

Commitment to a safe, engaged, and inclusive workplace at Aboitiz Equity Ventures, Philippines

Aboitiz Equity Ventures (AEV) is recognized as one of the best-managed conglomerates in the Philippines. AEV participated in a case study commissioned by Investing in Women (IW), an initiative of the Australian Government, to demonstrate results in bringing about change in workplace gender equality (WGE). The case study examines the company's efforts as part of their engagement with the Philippines Business Coalition for Women Empowerment (PBCWE).

The GEARS Process

AEV joined PBCWE in March 2021 to help the company build a more resilient and inclusive environment as part of their commitment to the United Nations Global Compact and its Ten Business Principles. A desire to continually improve the broader Diversity Equality and Inclusion (DE&I) strategy was also a motivation.

PBCWE's technical support centered on an internal company-wide assessment called GEARS (Gender Equality Assessment Results and Strategies). The GEARS guides companies in collecting and analysing Human Resource (HR) statistical data and policies and practices that support and promote WGE. In April 2022, PBCWE presented the GEARS findings to the team leaders from HR and Reputation Management/Sustainability Teams. The assessment confirmed that AEV had a strong vision for WGE, with a priority placed on continuously improving policies, business processes, and initiatives for a safe, engaged, and inclusive workplace. The assessment also found that:



- AEV achieved 'Strategic' status in the areas of professional development, mentoring, sponsorship, recruitment, selection and promotion, flexible working, talent management and succession planning, and preventing and addressing gender-based harassment and discrimination.
- AEV achieved 'Active' status in the areas of WGE training, alignment of gender equality and business priorities, and workforce gender composition.
- AEV has broadly balanced gender composition at almost all levels (at least 30% men and women).
- AEV was found to recruit more men but promote more women overall.

GEARS was used by AEV and PBCWE to set priorities for an action plan. The top three GEARS recommendations included:

1. Introduce accountability mechanisms for managers regarding WGE progress and outcomes;
2. Introduce remuneration policy with gender pay equity objectives; and
3. Conduct regular HR data analysis to improve recruitment, retention, and promotion programs.

WGE Progress at AEV: Post-GEARS Assessment

AEV already has strong policies and programmes in support of DE&I. PBCWE helped the company use the insights from GEARS to deepen their understanding and refine their strategy further. Despite a short implementation timeframe, there are early indications of change and impact within AEV and these include:

- **Enhanced understanding of WGE.** Through GEARS, WGE action planning, and learning sessions facilitated by PBCWE, AEV staff have increased their knowledge and understanding of WGE and its implications on their work and company-wide DE&I initiatives.
- **Increased employee engagement on WGE.** Results of a staff perception survey have helped development of new employee engagement programs and sessions on improving workplace DE&I.
- **Improved company WGE policies and procedures.** The GEARS assessment recommended the inclusion of a non-discriminatory clause in recruitment and promotion policies and procedures. AEV conducted a review of its hiring and job evaluation procedures and adopted an anti-discriminatory policy.
- **Improved WGE accountability.** AEV staff in supervisory and senior management roles are now required through the performance appraisal system to demonstrate their commitment to the company's WGE policies and targets.
- **Improve gender balance at board level.** From 2019 to 2021, AEV'S board membership composition was eight male board directors and one female board director. Following the GEARS report, the company in 2022 appointed a new female member who holds the directorship of AEV and four other business units.

While implementation of actions is at an early stage, AEV is demonstrating tangible results that will further evolve over time as the company's partnership with PBCWE continues.

Sector	Power/Banking/Food/ Infrastructure/Real Estate
Market	Philippines
Employees	50% women
Mid and Senior Management	62% women

AEV's Success Factors

The case study highlights the following factors that have contributed to progress on WGE in AEV:



Gender equality data, insights, and analytics. AEV's HR disaggregated baseline data was critical for the company's ability to monitor its progress in implementing its WGE Action Plan.



Commitments to global initiatives (Sustainability, UN Compact and ESG). AEV's commitments to global initiatives and its DE&I strategy has driven leadership to continuously improve policies, business processes, and initiatives to create a safe, engaged, and inclusive workplace for employees.



Sustained leadership, commitment, and accountability. AEV's initial focus was on achieving broad DE&I targets as part of commitments on sustainability. Since joining PBCWE, the focus now is on meeting WGE targets and in strengthening accountability measures in relation to gender balance, safety, and inclusion.



Trusted Local Technical Support. PBCWE have played an important role in supporting AEV to better integrate WGE into their DE&I agenda.



Gender equality knowledge and skills. The GEARS and the WGE Strategy and Action Plan have provided a structured approach and broadened the company's understanding of what needs to be addressed and why. The company now has a clear strategy and action plan and benchmarks for progress.



Gender equality communications and transparency. AEV conducted an employee engagement survey through their CHRIS program which was crucial in setting the direction of DE&I and WGE initiatives.