Appendix G: Public-Private Cooperation for Gender Equality

Despite the growing interest in gender parity issues, 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 ongoing 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 World Economic Forum and its constituents launched the Gender Parity Task Force model. This model supports the analysis of gender gaps in the local workforce and the development and implementation of shared strategies to narrow these gaps. In 2012, three pilot task forces were launched in Mexico, Japan and Turkey, and a fourth in Korea, Rep. in 2014, and 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 Gender Parity Task Force model is designed to encourage the co-leadership of activity by public and private sector leaders, supported by 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.

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. 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. Across all four of these countries the Gender Parity Task Forces have made a significant positive impact, proving 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. The Forum is now exploring options to scale this model with multilateral development agencies, including regional development banks and governments and national organizations wishing to use this model to pursue country-level action. As a first step, in 2016, the World Economic Forum and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) have established a new Gender Parity Task Force in Chile.

Reference