



Tackling Childcare: The Business Case for Employer-supported Childcare in Sri Lanka

Case Study

Fairway Holdings (Pvt) Ltd

Diversified Business

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ABOUT IFC'S WOMEN IN WORK PROGRAM IN SRI LANKA

The IFC-led Women in Work (WiW) Program, a four-year program valued at US\$11.5mn and funded by the Australian Government, launched in April 2017.¹ It is IFC's largest, standalone country-based gender program, working with private sector companies to close gender gaps while improving business performance. The program, which benefits from multisector program design and works closely with the World Bank on research, tackles women's access to jobs and assets at the same time. It aims to increase women's workforce participation in Sri Lanka's private sector, create more and better jobs for women, and has the potential to increase company profits and drive overall economic growth. WiW also contributes to the vision of the Government of Sri Lanka where all citizens can achieve higher incomes and better standards of living by 2025.²

Access to quality childcare services is a key constraint on women's labor force participation. Following IFC's global Tackling Childcare initiative, this report highlights Sri Lanka-specific data, experiences and resources on employer-supported childcare and may not only be relevant to individual businesses but can also serve as a resource for special economic zones, Information Technology (IT) parks and other consortium models. This case study is one of 10 featured in the report: *"Tackling Childcare: The Business Case for Employer-supported Childcare in Sri Lanka"*, available at www.ifc.org/tacklingchildcare.

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Fairway Holdings (Pvt) Limited

Investing in Parents through Childcare Benefits



Founded in 2004, Fairway Holdings (Pvt) Ltd is a market leader in luxury residential and commercial high-rise developments. They extended their business acumen to diverse ventures in Leisure, Aviation, Trading, Pharmaceuticals, Financial Services, Bio Technology and Renewable Energy. Their leisure portfolio includes the Fairway Colombo, a 180-room hotel in Colombo Fort, and the recently launched Fairway Sunset in Galle, a hotel with 65 luxury rooms and 19 Luxurious serviced apartments. With more than 7 office locations and an average of 9 construction sites, the company employs over 750 employees of whom 24 percent are women. Fairway Holdings follows a business model which focuses on wealth creation for all its stakeholders and sharing wealth with its employees and the community. Fairway Holdings is a member of the IFC-led SheWorks Sri Lanka Partnership.

“Fairway Crèche’s success is to be attributed to the ‘Crèche Mama’, Kshanika Dharmasena, who has been the crèche manager since inception. Her commitment has made a huge contribution towards the success of the Crèche. “You need to be passionate about children to play the role as a crèche supervisor effectively.”

**Chinthaka Premaratne, Group HR Director,
Fairway Holdings**

The decision to establish a crèche was part of the leadership team’s commitment to the company’s diversity and inclusion efforts. The Chairman, Hemaka de Alwis, and his wife, Sundari de Alwis, were personally involved in the crèche project from inception to execution. A committee was formed involving the human resources department, a cross functional business team, and parents to make sure that the best facilities were provided and that every child’s need was handled with the appropriate care. The Group HR Director, Chinthaka Premaratne, also reached out for guidance from other companies who had piloted similar childcare initiatives such as Standard Chartered Bank and WSO2 (both featured in this report), as well as the Child Protection Authority to ensure the facilities and resources adhered to the country’s required safety standards and regulations. The Fairway crèche is managed internally and not outsourced to a third party. It is mandatory for all staff to have undergone a professional training if they are to work at the crèche.

Employee Profile:

- 24 percent of 750 employees are women
- 32 percent of the Senior Leadership Team (reporting to the CEO) are women
- 22 percent of the new recruits are women
- 30 percent of applications received to fill vacancies are women
- 36 percent of newly promoted employees are women
- 14 percent of female and 11 percent of male employees have children younger than age five

Fairway Holdings supports working parents through:

- Fairway Crèche which can accommodate 8 children
- Free of cost childcare benefits
- Extended maternity leave on a case by case basis
- Medical support
- Overtime time exemption and flexible working hours

Key business impacts of providing childcare support:

- Significant improvements in retention of new mothers
- Building a gender diverse organization
- Strengthening the company’s reputation as a family-friendly employer

“The daily log book plays an important role as it helps me track my daughter’s routine. The log book also encourages her as well as everyone at home. When she took her first steps, the ‘Crèche Mama’ video- recorded it for us and made a note. Though I was not present at this very special moment, at least I could view the first steps later. I cannot imagine sending my daughter to a crèche where there is no such dedicated ‘Crèche Mama.’”

Mother of an infant, user of the Fairway Holdings Crèche

The Fairway Crèche was officially launched on January 18, 2018,³ at the Head Office which has 750 employees, 24 percent of whom are women. The crèche is open to children of all employees. It can accommodate up to 8 children within the age group of 4 months to 5-year-old and currently has a waiting list. The company has invested approximately 4.5 million rupees and incurs a monthly operational cost of 150,000 rupees. The employees of Fairway receive the childcare benefit free of charge. The crèche facility is staffed with qualified teachers and is equipped with child-friendly furniture, a lactation room and play area. It follows a high allergen-proof health and safety standard in all materials used. A parents' committee convenes monthly to address any challenges. The parents also provide meals, snacks and change of clothes. They log in and out every time they drop and pick-up the child from the crèche. A log book is maintained daily which tracks the child's progress on health, sleeping schedule, meals, diaper change, speech and social traits etc.

“Compared to my eldest son who grew up with grandparents, my daughter seems to have better social skills, and it has only been a few months since joining the Crèche.”

Father of a two-year-old, user of the Fairway Holdings Crèche

“Being a part of the organizing committee and knowing my child is going to grow up in the crèche, it was a personal task to work on the interior design of the crèche. The best part was that I was not constrained by a budget, as the company asked me to purchase the best products for the children.”

Mother of an infant, user of the Fairway Holdings Crèche



In addition to childcare support, the company offers various additional services on a case by case basis for nursing, expecting mothers and maternity returns by providing flexible working hours, extended maternity leave, medical benefits, etc. Fairway has experienced a growth in the maternity return rate compared to previous years, which now stands at 100 percent.

Fairway Holdings believes that an on-site company crèche tends to have the greatest perceived value to employees and improves work-life balance as part of their broader corporate objectives of increasing gender diversity. Investing in parents through childcare benefits also leads to building a reputation as a family-friendly employer and thus attracts the best quality of talent in the market.

“I was thrilled to hear about the Fairway Crèche while I was on maternity leave, as I was actually considering resigning. Fairway Holdings supported me by extending my maternity leave and I returned to work on the same day my daughter joined the Crèche.”

Mother of an infant, user of the Fairway Holdings Crèche



1 IFC. 2017. Government of Australia Partner to Support More and Better Jobs for Women in Sri Lanka.
2 Office of the Prime Minister. 2017. Vision 2025. A Country Enriched. See page 26.

3 See Fairway Group CEO's (Imal Fonseka's) LinkedIn Announcement on January 18, 2018.

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