
Sustaining an inclusive culture for women at DDB Group Philippines

Case Study Report

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Cover: DDB Group Philippines' Executive Committee led by Group Chairman and CEO Gil Chua. Photo from DDB Group Philippines, 2022

Abbreviations

ASH	Anti-Sexual Harassment
BCs	Business Coalitions
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CFO	Chief Finance Officer
COO	Chief Operating Officer
D&I	Diversity and Inclusion
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australia
FWA	Flexible Work Arrangements
GEARS	Gender Equality Assessment Results and Strategies
IW	Investing in Women
LGBTQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and plus
PBCWE	Philippine Business Coalition for Women Empowerment
PHILWEN	Philippine Women's Economic Network
WEE	Women's Economic Empowerment
WGE	Workplace Gender Equality

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Executive Summary

Investing in Women (IW) is an Australian Government funded initiative which supports Business Coalitions (BCs) who work with influential businesses on shifting workplace cultures, practices, and policy barriers to achieve workplace gender equality (WGE). This case study forms part of the IW case study series prepared by Triple Line in 2022 to examine workplace gender equality experiences and good practices in Indonesia, Vietnam, and the Philippines.

The case study considers the experience of DDB Group Philippines, one of the leading integrated marketing communications and services groups in the Philippines that provides business solutions to clients. It draws on qualitative research, including primary data from interviews and focus group discussions with men and women, and secondary data. By observing the points of engagement between DDB and the Philippine Business Coalition for Women Empowerment (PBCWE), the case study identifies the unique value of PBCWE in helping a leader in workplace gender equality sustain and further their commitment.

Incorporated in 1992, DDB Group Philippines is the country's first integrated marketing communications and services network that provides creative business solutions and services to clients. The company has a high representation of women in their workforce in addition to having a gender-equal board with 50:50 ratio of men to women.

Early in 2021, DDB sought PBCWE membership as well as technical assistance to help formally assess the company's WGE status, and to bring about improvements to their internal policies, practices and working culture.

In terms of change and impact, the case study found that DDB's engagement with PBCWE and the company's use of the Gender Equality Assessment Results and Strategies (GEARS)¹ have (i) increased DDB staff awareness of why WGE and inclusion matter; (ii) reinforced the company's policies and values particularly around Anti-Sexual Harassment, gender equality, diversity and inclusion; (iii) resulted in DDB adopting a policy to encourage its clients to take action on WGE; and (iv) further enhanced the company's reputation amongst its peers and clients. There is also anecdotal evidence of DDB's culture around WGE impacting in a positive way on family life: staff members feel they can now raise sensitive gender related issues at home.

PBCWE contributed to changes in DDB's WGE in several ways. In October 2021, PBCWE started providing DDB with technical support, initially focusing on GEARS which included an assessment of the company's policies, practices and working culture. During GEARS, PBCWE mentored DDB's staff in collecting and analysing HR statistical data. This allowed PBCWE and DDB to jointly evaluate achievements against WGE indicators e.g., gender composition in the workplace, employee career progression and policies and practices that support and protect women, and to reflect and strategize for improvements.

For DDB, PBCWE's data-driven approach to WGE helped the company demonstrate accountability to government legislation on gender equality and to its staff. It allowed company leaders to gain an understanding of where they stood and what more could be done to sustain an already high level of achievement on WGE within the company. While the assessment found leading practice in 9 out of the 10 areas, including pay equity, workforce gender composition and flexible work, it also identified areas for improvement. For example, while training on workplace gender equality and diversity was opened to all employees across all levels, the training was not made mandatory.

PBCWE also supported DDB in developing an action plan on gender equality. This included PBCWE's training for 200 staff on Anti-Sexual Harassment (ASH) policies and practices so that they could understand key terms and concepts; training for staff on workforce gender equality, diversity and inclusion more broadly; a campaign to support Break the Bias for Women's Month with PBCWE

¹ GEARS is a regional-level assessment developed by four business coalitions in Indonesia, Myanmar, the Philippines, and Vietnam with support from the Australian Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA).

under their Talent Has No Gender initiative; and targets to achieve gender balance where women were significantly over-represented.

The case study identifies several important drivers of DDB's change process, including:

- The influence of leadership, commitment and accountability. DDB notably have feminist female leaders who have acted in concert with their male counterparts to drive WGE improvements forward.
- A conducive company culture that has promoted values of decency and fairness and this has reinforced the values associated with WGE.
- Gender equality HR policies, processes and procedures, including on ASH provided the building blocks for further improvements.
- Putting in place a gender equality company strategy provided DDB with an easy-to-use roadmap to make future improvements along with tools to track progress.
- Having reliable data, insights, and analytics as tools to reflect and assess areas to improve.
- Communications and transparency on the part of DDB about the company's status on WGE. This has driven awareness, improvement, and sustainability.

DDB's engagement on WGE with the PBCWE has helped them see opportunities to instigate industry-wide competition towards a more gender sensitive approach in the marketing industry. This is an important development by an industry-leader in a sector widely recognised as contributing to negative gender stereotyping.²

² See for example, 1990, Naomi Wolf, The Beauty Myth.

Introduction

Investing in Women (IW) is an Australian Government initiative that catalyses inclusive economic growth through women's economic empowerment in Southeast Asia. It was launched in 2016 and is operational in four South East Asian countries.

IW support Business Coalitions (BCs) who work with influential businesses on shifting workplace cultures, practices and policy barriers to achieve workplace gender equality (WGE). Business Coalitions are operational in Indonesia, Philippines, Vietnam, and Myanmar, with member companies together employing more than 1 million people.

The Philippine Business Coalition for Women Empowerment (PBCWE) was established in March 2017 under The Philippine Women's Economic Network (PhilWEN) with IW's support. PBCWE is composed of members who are large businesses that are committed to improving gender equality in their workplaces, becoming better employers for women and to influencing other businesses within their supply chains to do the same. PBCWE reports to the PhilWEN Board on its contributions and achievements towards Sustainable Development Goal 5 - Gender Equality and Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE).

This case study tells the story of how DDB engaged with PBCWE to improve and sustain its inclusive work environment for women. It also identifies what has changed as a result and what drove change. The case study concludes with insights and lessons.

Method

This case study drew on quantitative and qualitative data (PBCWE project documents, DDB records) and primary research in the Philippines. Primary research included in-depth qualitative interviews and small group discussions with staff (men and women) from DDB and PBCWE. Interviews were conducted by Triple Line Consulting in local languages and English. Interview participants were: DDB Group's Chief Culture Officer who leads the corporate level WGE initiative, the Chief Operating Officer (COO) and Chief Finance Officer (CFO), and two managers as focal points for WGE. Two group discussions were also held with DDB staff, one with three men and one with two women staff. Two interview sessions were held with PBCWE staff, and these provided insights on their role in engaging and supporting DDB's efforts to understand and improve their WGE.

During the period allocated for case study interviews, DDB staff were experiencing a heavy workload which meant that fewer interviews and group discussions were held than anticipated. Triple Line would have liked to have gathered more perspectives from staff, but all parties are satisfied that the data gathered was sufficient to meet the case study objectives.

Country Context

The Philippines is a strong advocate for gender equality and the country scores well on international gender equality measures and indices. It is ranked 19 out of 144 countries on the Global Gender Gap Index with an index score of 0.783 in 2022. This is above the global average

score of 67.8.³ Women have a higher life expectancy than men (76 years versus 67 years)⁴, and on average girls receive slightly more years of schooling than boys (9.5 years versus 9.2 years). However, women continue to experience disadvantages in the labour market and this stems from gender inequality and entrenched discrimination towards women around what they can and should do in life. Consequently, women are overrepresented in the informal labour market where their work is precarious and poorly paid. Women provide 85 percent of the total household time allocated to children. Men earn between 23 and 30 per cent more than women.⁵ Women are often ineligible for social security and health care, and they also experience limited access to justice.⁶

To tackle gender equality, the Philippine Government has put in place a strong legislative framework which includes:

- Republic Act 7877 (1995) known as the Anti-Sexual Harassment Act is the main Philippine legislation that defines and penalizes sexual harassment in the workplace, or in an education or training environment.
- The Magna Carta (2009) for women is a comprehensive women's rights law that upholds the rights of Filipinas, especially if they belong to marginalised sectors. It declares women are entitled to protection from all forms of violence, equal treatment before the law, and equal access to education.
- The New Telecommuting Act (2018) legitimizes working from home employment arrangements and ensures a legal framework for the rights of telecommuting workers.
- The Safe Spaces Act (2019) is intended to expand the scope of 1995 Anti-Sexual Harassment Act. It includes a list of offensive behaviour such as sexist slurs, unwanted invitations and taunting, and unwanted comments on the appearance of an individual amongst others.

Company Background

Incorporated in 1992, DDB Group Philippines is one of the leading integrated marketing communications groups in the Philippines. It is composed of award-winning creative business solutions agencies that do mainstream advertising, digital solutions, public relations, media services, branded entertainment solutions, and data analytics.

Its core companies include creative agencies DDB PHL and DDB MNL; digitally centric agency Tribal Worldwide Philippines; integrated PR solutions firm Ripple8; media agencies Touch XDA and Optimax; data analytics firm Agile Intelligence; and content firm Bent & Buzz.

³ Business World, "Philippines ranks 61st in gender equality list". April 26, 2022. <https://www.bworldonline.com/infographics/2022/04/26/444315/philippines-ranks-61st-in-gender-equality-list/#:~:text=The%20Philippines%20placed%2061%20st%20out%20of%20144,for%20all%20and%20a%20healthy%20environment%20by%202030.>

⁴ The World Bank Data, "Life expectancy at birth, female (years) – Philippines" last accessed 9 November 2022. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.LE00.FE.IN?locations=PH> and The World Bank Data, "Life expectancy at birth, male (years) – Philippines" last accessed 9 November 2022. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.LE00.MA.IN?locations=PH>

⁵ Philippine News Agency March 31st, 2021. Philippines ranks 17th in Global Gender Gap Report. <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1135541>

⁶ UN Women Asia and the Pacific: CEDAW Philippines. <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/countries/philippines/cedaw>

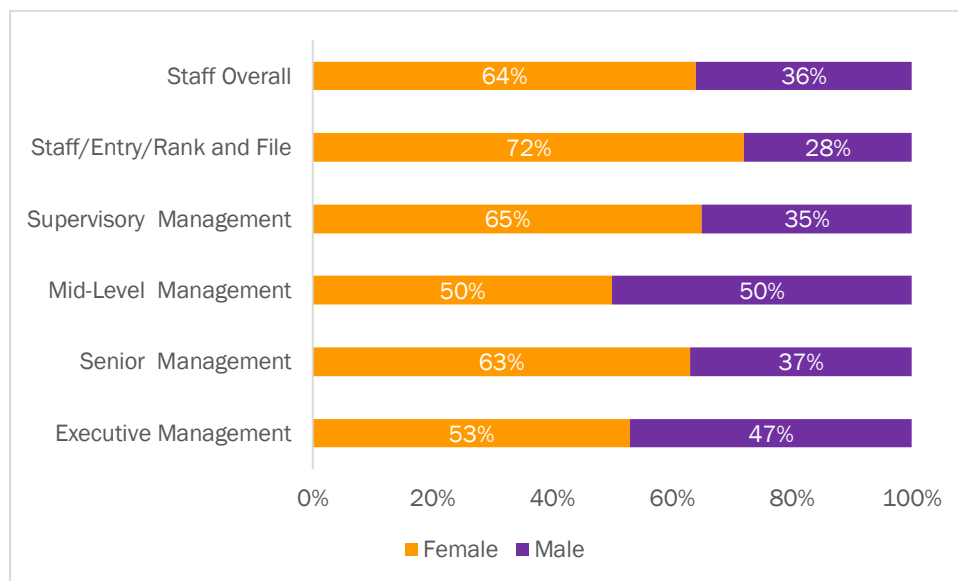
These agencies build clients' brand equity and help them achieve their communications and business objectives through our varied expertise including Creative Business Solutions, Digital Strategies, Public Relations, Events and Activations, Media Planning & Buying for ATL and Digital, Advocacy, Content, Strategy, Consumer Insights, Social Media, Share of Voice, Experiential Marketing, Crisis Management, Retail Design & Visual Merchandising, Creative Design, Training, etc.

DDB Group Philippines is part of DDB Worldwide, one of the largest and most influential advertising and marketing networks globally.

The company has a diverse portfolio of local and multinational clients that includes some of the biggest names in the corporate world such as Smart, PLDT, Johnson and Johnson, PepsiCo NutriAsia, Meralco, Jollibee, Mang Inasal, and AC Motors to name a few.

As demonstrated in Figure 1 below DDB Group Philippines had, from the outset of their engagement with PBCWE a workforce where women outnumbered men at executive management, senior management, supervisory management and at entry level. At mid-level management level, the ratio of men to women was 50:50.

Figure 1. DDB Group Philippines Gender Composition of Staff by Level of Responsibility



Source: GEARS Report 2021 – DDB Group Philippines

Engaging with Workplace Gender Equality

PBCWE began its engagement with the DDB Group as a member early in 2021 (see Figure 2). Prior to this, DDB has a long-time WGE program called “Talent Has No Gender” which was a DDB global campaign started in 2014. In an interview, the DDB Chief Culture Officer said she felt that the Philippine office took the campaign very seriously.

Despite this earlier initiative on WGE, the DDB Chief Culture Officer noted that prior to the engagement with PBCWE, the company lacked in-depth awareness and expertise on WGE. Therefore, she conducted online research and found PBCWE as a potential learning partner. A key

motivating factor for DDB in partnering with PBCWE was to understand how the company measured up to its competitors on standard indicators of workplace gender equality. DDB prided itself on having a diverse and gender equal workplace. The company's senior staff also wanted to understand how they fared on other measures of WGE and whether there was scope for the company to do more.

In October 2021, PBCWE started providing technical and learning support to DDB. A key part of this process centred on an assessment tool called GEARS (Gender Equality Assessment Results and Strategies). The GEARS assessment took three months and ended in December 2021.⁷ PBCWE used GEARS to assist DDB in collecting and analysing HR statistical data, and in evaluating a set of indicators that demonstrated where the company stood on WGE, e.g., gender composition in the workplace, employee career progression, and policies and practices that support and promote WGE.

DDB gathered key data and PBCWE provided technical knowledge and guidance on the interpretation of data associated with WGE. With PBCWE's guidance, DDB submitted all the required evidence to complete the GEARS assessment process.

DDB Group Philippines' engagement with PBCWE was taken forward by its Chief Culture Officer who headed its HR/talent management and corporate communications department The Culture Hub, two WGE focal points and DDB's HR Administrative and Compliance Officer. Their engagement with PBCWE included regular consultations and meetings. During the first orientation and induction meeting, PBCWE and DDB team members examined DDB's company background, agreed expectations and key activities such as the GEARS assessment. PBCWE helped the DDB team gain a better understanding of actions that can improve WGE policies and practices. With guidance from PBCWE, the HR Officer and DDB Culture Hub organized data collection from various departments and business units for WGE mapping and monitoring. The HR Officer coordinated with department heads and business unit managers to help submit evidence for the GEARS assessment.

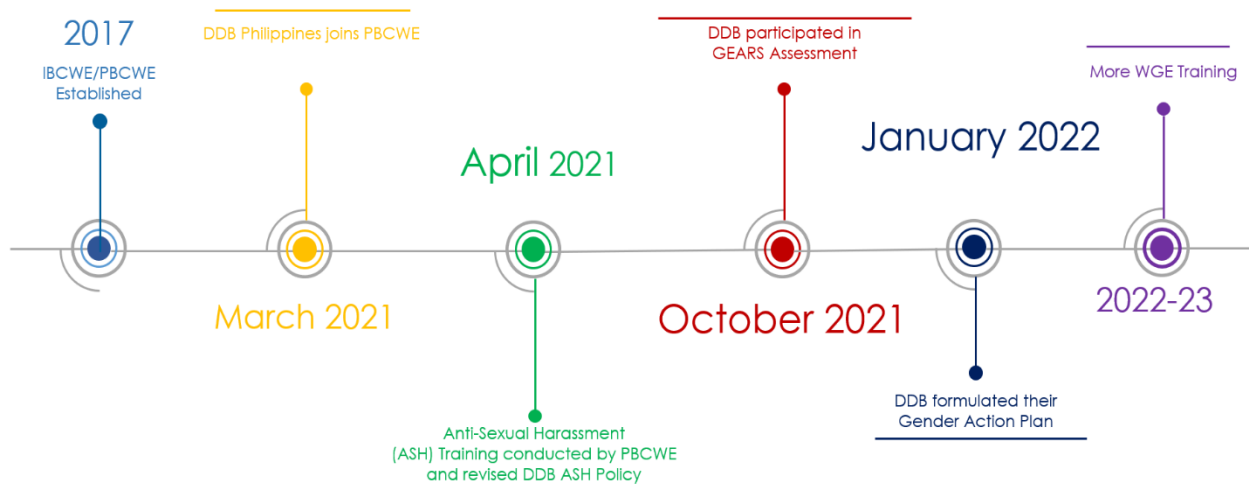
In March 2021, DDB signed up to become a PBCWE member and in April 2021 PBCWE conducted training for around 200 DDB employees on Anti-Sexual Harassment (ASH). This training was open to all PBCWE's corporate members. Although DDB's ASH policy already complied with existing government legislation,⁸ the company recognized that its workforce needed to understand what the policy meant in practice. This involved PBCWE defining in more detail what key terms and concepts mean when it comes to sexual harassment.

⁷ GEARS is a regional-level assessment developed by four business coalitions in Indonesia, Myanmar, the Philippines, and Vietnam with support from the Australian Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA).

⁸ ASH legislation states that it is the duty of the employer 'to prevent or deter the commission of acts of sexual harassment' through appropriate rules, regulations, and procedures for the investigation and administrative sanctions'.

In June 2021, PBCWE and DDB had a “getting to know each other” meeting where information and expectations for further engagement were shared. A month later, DDB discussed with PBCWE the possibility of availing of the latter’s flexible work arrangements (FWA) policy program to enhance DDB’s existing FWA policies and practices, and in August the parties met again to discuss the potential for WGE and Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) training. At the same time, PBCWE conducted a training needs assessment for DDB.

Figure 2. Timeline on DDB's engagement with PBCWE on Workplace Gender Equality.



Assessing DDB’s WGE

The GEARS assessment confirmed that DDB had a strong vision for WGE as well as aspirations, endorsed at leadership level, to be a leading advocate for gender equality, inclusion, and diversity in the advertising industry. The company’s strategic priorities for WGE were already established and DDB has constantly worked to achieve the following goals:

- Become an employer of choice for men, women and LGBTQI+⁹
- Promote inclusion especially among working moms through more flexible working arrangements.
- Ensure gender balance in all aspects of its operations.

The GEARS assessment also found that:

1. DDB was assessed as ‘leading practice’ on WGE with sound strategies, policies and accountability processes in 9 out of 10 focus areas: *leadership and accountability; gender pay equity; workforce gender composition; flexible work; preventing and addressing gender-based harassment and discrimination; professional development; recruitment, selection and promotion, and talent management and succession planning.*
2. The one area where DDB scored lower (75/100) was the provision of workplace gender equality training for staff. Training was provided for new staff as part of onboarding and induction activities but was not mandatory for all staff, including at the leadership level. (After engagement with PBCWE, this is now mandatory).

⁹ Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (or questioning), and intersex.

3. DDB's board composition was gender equal at 50:50 and at other job levels there were more women than men. This is demonstrated in Figure 1.
4. There were also more women than men recruited and promoted at nearly all levels which means the company had a strong pipeline of women for executive management roles in the future and will remain female dominant overall.
5. In the area of staff retention, 4 out of 5 job levels met the 90 percent GEARS retention threshold. For women, retention rates were lower and only the executive management level met the 90 percent threshold. Retention for women in supervisory management was significantly lower at 67 percent, and lower than for men at 78 percent.

The GEARS assessment provided DDB with a set of 10 actions for consideration, including in the areas where the company was already leading practice. The full list of actions is detailed in Table 1. PBCWE identified one strategic measure and three high impact measures for DDB to accelerate, optimize, expand, replicate, model and promote and these are flagged in the table:

Table 1. GEARS full list of recommendations to DDB

GEARS focal areas	Recommendations
Workplace gender equality training (strategic)	Require mandatory completion of the gender equality training for both employees and leaders. Provide practical exercises in this training.
Employee retention analysis (high impact measure)	Analyse data on why more women than men leave the company, including exit interviews to identify common challenges and how the company can address issues in the future.
Recruitment, selection, and promotion (high impact measure)	Monitor and analyse gender data on recruitment, promotions, and attrition. Identify unconscious bias. Understand why DDB, for example hires more women than men.
Talent management and succession planning (high impact measure)	Regularly monitor and analyse gender data on recruitment, promotion, and attrition.
Leadership and accountability on WGE	Share evidence of good practices both locally and regionally.
Communicate DDB's pay equity gaps and action taken to close them	E.g., in an annual report or sustainability report.
Mainstream flexible work for performance and support	Understand if and how FW can contribute to better retention of female staff in DDB.
Preventing and addressing gender-based harassment and discrimination, sexual harassment and bullying, domestic and family violence	Champion 'zero tolerance to sexual harassment'. DDB has no recorded evidence of workplace sexual harassment, and the company continues to promote ASH programs not just internally but also when they work with clients. Being an ASH champion and model firm will hopefully influence

GEARS focal areas	Recommendations
	and encourage other firms to follow DDB initiatives.
Professional development, mentoring and sponsorship	Mainstream ‘Talent has no Gender’ Program. This is a unique DDB approach which is worth sharing with other firms in the Philippines through for example PBCWE members, IW Partners, and national and regional events.
Strategic alignment of gender equality and business priorities	Monitor policy effectiveness and publicly report targets and outcomes.

Source: GEARS Assessment Report of Findings for DDB

The results of DDB’s GEARS assessment were finalised in December 2021 and shared with staff. PBCWE proposed next steps that included:

- Action planning and learning activities on WGE.
- Sharing comments with DDB Culture Hub and Executive Committee reflections after the GEARS assessment.
- Communicating the GEARS report widely within the company and externally.
- Repeating the GEARS Employee Survey annually.

DDB’s GEARS action plan to improve WGE and women’s inclusion

The case study research found that DDB staff welcomed the findings of the GEARS assessment and the technical support role of PBCWE. For DDB their engagement with PBCWE and the GEARS assessment process provided validation of their efforts to date to promote WGE. It also helped DDB understand areas for improvement as noted by company staff in case study interviews.

The GEARS assessment provided information on what areas needed to be improved and the DDB’s Action Plan was focused on these – e.g., WGE training. (Group Associate Corporate Communications Director, quoted with permission from interviewee)

The group’s Chief Culture Officer noted the systematic approach taken by PBCWE and GEARS:

What’s best about GEARS is that it is based on an empirical process. (Those conducting) GEARS gathered the numbers from each (relevant) department. They interviewed the Human Resource, Culture Hub and then scrutinized the written policies. It was (the same) as conducting an audit. (Quoted with permission from interviewee)

In group discussions staff commented that PBCWE had played a supportive and guiding role.

Having PBCWE (leading the process) makes us comfortable in making changes. They provide us space to make mistakes. (Staff member, quoted with permission from interviewee)

An important challenge for the DDB Group was to not let the company’s existing robust status as a practice leader in WGE and women’s inclusion stand in the way of further progress, as acknowledged by the Chief Culture Officer.

We have to push ourselves to do further research on what we have learned from PBCWE and GEARS. (Chief Culture Officer, quoted with permission from interviewee)

Following the GEARS assessment DDB agreed to a set of actions to consolidate, improve, and sustain their performance. PBCWE provided DDB with tools to track actions and progress on key performance indicators. For example, PBCWE provided the DDB’s WGE focal point with a WGE Checklist that had six main categories and supplementary questions. This list helped DDB determine if they had the management commitment, resources and systems required to support the achievement of gender equality objectives and priorities.

The Gender Action Plan was another tool which tracked DDB’s WGE action agenda. PBCWE, through consultations and meetings, provided technical guidance that helped DDB formulate their own Gender Action Plan.

DDB’s Gender Action Plan articulated three major goals, priority actions and relevant timelines. It also identified activities and key performance indicators. As one Culture Hub member noted:

‘DDB scored 9 out of 10 in GEARS, which is very high. But the company is now conscious that they must not go below 9 now. Hence, they are having a periodic review to assess (status). There is only one area that DDB did not get a perfect score – WGE training. (Quoted with permission from interviewee)

GEARS also provided an overview of the company’s strong points on WGE actions and areas for improvement. As one Culture Hub member noted:

It validates what we have been doing so far. We have completed the GEARS and the GEARS helped us in improving, analysing and evaluating our own work in gender equality but also in identifying what more needs to be done. (Quoted with permission from interviewee)

PBCWE facilitated the company in choosing three key actions highlighted in the table below along with progress to date. DDB chose to follow up on training its workforce on workplace gender equality, diversity, and inclusion which GEARS considers a strategic level action. The company also chose to pursue a 50:50 balance between men and women and set targets to ensure balance. The third action chosen was to support industry leadership. In this regard DDB produced a ‘Break the Bias’ YouTube video and a VIBER sticker pack with PBCWE for Women’s Month.¹⁰ This campaign has reached all PBCWE members and will continue to help position the company as a peer leader on workplace gender equality, diversity and inclusion.

Table 2. DDB’s progress on its Gender Equality Action Plan

No.	GEARS action and target outcome	Progress to date
1.	Workplace Gender Equality/Diversity & Inclusion (WGE/DI) Training.	Training conducted on 10 March 2022.
	<u>Target outcome:</u> Total workforce coverage including 100% of leaders trained.	Work in progress to cover the entire workforce.

¹⁰ DDB Group Philippines, Break the Bias [video] 2022. Retrieved November 11, 2022, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ajl9Y2xQ8MQ>

2. Review human resource messaging/procedures and setting gender balance targets across all levels of the organisations	Review completed. Targets set for gender balance (e.g., equal levels of men and women).
<u>Target outcome:</u> Inclusive, gender balanced workforce across all levels of DDB.	Work in progress.
3. Developing a campaign under Talent Has No Gender to establish DDB as a leading advocate for gender equality, diversity and inclusion.	DDB advocacy on Break the Bias for Women's Month.
<u>Target outcome:</u> DDB is industry lead on WGE/DI.	Work in progress.

Delivering Change and Impact

Prior to their engagement with PBCWE and the GEARS assessment DDB had put in place most of the building blocks that support workplace gender equality, diversity and inclusion. For DDB the process of engaging with PBCWE and taking forward action to improve WGE further centres on the company's aspirations to establish themselves as an industry leader in this area, and to put in place measures that will consolidate and sustain their commitment for the long term.

In terms of change and impact, DDB's engagement with PBCWE and GEARS has (i) increased staff awareness of why WGE and inclusion matter; (ii) reinforced its policies and values; (iii) encouraged its clients to take action on WGE; and (iv) further enhanced its reputation. There is also anecdotal evidence of the culture of the company impacting in a positive way on family life.

Staff experience for themselves why WGE and inclusion matter

Women staff members interviewed felt that DDB is one of the few companies in the Philippines, if not the region to offer equal opportunities to women and the absence of a glass ceiling. Women staff said their experience of working in DDB was positive as illustrated below.

With more women at most levels, including leadership and senior management levels, women appreciate the absence of a glass ceiling.
(Woman staff member, quoted with permission from interviewee)

A male staff member felt that DDB creates a healthy and inclusive culture where all staff are valued, regardless of gender. Another staff member noted that:

In DDB 'inclusion' is about creating and having a culture that nurtures talents and provides them with a healthy working atmosphere, allowing them to come together and work and comfortably and contribute effectively and confidently. Inclusion ensures everyone feels valued and add value. (Administrative and Compliance Officer shared during FGD; quoted with permission from interviewee)

The DDB culture of openness has always been ingrained in the company through the pro-women leadership of its CEO (a man) who was raised by a strong and independent mother. The CEO's daughter is the current Chief Culture Hub Director. She has followed her father's example and she has played an important role in ensuring women are seen as valuable contributors to the company. The GEARS assessment, flexible work arrangements and ASH training helped DDB staff understand and value the inclusive working culture of DDB.

In an interview, one manager said that he left DDB for a position in another company expecting a similar environment to DDB but he returned to the company because, in his own words:

I guess the answer is... I missed the DDB culture. That's why I came back... I cannot find another company that has the same culture. People are practicing real freedoms. (Manager at DDB, quoted with permission from interviewee)

DDB's WGE policies and values reinforced

DDB staff noted that the engagement with PBCWE and the GEARS assessment further reinforced the company's WGE policies and values by offering an independent assessment.

In interviews and group discussions staff said the ASH training which reached 200 employees and was conducted by PBCWE helped them feel empowered to report sexual harassment and discrimination. Before the ASH training staff knew about the policy but key terms and concepts were not necessarily widely understood. Peer discussions helped clarify and add meaning and relevance.

After the ASH training DDB's policy on sexual harassment and discrimination was updated to comply with the government's safe spaces act and penalty clauses. Gender based harassment was also added along with online sexual harassment and the staff handbook was updated.

Before PBCWE, HR would share the manual and ask employees to read and sign the consent. Employees would just sign the document without really reading the manual. PBCWE lets us know that we need to be vocal about this [ASH] policy at DDB. PBCWE helps us to understand that we need to communicate the issue for women to feel safe. (Corporate Communications Director, quoted with permission from interviewee.)

However, it is important to note that DDB's systems and processes in this regard have not yet been tested as DDB (happily) have not yet experienced a reported case of discrimination or sexual harassment.

Staff also noted that DDB is a company where employees feel senior staff are open and approachable. Staff also noted in group discussions that they have four essential freedoms within the company: freedom from fear, freedom to fail, freedom from chaos and freedom to be. These concepts provide staff with a conducive working environment where they are valued and respected.

We have an open line of communications to our (managers)¹¹. (Staff member, group discussion; quoted with permission from interviewee)

An advertising artist provided an example of DDB's working environment:

Weekly we have these meetings as a team to talk about our pipeline (of work). It's kind of like a free brainstorming session of how you want to manage...say, for example, the upcoming, Halloween event. If you present an idea, and if it's possible, if it's practical, we can make it happen. The team is almost always in full support. (Quoted with permission from interviewee)

Impact on clients and marketing approaches

Some staff noted that DDB is extending its organisational culture and values around WGE and inclusion to its operations, namely the way in which the company interacts and does business with clients. Staff consider this to be an important and radical change for an industry widely critiqued by feminist commentators for its role in reproducing gender inequality in its portrayal of

¹¹ While the use of the term 'superiors' is troubling, in the Philippine context this term is routinely used and not yet challenged.

stereotypical women and men in advertisements and the roles they play.¹² As the Culture Hub Director explained:

DDB (is being) braver about their communications with clients. (The company) is making efforts to “stop” unconscious bias among its clients (too). (For example), DDB has started to tell clients that “not all women want to be white” and that more gender-sensitive language is needed in advertisements. This is a huge paradigm shift in the industry. (Quoted with permission from interviewee)

DDB has supported an inclusive working culture where individual staff members who are passionate about certain topics such as gender equality, diversity and inclusion are given a free hand in their creative/advertising and marketing work to reflect these issues. These staff are now experts in their field and their design campaigns for their clients with these issues in mind.

Before working with PBCWE, DDB already had a conducive work culture that supported women and men equally. What PBCWE’s engagement brought was validation of the company’s WGE policies and practices as well as insight into areas where additional improvements could be made through, through for example staff training at all levels, including the leadership level, staff discussion, tighter policies and procedures and reflection.

Enhanced reputation and awards

DDB is now known amongst its peers and clients as a company that pioneers a more gender sensitive approach to advertising, marketing, and client engagement. According to staff this has enhanced the company’s reputation which, in their view, may spark competition for an industry-wide gender sensitive approach. To facilitate greater awareness of DDB’s approach, the Philippine Commission on Women showcased the DDB’s anti-sexual harassment campaign and helped increased support for the passing of the Safe Spaces Act.

DDB has received new work, produced gender equality related campaigns, and received awards because of its engagement with PBCWE. These results validate DDB’s efforts in taking forward a diverse, equitable and inclusive workplace together with flexible work arrangements that continue to attract and retain employees. DDB has been approached to produce gender sensitive commercials for NutriAsia and the ‘*Masarap na Love, Masayang Celebration*’ campaign, which supports the LGBTQ+ community and celebrates love in all forms.¹³

Recently, DDB was designated as Champion in the Gender Responsive Marketplace Category of the 2022 Philippines WEPs (Women’s Empowerment Principles) Awards hosted by the UN Women’s WeEmpowerAsia programme.¹⁴ This award recognizes DDB’s achievement of being a great employer of women.

¹² See for example: Naomi Wolf’s *The Beauty Myth* (2015); Asia Ewart: *The Past and Future of Gender Stereotypes in Advertising*, October 27th 2020 <https://www.shutterstock.com/blog/gender-stereotypes-in-advertising>

¹³ See <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2022/06/13/nutriasia-ddb-tribals-new-ad-campaign-celebrates-pride-in-all-kinds-of-love/>. Accessed 25 Nov. 22

¹⁴ In August 2021, DDB was named the winner of two Gold Stevie Awards for “Company of the Year” in the Advertising, Marketing, & Public Relations, and another Gold Stevie Award for “Most Exemplary Employer” in the COVID-19 Response category. In May 2022, DDB Group Philippines was awarded the “Best Place to Work: Individual Shop of the Year 2021” and gold winner at the recently concluded Campaign Agency of the Year (AOY) Global Awards.

Figure 3. 2022 Philippines WEPs (Women's Empowerment Principles) Awards



Source: DDB website (<https://ddb.com.ph/2022/11/05/ddb-group-philippines-named-2022-philippines-weps-awards-champion/>)

Impact on employee family life

PBCWE engagement, including the training on ASH, communication materials and the overall open and inclusive culture increased confidence among employees which in turn, according to staff interviewed, had a positive impact on employee family life. DDB staff felt they could talk with confidence to their families about sensitive issues related to gender.

One employee highlighted how DDB's working culture on WGE had influenced life at home for her daughter and her relationship with her father.

My daughter told me that she identifies herself as transexual. It helps that she knows that I work in an environment that is gender inclusive and that being gay is not a hindrance at my work. (Senior Content Navigator in KII; quoted with permission from interviewee)

My father lives with me and is kind of traditional. In the Philippines "Bakla" is the term used for gay men. Sometimes when my boys are crying, he says stuff like: Why are you crying? Are you gay? But since I have colleagues who are gay, I can now say: 'what's wrong with being gay? Do you know that my boss is gay? Do you know that the that these people I work with who are gay and they're all OK and they're actually brilliant people?' So, you know (DDB company culture) is a good way (for me) to explain to my children that there's nothing wrong with gay people. (Female employee, quoted with permission from interviewee)

Flexible work arrangements

DDB introduced flexible work arrangements during the COVID-19 lock down. PBCWE's support to the company included discussion, advice and training materials, and interviewees said this helped them explore and reflect on how flexible work can potentially help women in the workplace. DDB's Flexible Work Arrangement Survey found 94 percent of employees rank their experience of this approach as high.

PBCWE elaborated on the concept of 'flexible working'. PBCWE underscored the word "flexibility" and how it empowers women in the

workforce. (Group Chief Culture Officer; quoted with permission from interviewee)

PBCWE's advice on flexible work helped the company understand the rationale behind it as a strategy for WGE, as the Group Chief Culture Officer explained:

We realize that work flexibility especially works for helping women, especially mothers. We know we could lose them if we don't change because they are so busy. This is especially true for working mothers and single parents (men and women) during the pandemic. (Quoted with permission from interviewee)

WGE Drivers of Change in DDB Philippines

Based on a review of practice and experience, IW identified 7 drivers of change or 'critical ingredients' required to achieve WGE.¹⁵ This section discusses several key drivers observed in DDB's journey of change in their order of importance.

Sustained Leadership, Commitment and Accountability

This aspect in any company is critical. DDB had a critical mass of female leaders, a CEO and COO & CFO who are, according to the Chief Culture Officer – feminists. Female leaders acted in concert with their male counterparts to drive change forward and provide an inclusive working environment – not just for women but men too.

DDB's leadership and senior managers also considered their company to be accountable to the Philippine's legal framework on gender equality. In engaging with PBCWE, the company wanted an independent third-party assessment of their progress on WGE and women's inclusion in the company and an endorsement which could be made public.

We hold a sense of accountability in what we are doing for WGE. The policies exist, the company must truly practice it and implement the law. (Quoted with permission from staff member in a group discussion.)

"We (engaged) with PBCWE because recognized the need for WGE and we wanted to partner with someone who could hold us accountable. If it's not measured, (it) is nothing. Nothing (can be) improved, so we wanted to be held accountable for what we say. (Group Chief Culture Officer, quoted with permission.)

Conducive company culture

Those researching this case study observed the importance of DDB's culture of decency and fairness for their employees. These values supported and sustained WGE and women's inclusion. DDB staff said their leaders do not abuse power, and collectively all staff were expected to behave in a supportive manner. As the HR Administrative and Compliance officer explained in a group discussion:

¹⁵ Investing in Women, 2022. 'Drivers of Change for Workplace Gender Equality' Available online at <https://investinginwomen.asia/knowledge/drivers-of-change-for-workplace-gender-equality/>

People act with decency, and we are treated with dignity and respect. (HR Administrative and Compliance Officer, quoted with permission from interviewee.)

Other interviewees also shared their insights:

I like the environment. I think it's a healthy working environment and culture. We actually have a lot of initiatives to ensure that employees are kept happy. (Artist, quoted with permission from interviewee.)

I cannot find another company that has the same culture as this. People are practicing real freedoms. (Manager, quoted with permission from interviewee.)

Gender equality policies and processes, including on ASH

DDB had strong policies supporting WGE. The engagement with PBCWE helped tighten policy language in places and ensure mechanisms and processes were in place. This included zero tolerance towards sexual harassment. PBCWE's support to DDB in undertaking the GEARS assessment helped revise, improve and update DDB's policies on ASH but it also outlined areas where further action could be taken, for example understanding why women's retention rates were lower than men even though the company had surpassed gender balance at all levels. It's hoped that research into this aspect will be explored by DDB in the future.

At DDB, we will not tolerate any behaviour that amounts to sexual harassment. And any officer or employee found to have committed sexual harassment and shall be subjected to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal. But yeah, we educate our employees. (HR Administrative and Compliance Officer, quoted with permission from interviewee.)

Gender Equality Company Strategy

Of key importance in this area were the tools PBCWE provided to track progress on the three areas selected by the company for action and progress. These tools include well-articulated actions, key performance indicators and outcome targets.

Gender Equality Data, Insights, and Analytics

DDB staff said that one of the driving factors behind engaging with PBCWE and the GEARS assessment was to understand where the company stood on WGE compared to other similar marketing and PR companies. The industry is aware of its feminist critique and the way in which advertising can project the negative stereotypes and roles for men and women that entrench women's progress in the labour market and workforce. As indicated earlier, DDB aspires to be a market leader not just in WGE, diversity and inclusion but also in applying a gender perspective to its core business: marketing, advertising, and PR. Having gender equality data, insights and analytics provided by the GEARS assessment has enabled the company to demonstrate publicly how well they are doing. This gives them a competitive edge which in turns helps with the company's bottom line.

Gender Equality Communications and Transparency

Four factors played an important role in driving change in relation to communications and transparency when it comes to WGE: DDB's communication products (see Figure 4 below), the training provided by PBCWE and transparency about the company's progress. In addition, of particular importance was action to clarify what WGE and ASH policies meant and explain key concepts to staff members.

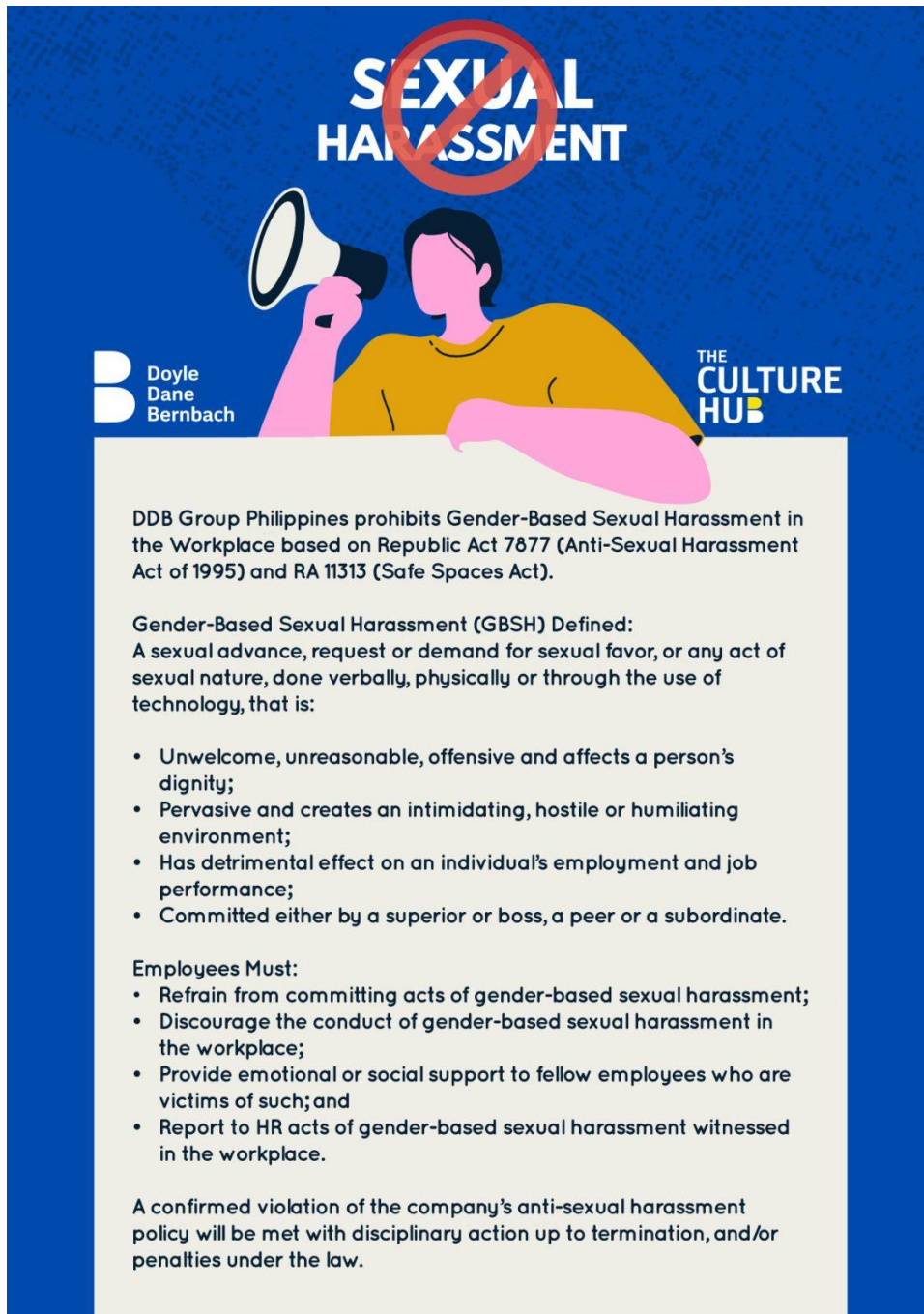


Figure 4. An example of DDB's communications products

Source: IEC poster sample from The Culture Hub, 2022.

Conclusion

This case study shows that the IW initiative to support business coalitions to work with influential businesses in shifting workplace cultures and policy barriers to achieve WGE has had tangible impact in DDB Group Philippines (DDB). DDB's engagement with PBCWE and GEARS increased DDB staff's awareness of why WGE and inclusion matters. This in turn led to stronger internal policies, practices, staff knowledge and values. PBCWE's support helped systematically address areas of weakness and it demystified, for DDB's workforce, key terms and concepts associated with sexual harassment. It also resulted in DDB encouraging its clients to address WGE and to be more gender sensitive in the way they advertise. PBCWE's engagement also further enhanced the company's reputation amongst its peers and clients. Improvements in WGE in DDB impacted positively on staff family life. PBCWE played an important role in coaching and mentoring DDB, providing the tools of assessment and leading the process of change. Critical factors that drove change and impact in DDB included: leadership and commitment; a conducive company culture; tangible improvements to policies and practices; a gender strategy and action plan, and communications and transparency with staff about what could be improved and how.

DDB aspired to leverage their company-wide approach to WGE to encourage clients to embrace WGE and to be more gender sensitive in the way they market and advertise. DDB also saw opportunities to instigate competition towards a more gender-sensitive approach in the marketing industry at large. Those advocating for gender equality have long noted that advertising and marketing has an impact on perpetuating negative stereotypes of the roles men and women play. It's a welcome development that such a major industry player is tackling this issue.