

Dilrukshi Kurukulasuriya on DIMO's Strategy for Equality at the Workplace

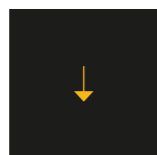
At DIMO, Gender Equality is a Core Strategy for Business Excellence

As an advocate for gender equality in the corporate sector, what strategies have you used to create real change at DIMO?

At DIMO, we approach gender equality as a fundamental aspect of our corporate culture, not as a peripheral initiative. We have taken a structured, long-term approach to drive real change that integrates gender equity into our policies, leadership decisions, and workplace culture. We have aligned ourselves with the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs), which provide a global framework for fostering gender equality in the workplace, marketplace, and broader community. These principles guide us in setting measurable goals and ensuring our strategies align with best practices worldwide.

One key measure we have implemented is introducing progressive policies that support work-life balance for all employees. We recognize that traditional parental leave policies often burden women unequally, so we have restructured them to be more inclusive. Paternity leave and parental leave for adoptive parents ensure that caregiving

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Dilrukshi Kurukulasuriya, Executive Director & Chief Human Resources Officer of DIMO, says DIMO has integrated gender equality into its corporate strategy with structured policies, leadership commitment, and data-driven progress in fostering inclusivity. DIMO actively challenges stereotypes, promotes workplace diversity, and sets measurable goals, demonstrating a long-term commitment to embedding gender equity into its organizational culture, Kurukulasuriya explains.



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Dilrukshi Kurukulasuriya
Executive Director &
Chief Human Resources Officer of DIMO

responsibilities are shared more equitably. By fostering an environment where men and women are encouraged to balance work and family life, we contribute to a culture that normalizes shared responsibilities at home and work.

Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) have been instrumental in creating gender-smart solutions tailored to our workforce. These groups, composed of male and female employees, provide a platform to address gender disparities in recruitment, career progression, and workplace culture. The ERGs at DIMO have played a significant role in refining our hiring practices, ensuring that we attract a diverse talent pool and remove systemic barriers to entry and retention. Additionally, they serve as a crucial mechanism for identifying and addressing workplace harassment, reinforcing our commitment to a safe and respectful working environment.

We have also made unconscious bias training mandatory across all levels of the organization. These sessions focus specifically on recruitment and promotions, ensuring that decisions are based purely on merit. This initiative has yielded measurable outcomes, with female representation in non-traditional roles increasing by 15% within a year. We see this as an ongoing process that requires continuous reinforcement to dismantle ingrained biases and drive lasting change.

What are the biggest barriers to gender equality, and how can organizations overcome them?

Cultural stereotypes continue to be one of the most significant barriers to gender equality. Societal expectations often limit women's career choices, steering them toward those traditionally per-

ceived as more suitable roles. These stereotypes, embedded from an early age, influence hiring decisions, promotions, and workplace dynamics, making it difficult for women to enter and advance in fields traditionally dominated by men. Overcoming this requires consciously challenging and reshaping these perceptions within organizations and society.

Workplace harassment remains another major obstacle. Many women

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leave the workforce or hesitate to advance in their careers due to unaddressed harassment. Establishing clear policies and robust reporting mechanisms is essential, but fostering a culture where employees feel

safe and supported in coming forward is equally important. At DIMO, we have implemented strict anti-harassment policies and taken proactive measures to create an environment where employees know they have leadership backing when they report misconduct.

Another critical challenge is unconscious bias in recruitment and promotions. Often, decision-makers unknowingly favour candidates who fit traditional leadership profiles, sidelining highly qualified women. Comprehensive training on recognizing and mitigating bias is essential to overcoming this hurdle. Organizations must also introduce accountability mechanisms to ensure equitable hiring and promotion decisions.

Why is gender equality critical to long-term business success, and how can companies prioritize it?

Gender diversity is not just a social imperative but a business imperative. Studies consistently show that organizations with diverse leadership teams perform better financially and are more innovative. At DIMO, we have recognized that fostering gender equality strengthens our decision-making processes, enhances employee engagement, and positions us as an employer of choice in an increasingly competitive talent market.

To make gender equality a strategic priority, companies must integrate it into their business objectives rather than treat it as a standalone initiative. At DIMO, we have set a clear, ambitious target to increase female representation in leadership roles from 10% to 40% by 2030. This goal is embedded in our broader business strategy, ensuring that progress is regularly reviewed and tied to measurable outcomes. By linking gender equality to performance metrics, companies can hold leadership accountable and drive sustained change.

How do you measure the success of gender equality initiatives?

Tracking progress requires a combination of quantitative and qualitative metrics. At DIMO, we closely monitor representation metrics to assess the percentage of women in various roles at different levels of the organization. These data points help us understand where gaps exist and where targeted interventions are needed. Retention rates provide insight into whether women see long-term career potential within the company, while employee feedback offers valuable qualitative perspectives on workplace inclusivity.

Regular assessments allow us to refine our initiatives and ensure their effectiveness. We also benchmark ourselves against industry best practices to maintain momentum and continuously improve our approach.

As a leader, how do you drive gender equality, especially in traditionally male-dominated industries?

Leadership must set the tone for gender equality. At DIMO, we ensure that our commitment to diversity and inclusion is reflected in every aspect of our decision-making. Leading by example means actively fostering an environment where employees feel valued regardless of gender.

Mentorship is crucial in supporting women's career progression. Through structured mentorship programmes, we provide guidance and advocacy for female employees, helping them navigate challenges and seize opportunities. Open communication is another critical factor. We encourage honest conversations about gender-related difficulties, ensuring that employees feel heard and that meaningful solutions are developed.

Progress requires deliberate effort in traditionally male-dominated sectors. Companies must actively seek female talent, create career development pathways, and ensure

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women are represented in decision-making forums. Token representation is not enough; the goal must be to create an environment where women can lead and succeed on equal footing.

How can corporate culture evolve to be more inclusive, particularly in Sri Lanka's business landscape?

Corporate culture must evolve beyond policy changes; inclusivity must be ingrained in everyday practices. In Sri Lanka, where traditional gender norms still exert influence, businesses are responsible for challenging outdated mindsets and driving meaningful change. Awareness campaigns can significantly reshape perceptions, helping employees understand the tangible benefits of gender diversity.

Policy reforms are equally important. Companies must go beyond compliance and implement structural changes that support inclusivity, such as flexible work arrangements, equitable pay structures, and leadership pathways designed to remove systemic barriers.

Collaboration with external organizations can amplify impact. By engaging with advocacy groups, policymakers, and industry peers, businesses can contribute to broader societal change, ensuring that

gender equality is not just an internal initiative but a national priority.

What is your vision for gender equality in Sri Lanka over the next decade, and what steps should businesses take today to get there?

I envision a future where gender balance is no longer an aspiration but a norm across all industries and leadership levels. A genuinely inclusive workforce will be one in which men and women have equal opportunities for career advancement, workplaces are structured to support diversity, and bias is actively challenged at every level.

Businesses must act today to lay the foundation for this future. This requires a commitment to measurable goals, continuous education, and leadership accountability. Gender equality must be treated as an essential business function, with clear targets, regular evaluations, and a willingness to adapt strategies. At DIMO, we see this as an ongoing transformation rather than a destination. By embedding gender equity into our core values, we ensure that the changes we make today will shape the workforce of tomorrow. ●