



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

Case Study

Standard Chartered Bank

Banking and Financial Services



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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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For Standard Chartered Bank (SC), a member of IFC's SheWorks partnership in Sri Lanka, providing childcare support and measures to improve employee work-life balance is part of SC's broader corporate objectives of increasing gender parity in the workplace. Childcare support is weaved into their strategy through the Diversity and Inclusion agenda and commitment to retain, develop and promote talent, irrespective of gender or parental status. Having childcare support is also a way of letting women know that one can continue their banking career whilst celebrating the life-event of being a mother. Currently, 48 percent of SC's entire workforce in Sri Lanka are women. SC also takes pride in reporting 54 percent participation of women in its Country Leadership Team and almost 30 percent representation of women in the Country Management Team. These are positive results that SC has achieved whilst being an equal opportunity employer and placing emphasis on promoting and developing women in leadership roles.

In 2008, SC introduced a crèche facility 'Kidkare' to all its employees and was one of the pioneers in the industry. The facility is located in the heart of Colombo and currently accommodates up to 30 children from the age of 6 months to 11 years. 'Kidkare' operates with an external childcare provider and supports the business working hours from Monday to Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The facility provides adequate care in terms of hygiene, preparation of home cooked meals and security during operational hours. The food menu is prepared by the crèche supervisor in consultation with a nutritionist to provide healthy and balanced meals for children. Both children and employees of 'Kidkare' are also covered by a medical insurance scheme provided by SC. 'Kidkare' offers early childhood education and quality care under the supervision of a qualified Montessori teacher. Once the children come after school they are supported in completing their homework. Special events are organized by the crèche during the holiday months with outings and excursions for the children.

Initially, the employer-supported crèche was received by its employees with some caution, as it was a cultural shift for parents to trust the concept of a childcare facility in comparison to grandparents and nannies taking care of the child. Following the success of SC Sri Lanka's initiative, several other SC locations globally have followed and established their own crèche facilities using the lessons-learned from SC Sri Lanka.

Employee Profile:

- 48 percent of SC's workforce are women
- 54 percent of the Country Leadership Team are women
- Over 43 percent of the recruitments in 2018 were women
- Over 40 percent of the bank's promotions in 2018 were women

The Bank supports working parents through:

- 'Kidkare' which caters to approximately 30 children, from 6 months to 11 years old
- 20 weeks of paid maternity leave
- Two calendar weeks of paternity and adoption leave
- Flexible working arrangements
- Medical insurance coverage of children

Key business impacts of offering childcare support:

- Supporting retention of new mothers
- Creating a "Great Place to Work"
- Branding as an "Employer of Choice"
- Important building block for the Bank's gender diversity strategy

"Standard Chartered is an equal opportunity employer and our true success has been the result of the strong platform we have created to drive a diverse and inclusive culture in the workplace. The Women's Network and our Diversity and Inclusion Council enable us to do this. We are an employer of choice and are leading the way in the market by providing benefits that enable an environment conducive for working parents, especially mothers. These include flexible work arrangements, working from home, parental leave for mothers and fathers, adoption leave, the crèche facility and a comprehensive framework in managing workplace harassment."

Ransi Dharmasiriwardhana, Head of Human Resources, Standard Chartered Bank Sri Lanka

SC meets two thirds of the crèche's operational costs whilst the parents pay a monthly nominal fee. The investment is justified with SC's maternity return rate at 100 percent and parents claiming they are at ease and can better concentrate during work knowing that their children are well taken care of. SC takes pride in a zero percent attrition of mother's resigning to care for their children. This is predominantly due to the crèche facility, flexible working arrangements and other enhanced benefits offered to parents. SC claims that one of their key successes of the 'Kidkare' functioning seamlessly is their crèche supervisor and her ability to manage the bank's protocol, parents and their children.

More recently Standard Chartered Bank Sri Lanka enhanced its existing policy on maternity leave to offer 20 calendar weeks of maternity leave, exceeding the legal requirement of 84 working days whilst fathers enjoy paternity leave of up to two calendar weeks. Parents who chose to adopt are also eligible to avail themselves of two calendar weeks adoption leave. SC provides nursing intervals in line with the labor law requirements. In addition, SC offers "flexible working" to support employees to meet the demands of their personal lives, without impacting their careers. Further, SC launched its first Women's Network "W3: Women Win @ Work" in 2016. This initiative promotes networking, professional and personal development of women in the bank.

"I was the first to utilize the 20 weeks of maternity leave which gave me the confidence of getting back to work especially after having my third child, who is also currently at the crèche." My husband always says, 'never quit your job, as we prefer 'Kidkare' to a domestic maid or nanny, because our children tend to enjoy being around other children.' Over the years they have become more independent, sociable and good at sharing."

Mother of three children who uses the 'Kidkare' facility at Standard Chartered Bank Sri Lanka



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.

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December 2018