

Concept Note: Jordan Diversity Trailblazer's Award

Promoting Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in the Jordanian Private Sector

Introduction

The participation of women in the labor force is a critical driver of economic development and social progress in any country. In Jordan, despite significant strides in women's educational attainment and professional training, their labor force participation rates remain notably low. Leveraging Jordan's underutilized female economic talent is essential for the country's economic growth. As employers, Jordan's private sector plays a pivotal role in bringing women into the workforce, supporting their careers throughout various life stages—including marriage and childbearing—and promoting them into leadership positions.

To recognize and celebrate employers in Jordan who are leading by example—and to inspire others to follow suit—IFC is introducing an annual award for the second year in a row: the Jordan Diversity Trailblazer Award 2026.

Problem Statement

Women in Jordan face numerous barriers that hinder their workforce participation. Despite high levels of education and professional qualifications, the labor force participation rate for women remains significantly lower than that of men. According to the World Bank, as of 2024, the female labor force participation rate in Jordan was approximately 17.5%, compared to 64% for men. This disparity stems from a combination of socio-cultural norms, workplace discrimination and inadequacies, the absence of supportive national and company policies, and inadequate childcare facilities. These factors collectively lead to the underutilization of a highly educated and capable segment of the population, ultimately limiting the country's economic growth and development potential.

The employment barriers are complex and interconnected. Addressing these challenges requires collaboration among private sector employers, policymakers, and other stakeholders. Employers, in particular, play a critical role through workplace policies and workplace infrastructure that attract, support, retain, and promote women in their workforce. Some good practices already exist within the Jordanian private sector, and highlighting these examples is essential. Recognizing and rewarding employers who champion gender equality through an annual award not only motivates them to continue and expand such initiatives but also encourages others in the business community to adopt these practices, fostering widespread change.

Proven Track Record: IFC's Experience in Jordan (2025) and Pakistan (2024)

- The concept of awarding employers for their efforts in promoting gender equality has been successfully implemented in Pakistan. In 2018, IFC partnered with the Pakistan

Business Council (PBC)—the country’s leading private sector organization, whose member companies contribute to over 60% of Pakistan’s GDP—to introduce the annual “Employer of Choice for Gender Balance Award.” This award recognizes companies that have made significant strides in advancing gender equality in the workplace. Now in its fourth year, the 2024 award recognized three companies from nearly fifty participants. The number of companies participating in the award grew from less than 20 in its inaugural year (2018) to nearly 50 in 2024.

- In Jordan, IFC partnered in 2025 with the Amman Stock Exchange (ASE) to replicate the award, attracting over 60 applicant companies and recognizing three winners (Gold, Silver, and Bronze), alongside sector-specific recognitions.

The impact of the IFC-ASE Diversity Trailblazer Award has been substantial:

- **Policy Implementation:** Many companies competing for the award introduced new policies to enhance their chances of winning the award, such as flexible working hours, extended parental leave, and anti-discrimination training.
- **Visibility and Cultural Shift:** The award has significantly elevated the visibility of gender equality within Jordan’s private sector, fostering a cultural shift. With the annual replication of this award, it is expected that many more companies will follow suit, increasingly recognizing the business case for gender diversity and proactively creating more inclusive workplaces.

Strategic Partnerships and Outreach

To compete for the award, companies in Jordan must submit an application. IFC will actively promote the application process within the private sector through an outreach campaign. To maximize its reach, IFC will establish a strategic partnership with a prominent member-based institution in Jordan such as the Amman Stock Exchange (ASE). This collaboration enables IFC to engage a broader range of companies and encourage more applications from the private sector. Additionally, IFC will leverage its relationships with key business organizations in Jordan, including the Chamber of Commerce, AmCham Jordan, the Jordan Strategy Forum, and other industry associations. These partnerships allow IFC to:

- **Expand Outreach:** Leverage the extensive networks of these organizations to disseminate information about the award and encourage applications from a diverse range of companies.
- **Enhance Credibility:** Collaborate with well-respected organizations to enhance the credibility and visibility of the award, making it more appealing to potential applicants.

The target date for this year’s award is **07 April 2026.**