

GENDER ACTION PLAN

A. Gender Context

1. **Despite progress on various development indicators, gender inequality persists in Sri Lanka.** While Sri Lanka has achieved positive developments in health and education, gender inequality in employment persists. Sri Lanka is the only South Asian country that has achieved the Millennium Development Goal of universal primary education, as well as gender parity in secondary education. In contrast, women's participation in the economy was only 37% compared to 75% for men in 2017.¹ Research by McKinsey shows that equal participation of men and women in the economy could add \$20 billion to Sri Lanka's gross domestic product.²

2. **Women are disadvantaged in the Sri Lankan labor market.** Women in Sri Lanka are often excluded from higher income generating activities, impeding their upward occupational mobility. The unemployment rates of women are more than double that of men at all age levels, and there is a large concentration of economically active women in unpaid family labor, particularly in agriculture. Sector-wise, women are concentrated in low productivity and low-income agriculture and in the plantation sector, in assembly-line jobs in garment and other industries with minimal opportunities for promotion.³ Women's labor force participation in the country is often compounded by many factors such as the lack of affordable and quality childcare services, lack of support in sharing household work and some workplace cultures that are not supportive of women employees.⁴

3. **Women are actively involved in the agriculture sector but have unequal access to skills, extension services, and markets.** Since women's contribution is counted as unpaid work, they are often not seen as farmers affecting their ability to access agricultural assistance and participate in on-farm decision-making (footnote 3). Cash crops are frequently regarded as 'men's crops' and vegetable and home garden crops as 'women's crops'. Women tend to work at the production stages of the value chain largely because this work can be done close to home, and this gives women the flexibility they need to carry out household chores.⁵

B. John Keells Holdings PLC (JKH)

4. **Gender inclusivity at JKH.** The Group has a gender policy, an equal employment and non-discrimination policy, and an anti-sexual harassment policy which apply to all its businesses. The anti-sexual harassment policy includes a confidential reporting mechanism, procedures for investigation and redressal of complaints. JKH also offers flexible work arrangements to its staff. Maternity leave of 100 days and paternity leave of 5 days is offered which exceeds the requirement per national laws. The Group is keen to enhance gender diversity and inclusion across its businesses particularly by increasing women's representation in the company and supply chain. As of March 2021, women constituted 43% of staff in the retail business (see Table

¹ J. Solotaroff et al. 2018. [Getting to Work: Unlocking Women's Potential in Sri Lanka's Labor Force](#). Washington DC. World Bank.

² Jonathan Woetzel et al. 2018. [The Power of Parity: Advancing Women's Equality in Asia Pacific](#). McKinsey Global Institute.

³ ADB. 2015. [Country Gender Assessment: Sri Lanka \(An Update\)](#). Manila.

⁴ UN Women. [UN Women Sri Lanka](#) (accessed 23 September 2021).

⁵ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. 2018. [Country Gender Assessment of the agriculture and the rural sector in Sri Lanka](#). Bangkok.

1). The Group through their Foundation is also working on prevention of gender-based violence and child abuse and women's economic empowerment activities.

Table 1: John Keells Holdings PLC Staffing

(As of 31 March 2021)

Role	Male	Female	Total	% Female
Assistant Vice President & Above	12	1	13	8%
Managers	20	5	25	20%
Assistant Managers	41	19	60	32%
Executives	375	139	514	27%
Non-Executives	2,630	2,189	4,819	45%
Total Employees	3,078	2,353	5,431	43%

Source: John Keells Holdings PLC.

C. Gender Action Plan

5. The project is categorized as effective gender mainstreaming (EGM). The gender measures for the project are presented in Table 2.

6. **Technical Assistance.** A Technical Assistance grant will complement the equity investment by providing capacity building support to 2,000 fruit and vegetable farmers (including at least 30% female famers) in Sri Lanka on (i) climate-resilient and organic farming best practice methods and technologies, adapted to the needs of the local context; and (ii) functional financial literacy, including a focus on access to savings and credit facilities and a module on the economics of climate-resilient capital investments. The capacity building will also focus on female farmers and will help boost women's participation in the horticulture industry and accelerate gender equality by improving their financial and technical capabilities.

Table 2: Gender Action Plan

Results Chain	Performance Indicators with Targets and Baselines
Outputs	By FY2024:
2. Local employment generated with gender equality enhanced	2a. Employment created during the operation of retail and distribution business increased to (Confidential Information deleted) 2b. (Confidential Information deleted) participants in JKH's Management Trainee Programme are women (Confidential Information deleted)
3. Farmers' climate resiliency and financial literacy improved in a gender-sensitive manner	3a. (Confidential Information deleted) Farmers in Sri Lanka (Confidential Information deleted) trained in best practices for climate-resilient vegetable and fruit farming (Confidential Information deleted) 3b. (Confidential Information deleted)in Sri Lanka (Confidential Information deleted)) trained in functional financial literacy (Confidential Information deleted)

Results Chain	Performance Indicators with Targets and Baselines
5. Gender equality in the workplace enhanced	5a. Subsidized creche services made available to working parents ((Confidential Information deleted)) 5b. An online gender inclusion and diversity awareness module for staff developed (Confidential Information deleted)

JKH = John Keells Holdings PLC, N/A = not applicable.

(Confidential Information deleted)

Source: Asian Development Bank.