enable Lanka to reach out to persons with disabilities. The company is committed to ensuring that their platform is accessible and aims to improve accessibility of the platform by seeking feedback from persons with disabilities.

In partnership with Employment Support for Persons with Disabilities (ESPD), a joint venture between the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the Department of Social Services in Sri Lanka, John Keells Holdings PLC has successfully connected persons with disabilities with roles within their transportation sector in the integrated logistics business. The company continues to commit to disability inclusive recruitment by training and appointing Supported Employment Officers who are trained to identify roles, respond to requests for reasonable accommodation and identify changes required to improve accessibility in the workplace.

Image courtesy: MAS Holdings





Images courtesy: JKH

ONE JKH

Sri Lanka's largest listed conglomerate John Keells Holdings PLC (JKH) encompasses over 70 companies across eight diverse industries in the country. In 2020 the Group launched 'ONE JKH' to consolidate its diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives under one brand. ONE JKH commitments are structured in the three focus areas of increasing female participation in the workforce and value chains, increasing career opportunities for persons with disabilities, and ensuring inclusivity of the LGBTI community.

Through TWC+, aligned with ONE JKH, the organization developed a policy for supported employment. They also developed a strategic approach towards meeting global benchmarks of economic inclusion of persons with disabilities. Some highlights are:

- Developing a phased roadmap to increase accessibility in the physical and digital workplace;
- Advancing inclusive recruitment and retention through the appointment of Supported Employment Officers and the identification of job roles that can be fulfilled by persons with disabilities with a range of impairments, when provided with reasonable accommodation.
- Working closely with the program Employment Support for Persons with Disabilities (ESPD) – a joint venture between the Japan International Cooperation

Agency (JICA) and the Department of Social Services – to match jobseekers with disabilities with available vacancies at the Group. This has resulted in the first batch of placements to the JKH logistics and warehouse business.

JKH is also working to expand the services offered to clients with disabilities. For example, destination management company Walkers Tours is positioning itself as Sri Lanka's first tour company for accessibility tourism, upgrading its vehicle fleet to meet global standards of passenger access.

In 2015, JKH took a public stance by becoming the first Sri Lankan corporate to be formally inclusive of the LGBTI community. This was achieved through revisions to all people-related policies specifically for the non-discrimination of LGBTI persons, which was then mainstreamed through mandatory, annual awareness sessions. The awareness sessions are now offered as e-modules available to all staff in Sinhala, Tamil, and English languages. The awareness sessions were designed in consultation with local non-governmental organizations. JKH is a vocal corporate ally throughout the year for the LGBTI community, advocating the need for respect and inclusion irrespective of a person's gender identity or sexual orientation and the need to repeal laws that discriminate against LGBTI persons in Sri Lanka.



'ONE JKH' represents our Group's approach towards valuing diversity in our workforce and that Life at JKH is inclusive. Irrespective of our race, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, age and ability, at JKH, we are ONE.

Gender Parity | Differently Abled | LGBTIQ



08 ■ Customer Orientation

Beyond workplace inclusion of persons with disabilities and LGBTI persons, two companies took action to address the needs of consumers with disabilities and LGBTI consumers:



Fortude revised company communication and commercial materials to ensure LGBTI-inclusive language and representation.

JKH supported the gender transition of an employee in a customer-facing role, with awareness sessions for the team through external resource persons, sensitizing clients and also providing the requested leave for the transition process.

MAS Holdings fosters disability inclusion in the design and manufacturing of apparel, including sporting and intimate apparel. In order to ensure that the products meet the needs of consumers with disabilities, MAS engages with persons with disabilities, caregivers and subject matter experts in the design of products.

LABLE> by MAS

MAS Holdings is a global apparel tech conglomerate providing concept-to-delivery solutions for the world's leading apparel brands. Headquartered in Sri Lanka, MAS has over 50 manufacturing facilities employing over 120,000 people.



Lable> equips clothing brands across the world to cater to anyone with disability, challenging the idea that one form fits all. Lable> proves that inclusivity can expand markets while empowering our customers."

Ranil Vitarana,
Chief Innovation Officer
MAS Holdings

MAS ventured into adaptive wear in 2018 when approached by a client to produce clothing for persons with disabilities. Quick to recognize the global potential and market gap in adaptive apparel, MAS established the Adaptive Centre of Excellence (ACoE) to conceptualize, design, test and manufacture inclusive clothing. This resulted in the launch of Lable>, an adaptive clothing brand that's inclusive and accessible to anyone with a permanent disability or temporary setback.

MAS employs over 450 persons with disabilities, who have become key contributors to the design of new adaptive wear. As co-creators and validators of products, employees with disabilities engage in bi-monthly meetings with design teams. "We noticed increased confidence in the group after they had access to these adaptive clothing. They went from being passive consumers to proactive contributors in the design process," says Suleik Mushin, Team Lead at Lable>. MAS also partnered with the Sri Lankan Paralympics team to further expand their product offerings across intimates, loungewear, activewear & swimwear.



Hope Cookies by Ceylon Biscuits

Ceylon Biscuits Limited (CBL), a leading confectionery manufacturer in Sri Lanka, produces 'Hope' cookies at Sahana Sevana or Shelter of Solace, where eighteen neurodivergent persons are employed. Sahana Sevana was established in 2010 with the goal of providing dignified employment for persons with disabilities.

The thriving manufacturing plant has won a number of certifications, including the ISO 22000:2005 Food Safety Management System and ISO 9001:2015 Quality Management System awards.

Inclusive of work-related training like artisan cookie manufacturing, employees receive guidance and support on communication, travel, and teamwork.

“

We developed a system for Sahana Sevana team members to note down their daily activities in a log-book, with the support of their caregiver. This has enabled us to communicate with non-verbal members of the team, and ensure their comfort and wellbeing.”

Anusha Fernando
Project Manager Sahana Sevana

Images courtesy: Ceylon Biscuits



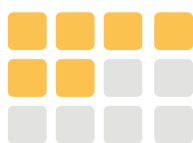
In addition to developing their work-related capacities, team members are supported to develop independence and self-reliance in daily activities, such as travel to and from work. Today, the Sahana Sevana team members are gainfully employed members of their communities.

All profits generated from the sales of Hope Cookies are reinvested by CBL into Sahana Sevana's upkeep and expansion.

Business Benefits

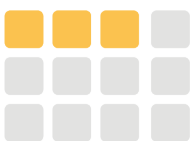
Sixty-six percent of participating companies reported business level impacts because of their participation in TWC+. Half reported increased employee safety at work and one quarter reported increased employee satisfaction.

NUMBER OF COMPANIES REPORTING BUSINESS LEVEL IMPACTS AS A RESULT OF TWC+ PARTNERSHIP



6

Increased employee safety at work



3

Increased employee satisfaction



2

Increased access to new markets



1

Cost savings due to reduced absenteeism

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Through our new policies and values practices employees feel more empowered.”

Brandix

“

“(Business-level impacts include) Recognition for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at Reuters awards, enhanced problem-solving and innovation, broader customer base and compliance with legal requirements.”

MAS Holdings

Image courtesy: MAS Holdings



Increased Knowledge and Understanding

All individual participants reported improving their knowledge, awareness and practices relating to disability and LGBTI inclusion because of their participation in the TWC+ partnership. Eight companies reported improving their knowledge and understanding of policies and practices to support disability and LGBTI inclusion as a result of their participation in the peer learning collaboration.

“

The understanding and appreciation of the challenges experienced by persons with disabilities in finding meaningful employment and career progression has improved exponentially. **As a result, we have made active efforts to engage with external institutions and have been able to provide more opportunities to persons with disabilities.** We have reviewed and revised our policies, documentation and hiring material and (made) improvements to ensure more inclusive language. We are currently working on an accessibility audit for our main buildings. Overall, **we are satisfied with the progress. However, we do acknowledge that this is a journey, and we are committed to continue our focus in this area and continue to improve in offering meaningful employment and inclusive opportunities for all.**

DFCC Bank

Setting Up for Success

Senior leadership buy-in is a key determining factor in the success of a company's inclusion journey. Within the TWC+ partnership, companies took steps to engage senior leadership by raising awareness, communicating the business case and assessment findings. Companies also sought out senior leaders who were willing to be role models for disability and/or LGBTI inclusion within the company and externally by communicating the company's commitments and efforts on inclusion.

Engagement with local organizations is an important factor to support companies in their implementation and ongoing efforts beyond the peer learning collaboration.

- o The participation of local organizations such as Enable Lanka and Equal Ground in TWC+ learning sessions led to companies collaborating with the organizations to deepen their engagement and understanding of inclusion, improve recruitment practices and strengthen accessibility.

Engaging companies at various stages of their inclusion journey enables peer learning and support.

- o Participating companies reported that hearing from other TWC+ members during sessions helped them learn from other companies and made them aware of potential challenges and benefits.

- o Company-to-company collaboration extended beyond TWC+: Companies reached out and learnt directly from other participating companies about their LGBTI inclusion journey in the Sri Lankan context. Companies who were more mature in their disability inclusion journey also provided capacity building to others.

The private sector can play an important role in championing LGBTI inclusion even within challenging environments. Despite the lack of an enabling legislative environment, several companies made commitments to advance inclusion of LGBTI persons.



Image courtesy: MAS Holdings



Images courtesy: Ceylon Biscuits

Together We Can Plus (TWC+)

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Creating Markets, Creating Opportunities