Promoting Gender Equality in the Telecommunications Industry for the Inclusive Recovery

PPWE Chinese Taipei

APEC

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Contents

Project Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerates digital transformation and brings new work styles to our lives. The need to stay connected in the physically contactless economy has created unprecedented opportunities for the telecommunications industry. However, as the telecom industry is traditionally male dominated, women may be left out of this trend. Therefore, this project aims to understand the current situation of women's participation in the telecom industry and to explore how to facilitate women's entry, retention, and promotion in the telecom industry. To achieve the project objectives, this project has conducted a Pilot Survey, a Best Practice Collection, a Workshop, and a Policy Dialogue Webinar.

Seeing the lack of sex-disaggregated data regarding women's participation in the telecom sector in the APEC region, this project conducted a **Pilot Survey** to collect gender data from governments and telecom companies in the APEC region. Government and company policies were also collected to understand how the public and private sectors have helped women to enter, retention, and advance in the telecom industry.

Moreover, recognizing the importance of role models for young women to envision their success and for companies to recognize and adopt gender diversity and inclusion policies, this project also conducted a **Best Practice Collection**. By interviewing a total of 10 female leaders and telecom companies across APEC economies, we sought to encourage more women to join the telecom sector and to increase telecom companies' understanding of how to build a gender-inclusive workplace.

To share experience and raise awareness on how to increase women's entry, retention, and advancement in the telecom industry, a **Workshop** was held with topics on female leadership and workplace diversity and inclusion. Through the sharing of female leaders and telecom company representatives, this workshop spotlighted the key factors affecting female leadership and the effective approaches for facilitating women's retention and promotion.

Based on the results of the aforementioned activities, the project team obtained four project findings and identified three features that make the telecom industry different from other male-dominated industries in terms of promoting gender equality. Three aspects of policy recommendations were also drafted for both governments and telecom companies to build a more diverse and inclusive telecom industry.

To ensure our drafted policy recommendations are comprehensive, a self-fund **Policy Dialogue Webinar** was held as this project's final event to collect more experiences and actions taken by both public and private sectors. Therefore, the Webinar focused on the effective policies or measures for women's entry, retention, and promotion in the telecom industry, as well as the challenges remained. Based on the sharing and suggestions made by government and company representatives, the drafted policy recommendations were finalized.

In this **Final Report**, the outcomes of Pilot Survey and Best Practice Collection, the summary of the Workshop and Policy Dialogue Webinar, and the project findings and three aspects of policy recommendations are presented.

Pilot Survey

Pilot Survey Analysis

I. Introduction

This pilot survey aims to understand women's participation in the telecommunications industry in the APEC region through sex-disaggregated data, as well as to understand government and company policies for facilitating women's entry, stay, and promotion in the telecommunications industry.

In this survey, which was conducted between March 1 and April 30, two versions of questionnaire were distributed: one for government and the other one for telecommunications companies, so that data at both economy and company levels can be obtained to draw the broad picture of women's participation in the telecommunications industry in the APEC region.

In total, 9 economies responded to the questionnaire: Canada; Chile; Japan; Malaysia; Mexico; Peru; Singapore; Chinese Taipei; and Thailand. These include 8 government questionnaires and 14 company questionnaires.

The questionnaire consists of three sections. The first section asks about sex-disaggregated data. In the government questionnaire, 7 economies reported the sex-disaggregated data. Four economies collected data specifically on the telecommunications industry, while 2 economies reported data from the Information and Communications sector, and 1 economy reported data from the sector of Information, Culture and Recreation. In the company questionnaire, only 1 company did not collect sex-disaggregated data. Totally 13 companies answered the questions on sex-disaggregated data, although some data were not available.

In the second section, government respondents shared their policies on the following aspects: (1) facilitating women's career development in the industry, (2) increasing the number of girls studying ICT subjects, and (3) promoting gender diversity and inclusion (D&I) at workplace. The company respondents also shared their gender D&I initiatives or programs, as well as their COVID-19 response measures that may help build an inclusive work environment.

The third section touches on the opportunities and challenges brought to women by digital transformation, which was accelerated due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The public and private sectors shared their observations and insights from different perspectives.

II. Women in the Telecommunications Workforce

2.1 Economy Level

● **Overall workforce**
At the economy level, the percentage of women working in the telecommunications industry ranges from 24.6% to 43.0%. The two highest figures are from the Information and Communications sector and Information, Culture and Recreation sector, respectively. In the telecommunications industry, the percentages concentrates in the range of 24.6% to 36.9%, with one economy having women occupying less than one third of employees in the industry. (See Figure 1)

● **Management and/or leadership levels**
At the management and/or leadership levels, the percentage of women drops significantly, ranging from 5.2% to 21.5%. However, only 4 governments reported the percentage of women for this category (See Figure 1).
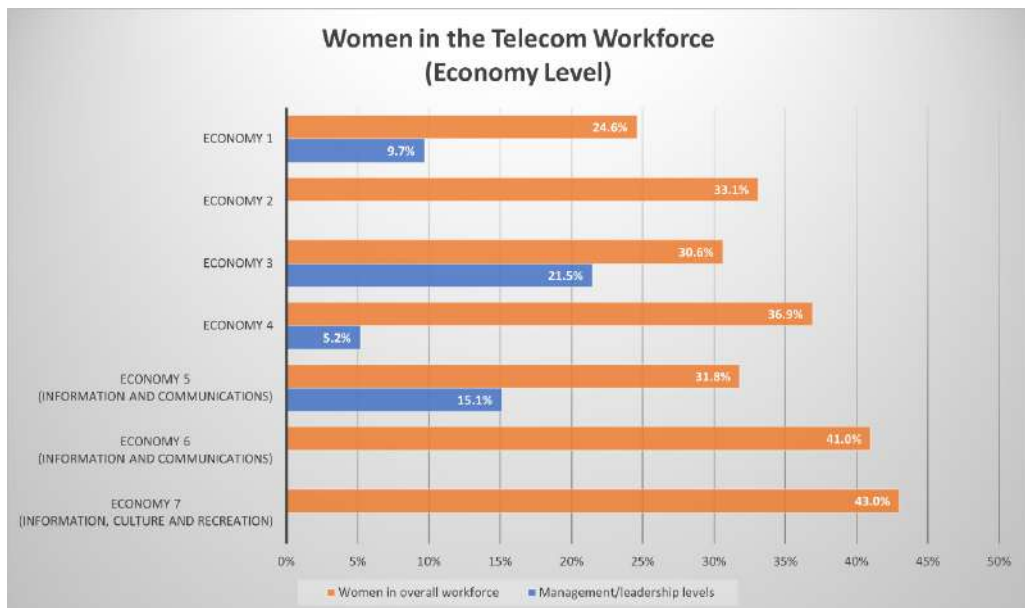
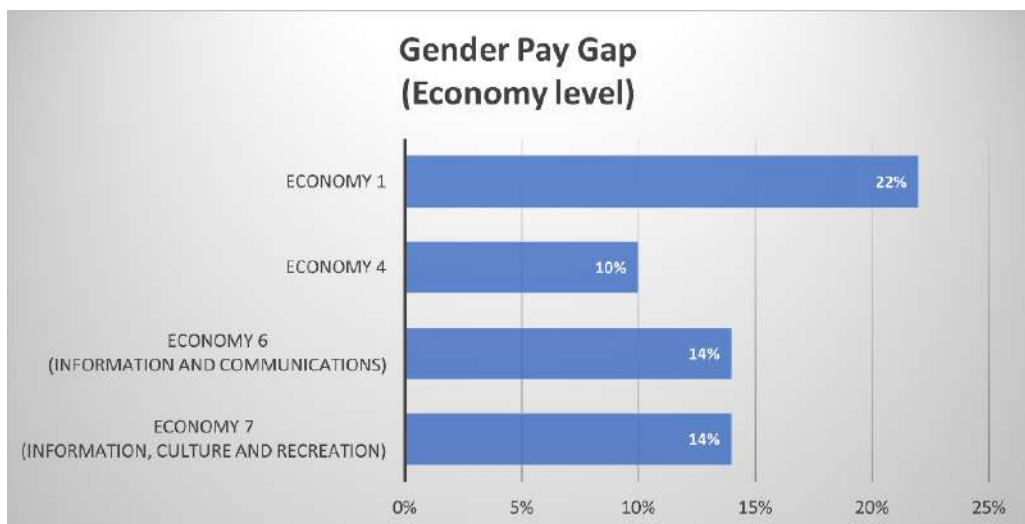**Figure 1.** Women representation in the telecommunications sector across different economies

Figure 2. Gender pay gap in the telecommunications industry across different economies

- **Number of years working**

Only 2 economies reported employees' number of years working in the telecommunications sector. The data show that men stay longer time than women in the telecom industry; the gender gap in the two economies is 1.5 and 4.5 years, respectively.

- **Gender pay gap**

There are 4 economies reporting data on gender pay gap, which ranges from 10% to as high as 22%. (See Figure 2)

2.2 Company Level

- **Overall workforce**

Among the 13 companies where data are available, the average percentage of women in the overall workforce is 41%, with the highest percentage reaching 50.0% and the lowest at 25.0%. Totally 10 companies have more than one third of their employees being women.

- **Women in new hires**

The percentage of women in new hires in the 13 companies ranges from 14.6% to 59.5%, and the average is 36.2%. However, in 3 companies, less than a third of new hires are women.

- **Senior leadership positions[1]**

However, at the senior leadership level, the average percentage of women drops significantly to 30.5%. Although 9 companies have women occupying more than a third of senior leadership roles, with the highest reaching 50.0%, there is 1 company having no women in the senior leadership positions.

- **Board of directors**

On average, women account for only 23.0% of board directors. Totally 7 companies have women accounting for less than a third of board directors, and 3 company have no women on the board.

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1. The definition of senior leadership positions differs across companies, constituting as a limitation in this survey.

- **Women in ICT-related departments**

When it comes to women in ICT-related departments, the percentage is even lower. The average is only 21.1%, and there are as many as 10 companies where less than a third of employees in ICT-related departments are women, including 1 company having no women there.

Figure 3 clearly shows the glass ceiling effect in the telecommunications industry. As the career ladder goes up, the percentage of women goes down. The percentage of women in ICT-related departments is the lowest, echoing the statistics in many studies that there is still a lack of women in STEM field.

- **Number of working years**

A total of 11 companies provided figures on the average number of working years among men and women. It is observed that in most companies (72.7%), men worked longer years than women; the gap is as large as 5.3 years.

- **Gender pay gap**

There are 8 companies reporting figures on gender pay gap, among which 3 companies asserted that women and men are paid equally without pay gap existing between different genders. Among the other 5 companies, the average pay gap is 8%, with the highest gap reaching 17% and the lowest at 4%. (See Figure 4)

III. How Policy Works

3.1 Government policies

3.1.1 Promoting women's career development in the telecom/ICT industry

The sex-disaggregated data collected in this study show that the representation of women in the telecom industry is lower than that of men, corresponding to the findings of the existing reports. As OECD (2019) pointed out, gender differences exist regarding the skills and confidence in using digital technology; inherent biases and limitations in society have curtailed women and girls' ability to benefit from the digital transformation. Governments have also noticed this phenomenon
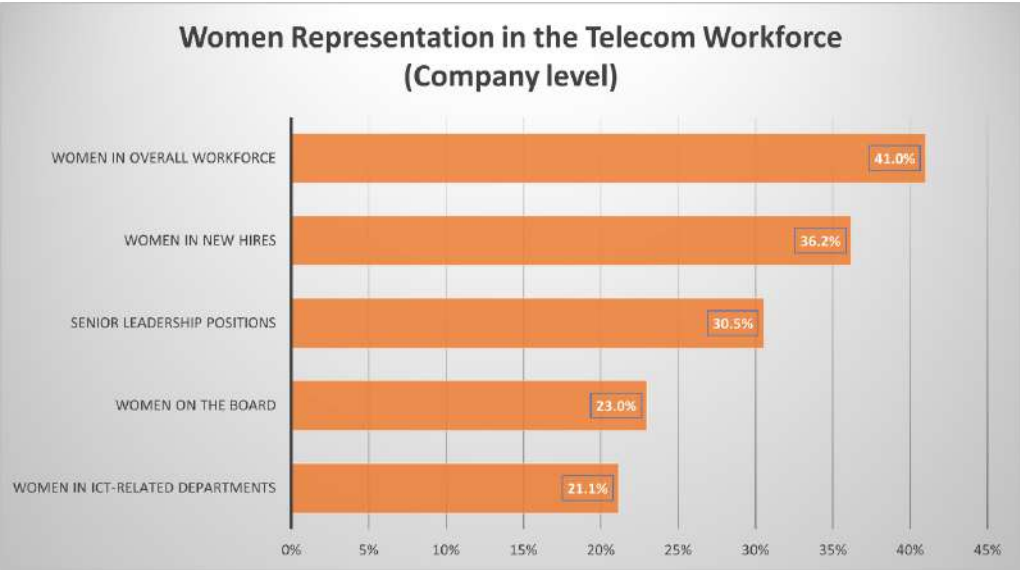
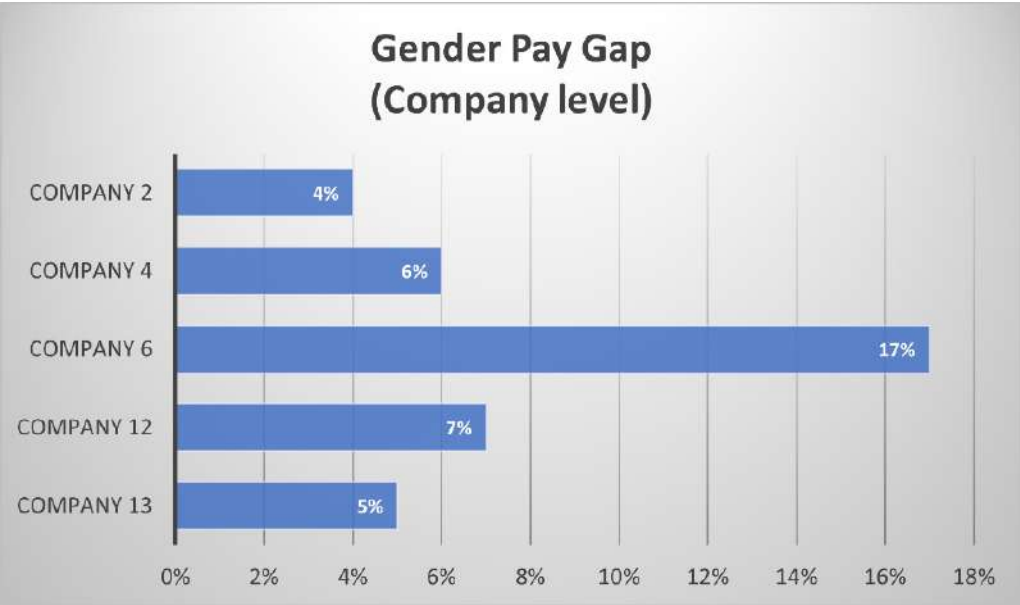**Figure 3.** Gender pay gap in the telecommunications industry across different economies

Figure 4. Gender pay gap across different telecommunications companies

and taken actions to assist women with their career development in these industries.

In this survey, all the 7 governments have implemented policies in this regard, including equipping women with digital skills, supporting women networks, collecting sex-disaggregated data for monitoring, and increasing women's access to telecommunications-related services and technology.

• Training:

It has been recognized that the gender gaps in digital skills and leadership have prevented women from fully participating in the digital economy and the ICT industry. Therefore, governments have provided trainings on digital skills and digital leadership for women, so that they are able to catch the economic opportunities and hold leadership positions in the ICT sector.

Example —— **Peru**

In 2020, through articulation with the private company Movistar, the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations participated by providing technical advice to the "Mujeres en red" (Women in network) Project, which seeks to train women to work as telecommunications technicians.

• Women networks:

Female networks have proved to be helpful for women's career advancement by connecting women to female leaders, boosting their confidence, and enabling them to learn leadership skills and the "secret language of success." In this regard, the governments have taken actions to support female networks and help connect women workers to female mentors. This is particularly important for women in a male-dominated industry. With a female mentor, young women can learn how to combat the challenges ahead of them and climb up the career ladder in this industry.

Example —— **Canada**

Women in Communications and Technology (WCT), an economy-wide non-profit organization supported by the Canadian government, helps women to develop career and leadership skills, and connects women to mentors in the ICT industry that can promote and support them.

• Gender data:

Through the collection of sex-disaggregated data, governments can monitor the progress of women's participation in the STEM field and develop policies correspondingly.

Example —— **Chile**

The Ministry of Science, Technology, Knowledge and Innovation of Chile developed a public data observatory of the STEM system, called OBSERVA, which has data that is disaggregated by sex with a cross-cutting gender approach.

• Access to telecommunications-related services and technology

The developing economies in this survey pay particular attention to women's access and use of telecommunications-related services and technology, highlighting the importance of women's rights to connectivity and participation in the digital environment.

Example —— **Mexico**

The Federal Telecommunications Institute (IFT) has issued qualitative reports analyzing different aspects associated with the use of telecommunications and ICT services for various user groups, aiming to provide qualitative data related to entry and development of women's careers in the telecommunications and ICT industries.

In addition, the IFT has implemented a series of mechanisms to provide users with information and skill training options to promote informed decision-making, and a proper use of their telecommunications services and equipment. In this regard, yearly, the IFT organizes several activities such as trainings, conferences, workshops and others (both virtual and in person) in the context of the International Day of Girls in ICT, to foster the inclusion of girls and young women in STEM.

3.1.2 Encouraging girls to study ICT related subjects

Education is a fundamental factor influencing women's career choice. Therefore, to increase women's participation in the telecom or ICT industry, policies should be implemented to encourage more girls to study ICT-related subjects. In this survey, governments have put efforts to stimulate female students' interests in ICT subjects and familiarize them with STEM careers by presenting female role models to them, connecting them to career women from STEM sectors, arranging related promotion activities and awards, integrating ICT courses into the curriculum, providing scholarships, and strengthening their employability in the digital economy through internship.

Example —— **Japan**

The Cabinet Office provides information on its website on the initiatives and events of the "Riko-challenge" Support Group, which consists of industry, academia, and government organizations that promote the success of women in science and engineering fields, as well as messages from women active in science and engineering fields to female junior and senior high school students, their parents and teachers.

Example —— **Chinese Taipei**

The Ministry of Education invited outstanding women in science fields to visit senior high schools to instruct experiments in class and give talks to students. Moreover, to enhance students' understanding of digital technology and encourage female students to participate in STEM field, the Ministry of Education has planned related information education courses in the curriculum for secondary schools and constantly arrange related campus promotion activities, individual counseling, and group guidance through the "Career Planning" course.

3.1.3 Promoting gender D&I at workplace in the telecom/ICT industry

After entering the telecom or ICT industry, women's retention and advancement would be influenced by the inclusiveness and diversity of the workplace. In this survey, four governments reported initiatives for promoting gender D&I at workplace, although they are not specifically for the telecommunications industry. The policies mainly center on providing incentives for the private sector. Certifications or awards have been established and challenge events have been held to recognize companies' efforts on gender D&I and to encourage more companies to join these efforts. Guidance has also been provided to help companies implement gender-friendly measures.

Example —— **Singapore**

The SG Women in Tech (SGWiT) and SGTech (the trade association for the tech industry in Singapore) launched the SGWiT Corporate Pledge, where companies pledge to create a conducive environment with strong support systems to attract, retain and develop more women tech professionals. The initiative aims to encourage companies to address the key motivators for young women to take up a tech career, and for women tech professionals to continue to grow and thrive in the tech industry.

Example —— **Chinese Taipei**

The "National Quality Award," "National Award of Outstanding SMEs," and "Rising Star Award" were organized by different government agencies to encourage companies to support gender equality at workplace. In addition, board member diversification was set as an indicator for corporate governance evaluation. The government also organized publicity talks and developed the on-site expert guidance system to assist enterprises in implementing gender-friendly measures superior to the statutory requirements.

3.1.4 Collaborating with the private sector

From the policies reported in the questionnaire, we can observe the importance of public-private partnership in promoting gender equality in the telecommunications sector. Government may work with the private sector by providing resources and support for non-governmental organizations, inviting industries and academia to join their initiatives and engage in related advocacy, or participating in the programs launched by the private sector.

The public-private partnership is particularly crucial for promoting gender D&I at workplace. With government's support, companies can have more resources or incentives to work on gender equality; similarly, with companies' support, it would be easier for the government to implement their gender equality agendas and to encourage more companies to join the efforts, as shown in the following examples and those presented above.

Example — **Peru**
The Alliance "+ Women and Girls in Science" is a program made up of nine public and private entities committed to gender equality. This initiative seeks to shorten the gender gap that makes it difficult for girls, adolescents, and women to find opportunities in the science field. The main objective is to promote activities to make visible the role of women in the fields of science and show girls and adolescents these areas as a professional opportunity. All the entities participating in this Alliance are committed to promoting and making visible the role of women and girls in science, having carried out different activities individually or together.

3.1.5 Governmental entity dedicated to gender equality

We also noticed that some governments established an entity responsible for incorporating gender perspective into their policies and setting gender equality agendas, especially for the STEM and technology field. The establishment of such entities is to ensure that all the policies have a gender perspective and can be implemented effectively.

Example — **Chile**
Chile has the Interministerial Team for Gender Equality in Science, Technology and Innovation, in which the Ministries of Women and Gender Equality, Science, Foreign Affairs and the Undersecretary of Telecommunications take part, to identify and lead Chile's agenda in the commitments on women in STEM, including the launch of the first Policy for Gender Equality in Science, Technology, Knowledge and Innovation and its action plan. Also, the Ministry of Women and Gender Equality, with the support of the Ministry of Transport and Telecommunications,

are implementing the Regional Alliance for the Digitalization of Women in Latin America and the Caribbean. The Alliance created the virtual platform TodasConectadas, alongside UN Women, Microsoft, Mastercard, to provide women and girls with free virtual training on digital skills; and is currently working to develop economy-wide programs to improve women's access to digital technologies, with the technical support of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean in coordination with UN Women.

3.2 Company Policies

3.2.1 Promoting gender diversity and inclusion

The ILO report (2022) suggested that D&I plays a critical role in the high performance of the workforce, businesses, economies and societies globally. Studies of McKinsey & Company (2020) and Harvard Business Review (2019) have indicated that companies with higher level of gender diversity are more likely to achieve higher productivity, gain higher profits, and foster innovative thinking. Moreover, inclusion is closely linked to employee engagement, serving as a key component of employee retention, productivity, and financial performance. A diverse workforce can attract not only more talents but also more investors.

Among the 14 companies that replied to the questionnaire, 9 companies shared their initiatives or strategies on gender D&I, which can be categorized into the following aspects:

• Setting goals and monitoring gender data
Companies integrate D&I into their agendas, including management meetings and board member composition, and set goals for women representation at management levels and technical roles. In addition, gender data have been collected and reported to monitor progress and policy effectiveness.

• Recruiting and developing talents
The ways to achieve gender diversity goals would be supporting the career advancement of current female employees and recruiting new female talents. For the existing employees, some companies implement

programs to help female employees develop soft and business skills required for leadership, thereby increasing their opportunity to be promoted to a higher position. In addition, companies may support women employees to create women's groups or join women's networks, where they can receive support and advice from female leaders and peers along their career path.

From the perspective of recruitment, one company reported that the telecom sector has encountered challenges in the recruitment and development of women. Therefore, they implemented a program to promote the training and employability of women to close the gender gaps in the technical roles. Another company reported an internship program that particularly recruits STEM female students, who then therefore have the opportunity to become the company's formal employees.

• Providing support for parents
As women are usually expected to take care of family and domestic chores, work flexibility policy, which has been adopted by an increasing number of companies due to the pandemic, is vital for female employees to juggle family and career. In addition, companies also provide parental benefits, such as paid parental leaves, and inclusive facilities, such as lactation room and childcare center, which are believed to be helpful for preventing women from dropping out of workforce because of childcare burden.

Recognizing the difficulties for women to make a balance between family and career, one company mentioned they organized forums and invited external experts to have conversations with female leaders on these topics. This not only can bring women leaders together in solidarity, but also support them to pursue career progression.

• Creating an inclusive culture
Working in an inclusive environment means all the employees feel being respected and valued for who they are and have a strong sense of belonging with others at work. Unconscious bias training is the main strategy for creating an inclusive

culture at the workplace, and the training may be designed specifically for managers or technicians to eliminate gender-based bias and prevent potential discrimination at decision-making levels or male-dominated departments. Moreover, celebrating diversity on special days, such as International Women's Day and Mother's Day, is also an approach to raise employees' awareness of respect colleagues of diverse backgrounds and foster an open and inclusive culture.

• Expanding influence and making social impact
In addition to internal policies, some companies have further extended their efforts externally to the entire economy or even the region. The efforts mainly concentrate on providing skill training for women and promoting women entrepreneurs using ICT. In doing so, the companies can expand their influence to make larger social impact.

Case 1 — **Maxis,** *Malaysia*
Maxis has implemened initiatives both internally and externally to increase women's representation in its workforce and in the technology roles in Malaysia and globally.

• Internally:
1. Setting goals for women representation amongst managers and technical related roles, with the progress on gender equality being measured and tracked.
2. Learning and development programs to equip women managers with soft skills.
3. Unconscious bias training programs amongst managers to encourage an inclusive culture.
4. Women At Maxis employee groups (set up by women employees and their allies) to drive meaningful and impactful activities to support women at Maxis, which includes coffee chat sessions and collaboration with other women networks.

• Externally:
1. Uplifting women entrepreneurs through eKelas Usahawan with digital marketing skills.
2. Allocating Women in Tech scholarship category

through Maxis scholarship awards to sponsor women undergraduates in STEM studies.

3. Engaging women technology community externally through speaking sessions.

4. Maxis has been a signatory support for UN Women Empowerment Principles in July 2021, where the company is committed to empowering women in the workplace and community.

Case 2 —— **Telefonica,** *Peru*

The telecommunications sector has traditionally been composed and led by men. For this reason, at the end of 2020, Telefonica Peru promoted "Mujeres en Red" with the aim of promoting the training and employability of women in the telecommunications technical service. The project was implemented in partnership with Telefonica's partner companies and the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations. The project began with 0.5% of women who were part of the technical service staff and has reached its milestone that 10% of the total staff hired by the partner companies are women.

In 2021, due to its good results, "Mujeres en Red" was extended to Telefonica's operations in Colombia, Argentina and Venezuela. Thus, at the level of Latin America, the project promoted decent employment for more than 700 female technicians in the telecommunications sector and trained more than 7,000 people on topics such as female empowerment and new masculinities.

In 2022, to contribute to the project sustainability, "Mujeres en Red" expanded its scope in Peru to other areas of the company, including field labor maintenance, logistics and B2B, and will continue to run in the technical service.

3.2.2 COVID-19 Response Measures

All the respondent companies reported that their COVID-19 response measures are not designed specifically for women but apply to and benefit both women and men. Most of the companies implement remote work or work-from-home policy or allow their employees to have flexible work hours. Some particularly highlighted that parents with special care responsibility are allowed to take extra care leaves or

apply for work from home. It is worth noting that some companies had implemented these policies before the COVID-19 pandemic.

Moreover, during the lockdown period, employees' mental health is a focus for many companies. These companies provided psychological support, counseling service, or stress management sessions to help their employees endure the tough times during the pandemic, especially for those who may be stressed out because of heavy care responsibilities.

As women typically assume the majority of care responsibilities and often struggle to make a work-life balance, these measures may be helpful for them to juggle family and career, and therefore can be seen as a way to build an inclusive work environment to enable women to stay in the workforce.

IV. Digital transformation and COVID-19

With the development of new technologies and the deployment of 5G network, the digital economy has grown rapidly, and many industries has undergone digital transformation. This trend has been particularly accelerated since the outbreak of COVID-19, which led to lockdown and social distancing measures. As online services are in high demand, the telecommunications industry has been at the forefront of digitalization. According to the questionnaire responses, this has brought both opportunities and challenges for women, as well as for telecom companies and governments.

4.1 Opportunities

4.1.1 For women

The survey results show that digitalization can bring women the following opportunities:

(1) Entering in the ICT sector

According to the responses from both the governments and companies, digital transformation has resulted in a diversification in the type and use of telecommunications services and platforms and therefore has created many new job opportunities in the telecommunications and ICT industries. This

can be an opportunity for women to join in these sectors.

(2) Staying in the workforce

Digitalization has enabled flexible work arrangements, including remote work and work from home, which have become popular after the outbreak of COVID-19. Flexible work arrangements can be helpful for women to juggle family and work, and therefore can increase women's possibility of staying in the workforce, instead of dropping out due to family care responsibilities. A government even cited a study showing that women across age groups had more remote work capacity than men.

4.1.2 For companies

(1) Paying more attention to work-life balance

During the pandemic when parents can only work at home with children beside them, the challenge of making a balance between career and family become manifest to the employers. The companies not only gained awareness of this challenges but also recognized the importance of work flexibility, emphasizing the implementation of initiatives that can support women who strive to excel both at work and at home.

(2) Building a diverse workforce

The telecom companies in this survey indicated that digital transformation not only provides new job opportunities for women, but also offers an opportunity for the companies to build diversity in workforce. As new digital services may require new skills, the telecom companies also catch this opportunity to develop female talents and enhance their skills, through training programs for example. One company particularly mentioned that the gender-balanced workforce can be representative of customers and therefore can provide better knowledge of consumers' preference.

4.1.3 For governments

(1) Cultivating female talents for the telecom industry

Seeing the many new job opportunities created in

the telecom industry due to digital transformation, the governments recognized that this is an opportunity for them to cultivate female talents and help more women enter this traditionally male-dominated sector. Therefore, in the survey, some governments reported the need to stimulate girls and young women's interest in STEM subjects and increase their access and participation in STEM jobs. It is also necessary to ensure women's adaptation to technological changes, so that they are able to catch the new opportunities.

(2) Improving women's access to high-speed Internet

A prerequisite for women's access to new digital jobs is the access to Internet. In particular, access to high-speed Internet provides the connectivity foundation required for digital skill development and the adoption of digital technologies. Under the circumstances of COVID-19 pandemic, when work-from-home arrangements become more prevalent, improving women's access to good-quality Internet can help them expand employment possibilities.

4.2 Challenges

According to the survey results, two major challenges can be identified as follows:

1. Work-family conflict

Although the pandemic has expedited the adoption of digital technologies at work and enabled flexible work arrangements, it has still been a challenge for women to adapt to the hybrid work modality. When childcare facilities and schools closed, working mothers took on additional unpaid care work and experienced tremendous stress. Although they are able to stay in the workforce, they may find it hard to switch between life and work, which can lead to mental health problems.

Moreover, not all women are "lucky enough" to be able to stay in their jobs. Still many women have to leave the workforce temporarily because of the care responsibilities. An economy cited its domestic statistics showing that women represent 94.7% of people who are unemployed or inactive and who are not job searching for reasons of care or family

responsibilities.

2. Low representation of women in STEM education and occupations

Despite the increasing job opportunities in the telecom industry, the number of women in STEM education and occupations has remained low, indicating women's less access to employment opportunities and lower capability to adapt to technological changes. This problem may offset the benefits digital transformation could bring to women.

Moreover, the trend of digitalization has caused many paperwork jobs and manual work to diminish, which are mostly taken by women. In other words, women are facing job loss, while still lacking the professional and technical skills required for digital transformation. This would be a major challenge for women to participate in the digital economy.

For companies, despite having the intention to increase diversity in the workforce, the small number of women in the current talent pool is also a challenge for them to recruit women. This again demonstrates the importance of promoting STEM education and providing digital skill training for women.

There are also other challenged being reported, such as the lack of access to the Internet, the lack of skills to use ICT products, which echo the opportunities that the governments and companies suggested for future efforts.

Best Practice
Collection

Ten Best Practices for Promoting Gender Equality in the Telecommunications Industry

It has been widely recognized that female role models are critical for young women to discover their potential and envision their success in male-dominated industries. Therefore, this best practice collection serves as a reference that shows how women can seize the opportunity to thrive in the telecom industry. We present female role models for young women to know their possibilities, and introduce companies' diversity and inclusion (D&I) policies to stimulate more companies to join the effort of facilitating women's entry, stay, and promotion in the telecom industry.

In this best practice collection, we interviewed a total of 6 female leaders and 4 telecom companies in the APEC region. By showing female leaders' life stories and career development experience, and companies' strategies for reducing gender disparities, this best practice collection seeks to encourage more women to join the telecom sector and to increase telecom companies' understanding of how to build a gender-inclusive workplace.

This best practice collection contains two sections. The first section presents how the women leaders become who they are today. Along with their journey, we can see the challenges women may face at work, the key factors for their success, and the vision they hold for a gender-friendly workplace. They also provide advice for young women to join this sector. The second section concentrates on what telecommunications companies have done to increase gender diversity and inclusion. The companies shared their gender equality visions, D&I initiatives, evaluation matrices, work-life balance measures, and the company culture that enable women to be seen and promoted.

Through this best practice collection, we hope to create an environment supporting women to unleash their unlimited potential in the telecommunications industry.

Section 1

WOMEN LEADERS AS INFLUENCERS

A Working Mother Reinventing a Better Workplace for Women

Nuraslina Zainal Abidin

Group Chief Executive Officer, Theta Edge Berhad (Malaysia)

Nuraslina Zainal Abidin is recognized as one of the top businesswomen in Malaysia, serving as Group Chief Executive Officer of Theta Edge Berhad, but she is much more than that. She is also an entrepreneur and a mother. She studied food technology at Universiti Sains Malaysia before founding her company GENAXIS, a consulting firm on transformation. When asked about what constitutes her success, Nuraslina believes that we can achieve whatever set our mind to do. By focusing on strengths rather than limitations, Nuraslina brings empathy and flexibility to the workplace.

> "
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> *You don't really have to conform to the normal social expectations. We set the expectations for people to deal with us, then people will start to change.*
>
> "
>
> **Nuraslina Zainal Abidin**

Nuraslina Zainal Abidin aspired to be the prime minister of Malaysia as a child, and this unrestrained, daring vision eventually led her to wear different hats later on in adulthood.

She is known in the corporate world as the GCEO of Theta Edge Berhad, an information communication and technology service provider. She is the founder of her own transformation consulting firm Genaxis and a certified Six Sigma and Lean Sigma guru, and all the while raising a family with 4 kids which includes an autistic child.

"The way I do it, I put priority on my kids and family first," Nuraslina says. "I have to first make sure that my kids have the proper means to be taken care of while I'm at work, and that they're healthy and happy. That way, when I'm at work I can be very focused."

Although societal expectations are changing, women are still often viewed as primary caretakers in Malaysia. Nuraslina continues to push for more flexible working conditions for women to feasibly join the workforce,especially the male-dominated telecommunications field.

Early Exposure to Entrepreneurship and Holistic All-Girls Education

Nuraslina says that attending an all-girl's school was fundamental in helping to build her confidence. "There's nothing you can't do there. You are basically encouraged to do everything," she says.

Being the eldest child also meant more responsibilities from a younger age.

"My grandma was a shop owner, and I would help her greet people and sell things. That gave me exposure to business," she adds. "As a shop owner my grandma does everything. There's no limitation in her capability as a female. I'm fortunate to grow up in the environment of strong women surrounding me."

With a can do attitude and early exposure to business operations, Nuraslina quickly switched from

food science and technology to telecommunications management, to utilize talents in creatively optimizing and transforming businesses.

Corporate to Provide Support for the Needs of Working Mothers

Nuraslina hopes that more companies prioritize the work-life balance of its employees – both male or female – especially after COVID-19 has normalized the working from home concept.

For those who still have to work in the office, however, she notes that there's still much to do in creating a friendlier environment for women, such as providing childcare services or breastfeeding stations and improving security for those who work late.

Nuraslina admits that she's fortunate to have an

accommodating boss and solid family support to enable her to fully realize her potential. Yet women still need to work much harder to gain recognition. Other problems also exist, such as the wage gap particularly for females in higher positions and discriminatory comments.

Sensitivity toward gender issues during conversation is a crucial part of making women feel more accepted in the work environment, Nuraslina says, especially women are often asked questions regarding plans for marriage or childbirth. "I must say over the years it has reduced significantly, " she adds.

"All leaders will hire people. These employees are created from the children we nurture at home. Mothers play the important role of nurturing future leaders. Without mothers, there will be a total breakdown in the supply of leaders in organizations."

"We should embrace women who take on the challenges of joining the workforce. Let our performance speak for itself. When you excel, there is no place for discrimination. Instead, you could look at women workforce as a great multitasker."

Gentler Leadership

Malaysia in 2011 launched a goal to have at least 30 percent women on corporate boards of publicly listed companies, and Nuraslina says that number trickles down the corporate ladder. Theta Edge Berhad does not have specific gender-based hiring policies, she says, but its senior management is about 32 percent female, measuring its gender diversity levels using the government's ESG (environmental, social and governance) framework and DEI (diversity, equity and inclusion) metrics.

In terms of gender stereotypes, Nuraslina says, "We set the expectations for people to deal with us, then people will start to change. Appreciate that you are the flower among the thorns. Leverage on the value it brings to the workforce."

Instead of the limitations, Nuraslina prefers to focus on the advantages women leaders bring to the table: "Our strength is our empathy. We are able to understand the situation of our staff in a holistic way, and we're able to guide them to achieve their optimal performance level."

The telecommunications industry is a more "hard" field driven by numbers and measurements, and Nuraslina believes women can provide a gentler, more humanistic side to management.

"I want the voice of women to be embracing the softness and beauty we bring to the hardness of the industry. It gives you an advantage where you can make people feel comfortable talking about problems, issues and resolve them in a way where everyone is happy."

"I honestly find that women excel in that area because we have a sense of knowing when and what to say at the right time. We manage men our entire life," she laughs.

To boost female leadership, it's important, Nuraslina says, for companies to encourage more female-led initiatives and projects.

"I think women sometimes don't have the opportunity to showcase their capabilities," she says. "Through these special projects, that's where they will learn and get exposure to leadership."

Companies should also provide more online certification programs or upskilling opportunities for women so they can improve while balancing family responsibilities.

"This can help them improve their credentials and excel," she says.

Transforming the Workplace

Companies are moving to smaller office spaces these days. In her perspective, the money saved can be used to benefit employees such as helping them hire caretakers or creating a transit center in the office for employees with children. The company is undergoing a transformation plan for human capital, where compensation may become more performance based.

Digital transformation is key to this flexibility. Part of this is expanding the company from the hardware end to more online ventures and services. Theta Edge Berhad has set up a new innovation hub, headed by a lady , that encourages people to come up with digital transformation ideas to be implemented. This will further provide chances for women to get involved and lead an initiative.

"When it comes to the nitty gritty process of putting ideas into plan, that requires detailed-oriented thinking, which ladies are typically better at," Nuraslina says.

Challenging Stereotypes and Building a Collective Force

Myrna Lira

Associate Vice President of Technology, AT&T Mexico (Mexico)

Myrna Lira is a Universidad del Valle de México graduate where she studied telecommunications engineering. Trained as an engineer as one of the only two female students, and then working in a male-dominated career in Mexico and Latin America, Myrna understands the challenges of overcoming stereotypes and bias. Her ideal workplace is diverse, with various perspectives and not limited to the ratio of working men and women. She believes in the importance of cultivating empathy and people skills, regardless of one's gender, origin, or creed.

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> **Myrna Lira**

They told her that the jobs were for men, not women. That she was going to be a failure. Her professors in the telecommunications engineering school constantly made fun of her and the only other female student in the program. "Let's see what these girls can do," they chided.

Although Myrna Lira was used to dealing with these negative voices, they could still be disheartening. And often they were more than just voices, as people purposely made things difficult to sabotage her career.

"Throughout all the years, there were many problems because of my gender. It was very hard," says Myrna, who is now Associate Vice President of Technology at AT&T Mexico. "Sometimes I thought, God, maybe I made the wrong choice in choosing this kind of career."

Myrna says although things are improving, Mexican culture is still very patriarchal, where women are raised to think that they are less capable. Only

47% of women participate in the workforce, as opposed to 83 % of men; the wage gap is significant, sexual harassment remains a problem and men are more frequently promoted on all levels. In the telecommunications industry, only three in ten jobs are held by women.

"We are challenging these traditional roles... and forcing our way into areas that our grandmothers could never consider," Myrna says. "But it is not enough. We need to support our girls and encourage them, not put them down."

Breaking in the field

Growing up as a self-described "crazy girl interested in video games," Myrna's passion in math and physics in school pushed her towards a career in the STEM field. She eventually decided on telecommunications engineering.

"I realized that this industry was going to grow a lot and become extremely important for our economy's development," she says.

"You can have 100 engineers working alone on certain activities... but if you combine all that effort, the difference is incredible." she says. "I think one of the most difficult things is to create and lead teams. You're working with people, not machines or computers, and you have to try your best to become a better person in order to be a better leader."

Again, it wasn't easy. Both her superiors and subordinates dismissed her for being too young and inexperienced, and being a woman certainly didn't help.

"I remember I was leading a project and people didn't want to share information with me, they didn't even want to talk to me," she says.

However, Myrna knew it was not going to be an easy path, and that people would dismiss her due to her gender.

"This only made me more determined, especially because I knew I was actually good at what I was doing," she says. "I forced myself to keep following my dreams and work very hard."

Fresh out of school, Myrna was pitted against six more experienced men for her first job in the field. Mortified, she mustered her courage and told her future boss to give her a chance as he wouldn't find anyone more passionate.

"He started to laugh, and I left the room and was on my way home when I got the call from human resources," Myrna says. "I started to cry... When you're determined and you show it, you can achieve whatever you want."

Becoming a leader

After establishing herself as an engineer, Myrna became interested in a leadership position. She was happy with her accomplishments, but she realized that one could only achieve so much independently.

Myrna fought hard to be recognized as an effective leader, which entailed way more than just technical expertise.

"When you're an engineer, you think that math and physics and IT are the only important things in the world. But with time, you realize that to be a complete leader, you have to study things such as legal issues, marketing, strategy; you have to be trained on leadership and accountability and communication," she says.

Life at AT&T Mexico

AT&T Mexico now has more female leaders than ever before. Due to the launch of a number of initiatives to promote gender equality, the percentage of females in leadership roles jumped from 10 % to 34 %, and the gender pay gap was eliminated.

One of these initiatives is the "Mujeres en Accion" program, which promotes gender equality and helps both male and female future leaders develop soft business skills. Furthermore, the company mandates that there be at least one female candidate in every shortlist for leadership positions. However, due to persisting stereotypes, Myrna says few women in

the company apply for technology posts, despite them actively promoting the idea that women are deserving of the same opportunities that a man would.

Seeing this situation, AT&T Mexico also participates in the "Mujeres STEM" program, which brings in female students as interns with the opportunity to become future employees. Myrna says that 80 out of 185 participants have been hired so far.

During the pandemic, the company reinforced its Employee Assistance Program, which includes counseling and emotional guidance to staff and immediate family members 24 hours a day, year-round. It also continues its support measures for working moms and dads, which offer nursing periods and parental leave for a longer period of time than what the law mandates.

Myrna believes that it is most crucial, however, to ensure that these programs are enforced and effective. AT&T says it has well-defined diversity metrics that they constantly review.

"The way to make sure these tools are working is to go to the source: ask people if things are actually improving, whether these programs are helping, and how we can do better," she says.

A sisterhood of working women

One of the few advantages of being a woman in the field, Myrna says, is that they have forged a new "sisterhood" where they encourage each other and work together to overcome obstacles.

"It's a beautiful effect of a terrible situation," she says.

Myrna now serves as a mentor in the Mujeres en Acción program, supporting other employees, in both

work and personal issues and helping them overcome challenges as she did. They also invite leaders from other industries to share their experiences.

However, just discussing these issues in the workplace is not enough, Myrna says. They must discuss them at home as well, since that's where the stereotypes are formed and often enforced.

To young women who aspire to succeed in STEM fields, Myrna reminds them to have confidence in their abilities even when they feel like they want to give up.

"It's incredibly important to stop, take a moment and look deep inside. That will help you realize that what is stopping you is not your abilities but momentary feelings," she says.

"I didn't have anything when I decided to be an engineer. The only thing I had was my hunger for success. I don't consider myself a special woman. You're as capable as all those women leading large companies or being entrepreneurs. You deserve to be listened to. You deserve to have the opportunity. You deserve to be in the place you want to be."

Listen to Your Heart and Keep Your Option Open

Naomi Lee

Vice President of Corporate Group, Taiwan Mobile (Chinese Taipei)

Specializing in the legal field of telecommunications, Naomi Lee is a lawyer and the Vice President of Corporate Group of Taiwan Mobile (TWM). She is one of the 7 female senior executives in the company. With a legal background, she worked with several law practices before joining the telecommunications industry. Born, raised, and educated in Chinese Taipei, Naomi (now in her fifties) witnessed the advancement of women's rights where traditional gender roles were changing rapidly. As a mother of three, she has had firsthand experience in balancing family with pursuing her successful career. Naomi is an inspiring figure for her generation.

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> —— **Naomi Lee**

As a career woman and a mother of three, Naomi Lee is an inspiration to women interested in developing a career in the telecommunications industry.

Trained as a lawyer, Naomi joined the telecommunications industry as a legal counsel. She looks back on her journey with gratitude, as the company she works for has a gender-friendly environment. The company is now actively implementing progressive policies and creating inclusive workplace, with a growing number women joining the workforce.

Navigating Gender Bias

Born and raised in Tainan, a city in the south of the island, Naomi grew up in a relatively conservative and traditional society, with enforced gender stereotypes that expected women to only have children and take care of their families. Female students who were lucky enough to continue their studies were strongly recommended to pursue an education degree and become a teacher upon graduation.

According to her teacher, Naomi shares, "summer and winter breaks at school will allow me to take care of my future family and kids, and meanwhile, I could be an additional financial support to the husband."

However, Naomi wanted more than that. With her mother's support, she chose to pursue a different career than her female high school peers and was the only one among her classmates who went to law school.. "I am thankful for my mother. She encouraged me to have a different life," Naomi says.

At the university, Naomi was surprised to find that there were as many female students as male ones. Upon seeing this, she was inspired to pursue a legal career, as she thought there were fewer limitations for women in that field. Unfortunately, reality told a different story.

After graduation, Naomi first encountered gender discrimination during an interview at a retail company. She learnt that her approved salary was much lower than the other male candidate, for the strange gender-based reason that he was male and had a family to take care of.

Naomi felt this was extremely unfair and grew worried that her career would be affected by gender bias and family responsibilities. However, even with this in mind, she chose not to let prejudice impact her dedication to her work and career development. Her hard work eventually brought her to the peak of her career.

Balancing Career and Family

Naomi has observed that most career women like herself can continue to work because they have supportive husbands and families who help take care of their children. It comes as no surprise that there are fewer female managers, and that the juggle between balancing family and career is a difficult one.

Seeing many female colleagues get married and have children, Naomi found that these women are often under immense pressure as they also have to undertake heavy childcare workloads. This would inevitably affect their performance due to fatigue and ongoing distractions.

"My husband and parents-in-laws are supportive for my career. I also have nanny and domestic helper so that I can spend more time on my job. If not, I don't think my career development could've been so successful. My employers might have actually thought that hiring a male employee would have been an easier choice," Naomi points out.

"But mothers are all the same. I still struggled with the sense of guilt about how much time I spent with my children. Sometimes I could not bear to compare myself to the mothers of my children's classmates who were full-time mothers. I found them maintaining their relationships with their children better. I have to admit that there are regrets but you win some, you lose some," Naomi adds.

Gender Equality Reviews are Crucial

Overall, Naomi doesn't see explicit limitations for women in the telecommunications industry. In practice, in the 2020 report, TWM had 52.3% male employees and 47.7% female employees. Regarding managerial positions, 51.9% were male and 48.1% were female.

Generally, according to Naomi, most departments do not see large gender difference in employment. However, there are usually more male applicants than female applicants for some technical positions. For example, the construction department tends to send male engineers to conduct on-site maintenance due to safety reasons and physical strength requirement.

Despite this, she said that it is important to have more female leaders serving as role models. This will encourage more women employees to perform better and believe they can succeed in this career.

In this regard, Naomi supports and approves of the many international reviews for gender equality, such as the environmental, social, and governance (ESG) criteria. She said that enterprises including her own company pay close attention to these reviews in line with the global trend. From the board of directors to senior management, the entire company has been dedicated to the promotion of their female employees and the percentage of women in leadership roles. Implementing and enforcing these reviews ensures that the work environment becomes more gender-friendly in every aspect.

Working from Home can be Empowering

It might come as a surprise for some that the notorious COVID-19 pandemic actually contributed to gender equality.

Naomi's company started remote work right away after the COVID-19 outbreak got worse in 2021, in consideration of the safety and health of their employees. "Everyone appreciates the work from home policy. Our work performance is even better during this period," Naomi says.

Their IT team reacted rapidly and digitalized all of the approval and evaluation procedures. "The telecommunications industry has great advantages and should be a role model in leading remote work," she claims.

The COVID-19 outbreak has forced many workplaces into digitization. Naomi strongly believes that this allows employees who need to take care of their families to have more flexible options. Working from home with adequate support from companies can be empowering for career women to balance their family life with children.

Due to the smooth transition and impressive outcome of working from home, the company also plans to keep implementing the policy after the pandemic. "It's good to give employees more flexibility," she agrees.

Advice for all Working Women

Besides drawing from her own experience and perspective to demonstrate how working in the telecommunications industry is a decent choice for women, Naomi also has some additional advice to share.

She encourages women to listen to their hearts to know what kind of life they want to live, and can afford.

Furthermore, Naomi advises female workers to have extensive discussions with their partners and families to establish a good and mutual understanding of each other's future plans and expectations. "Negotiate if necessary," Naomi reminds.

Naomi also encourages enterprises to raise the percentage of their female managers. "I do think having more female managers at work can inspire female employees to stay active in their job and let them know that continuing to develop their career is also an option," she says.

Leading by Example is the Key

Morragot Kulatumyotin

Managing Director of Internet Thailand PCL (Thailand)

Morragot Kulatumyotin has served at top positions of numerous companies and is currently the Managing Director of Internet Thailand PCL, the Chairman of the Thai ISP Association, and a board director at over a dozen companies. With over two decades of experience in the telecommunication industry and her leadership roles in diverse technical and business aspects, she is a commendable leader of the industry. Through changes in government policies, demographics, and digital opportunities, she believes women may be able to increasingly find careers and jobs suited to their needs.

> **"**
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> *there were things I couldn't do.*
> **"**
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> —— **Morragot Kulatumyotin**

When asked about her ideal gender-friendly workplace, Morragot Kulatumyotin says, "Come visit my office when you have the chance."

The managing director of Internet Thailand PCL says her company focuses on achievements and competency only, rather than demographic traits or social status. This has helped the firm achieve a roughly 50-50 gender balance among its staff, senior leadership and board, and only in the ICT-related departments are there more men, at 70 percent.

"I think what's important is the tone from the top. If the management board doesn't buy that policy, it is very difficult to have these values throughout the company," she says. It helps when young people who grew up with new social norms are given more leadership opportunities.

"We are lucky to see management getting younger and younger. You could not see this in the past," Morragot says.

Changing Demographics

Growing up, Morragot was supported by her family in whatever she aspired to do. Her mother is an accountant who had studied abroad, and has been quite liberal when it came to gender expectations. But Morragot says Thai society in general is also quite open—not just regarding gender, but also sexual orientation and nationality.

"If you show capability, you're welcome," she says. "Women play very important roles in many industries, including the financial sector."

The predominance of women in Thailand's banking industry has garnered attention in the international media, and Morragot believes that the science and technology sector is catching up due to an increase in women pursuing an education in the STEM fields.

In fact, for the past few decades, Thailand has seen more female than male university students, and this gap is only widening. According to APEC data, the

number of females graduating from STEM fields in higher education jumped from 29.7 percent in 2014 to 41.3 percent in 2017, with those in the engineering, manufacturing and construction fields increasing from 15.1 percent to 27.8 percent.

In the workforce, Thailand is one of the only three economies in the Asia-Pacific region to have an above global average proportion of women researchers in science, technology and innovation at 53 percent, according to a UNESCO report.

Morragot believes that there are still generally more men in the telecommunications and IT industry because traditionally they have not been popular fields of study for women. As educational trends change, there will be more women entering the field, who may eventually become leaders.

Role models are important. Morragot cites the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Digital Economy and Society of Thailand, Ajarin Pattanapanchai, who is a woman with a background in industrial engineering.

Suitable Industry

After graduating with first honors from her mathematics program in university, Morragot received a scholarship to study computer science in the United States. She then returned home to work with the government's National Electronics and Computer Technology Center to help set up the first academic network in the economy.

Morragot went from researching to the business sector when Internet Thailand transitioned into a commercial internet service provider. She also helped set up the Thai Internet and Cloud Service Provider Association and serves as its chairman today.

Morragot says she hasn't experienced much gender discrimination during her career in a male-dominated field, and feels she has been treated equally since her university days.

"I didn't feel that because I am a woman, there were things I couldn't do," she says.

Contrary to traditional belief, she says that the telecom industry is also suitable for women. "You just work hard with your brain," Morragot says.

Equality Goals

While there are no specific gender-based policies at Internet Thailand, Morragot says government policies trickle down to corporations. Gender equality and eliminating discrimination is one of the sustainable development goals the government has adopted as a UN member.

The stock exchange pushes listed companies to ensure gender diversity on their boards and provides best practice recommendations where companies that perform well are rewarded with points.

"We believe if more than 1,000 listed companies can comply and behave well, other small companies will follow too."

Those who meet all the guidelines receive five points and can use it to promote themselves not just as a good place to work, but increase their appeal to potential investors.

"The government uses incentives to carry out the policy, rather than just tell people what they must do," Morragot says.

The Family Question

Nevertheless, career women still face the challenges that come with child rearing and familial

expectations. Many move to the city for their career, far away from their family that could help out.

Balance is key: "Not all women can pay that much attention to work," Morragot says, especially single parents without familial support.

Morragot's husband helps out with taking care of their two children, and her parents who live nearby step in when needed.

"Not many people are lucky like us," she says, and that's why her company has a family-first policy in its core values. "I believe that if your family isn't well, you cannot focus on your work. We say that if your family has any urgent situation, go and take care of it first. Leave your work with your colleagues, but when you're back, you need to be willing to do the same for your colleagues. This is the culture we've had for more than 10 years; it doesn't matter if you're a woman or a man."

In Internet Thailand, new mothers get three months' paid leave, and if they need more time, they can take unpaid leaves while keeping their position. When one of Morragot's management-level staff took nearly a year off after childbirth, the company ensured that she could return and continue to work up the corporate ladder. If a woman decides that she wants to dedicate more time to her child and less on work, she can also find a position that fits those needs.

Digital Opportunities

The advent of remote working and digital transformation will further help women work around these issues. It gives them more flexibility to deal with family matters, and they can even relocate closer to where their family is.

In addition to operational benefits, digital transformation has also brought new services for the employees, such as telemedicine, where staff can see doctors remotely for minor problems so they don't have to go to the hospital and risk COVID-19 infection.

Also, there are increasingly more online resources for those who want to enter or further themselves in their chosen field. If a student cannot find an inspiring teacher or lives in an area with few resources, they can now go online and learn on their own.

While it's most important to keep improving oneself and stay ready, Morragot adds that choosing the right workplace that supports women is just as important.

"You have to find an organization that's a better fit. I believe there will be more companies that are open and have good policies like us."

A Legal Expert Advocating for Diversity

Daudeline Meme

Vice President and Associate General Counsel,
Federal Regulatory & Legal Affairs, Verizon (USA)

Daudeline Meme is a law professional with experience in both the private and public sectors. Before joining Verizon, Daudeline served in leadership positions at the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). The FCC is the United States' primary authority for communications law, regulation and technological innovation. During her 9-year tenure at the FCC, Daudeline's roles included Acting Chief of Staff and Legal Advisor to Commissioner Geoffrey Starks, Legal Advisor to former Acting Chairwoman, Mignon Clyburn, and Chief of Staff of the Enforcement Bureau. As a woman and ethnic minority, she has been a strong advocate for gender equity and diversity throughout her career as an advisor to government leaders. This commitment hasn't wavered as she transitioned to the private sector in 2019, joining Verizon as Vice President and Associate General Counsel. Daudeline is a graduate of Dartmouth College and the University of Michigan Law School.

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*It's about getting to know the people who make decisions and having them know you and understand you…
It's important for women to have that kind of network.*

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—— **Daudeline Meme**

Daudeline Meme has been a strong advocate for diversity and inclusion since the beginning of her career.

Daudeline, unlike many other young legal professionals, started her career in the diversity field. Her first job after college was as a counselor at Prep for Prep, a New York City-based non-profit organization whose mission is to "develop future leaders by creating access for young people of color to first-rate educational, leadership development and professional opportunities." As a counselor at Prep for Prep, Daudeline worked one-on-one with promising students of color enrolled in prestigious independent schools in the Northeast. "Since I had experience as a minority in a highly exceptional school, I was able to counsel the students, talk to them about their experiences and help them navigate the social and economic issues that they faced in such environments."

Reducing Biases in the Workplace

Daudeline has continued her advocacy for inclusive and diverse workplaces at every stage of her career. Informed by her life experiences, Daudeline believes providing unconscious bias training is crucial to building an ideal workplace nowadays.

From her point of view, biases are inevitable. "We are all human and have biases. It's natural for our brains to have shortcuts – but you have to recognize them, understand them and challenge them."

Given this, Daudeline stresses that what we have to do is to understand how biases are formed and try to mitigate their negative effects. "The training helps

you more easily catch and correct yourself when making assumptions or quick judgments."

Apart from the required training on unconscious biases, Daudeline believes that creating a culture of openness makes it easier for people to speak up when they notice prejudices and unfavorable issues.

Daudeline's advocacy is grounded in her own experiences. For example, Daudeline recalls how one of her female colleagues stood up for her, pointing out the problem of mansplaining at work. "There is that sensitivity in the workplace, and people will hold each other accountable if warranted by the situation," she adds.

In a Changing World, Upskilling Matters

Daudeline, who transitioned from her government career to Verizon in 2019, is encouraged by the company's initiatives to promote workplace inclusion in a comprehensive manner. For example, in 2021, along with other corporate sponsors, Verizon introduced Women's CoLab. This free development program is open to all women and provides essential digital resources to help achieve success in the post-Covid world.

"A recent survey we commissioned found that close to 60% of women who want to re-enter the workforce can't afford the training to remain competitive. This is exacerbated by the fact that 72% of women are concerned about the difficulty of finding a job that matches their existing skillset," Verizon Consumer Group's Chief Executive Officer, Manon Brouillette, says in a press release.
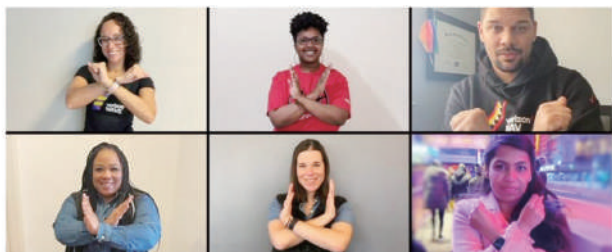
The pandemic has continued to disproportionately affect women, who lost more than 5 million jobs in 2020 amid COVID-19, according to data compiled by Verizon.

"Women's CoLab aims to give women the tools they need to build their careers themselves," Daudeline says.

She adds that digitalization accelerated by the pandemic will offer more opportunities in the future, but upskilling programs for women are still needed to help them prepare. "If the training is not in place beforehand, women may not be able to take advantage of those opportunities."

Promoting Diversity Across all Spectrums

According to Daudeline, Verizon's efforts to promote diversity and inclusion are not the purview of a cadre of leadership or any single practice team. Rather, every employee can contribute to building an inclusive work environment.

Daudeline says Verizon has a team that is directly in charge of facilitating issues surrounding diversity and inclusion. As of the end of 2020, 50% of Verizon's board were women or of racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds. Women also made up 38.1% of the company's senior management team, according to Verizon's 2021 ESG Report. The company currently has 10 employee resource groups that support employees of different backgrounds, such

as women, members of the LGBTQ+ community, ethnic minority groups, as well as caregivers and parents.

"The approach is both bottom-up and top-down," Daudeline concludes.

At Verizon, Daudeline actively participates in several groups to promote these workplace initiatives. The legal expert is part of a diversity and inclusion council and is engaged in a pipeline internship program at Verizon designed to provide opportunities for students from diverse backgrounds.

Verizon has also announced plans to sponsor multiple diversity-focused initiatives to widen its support across communities. Those programs include the company's Future Fund, a $5 million commitment to support emerging female talent across entertainment and technology sectors. Verizon is also a charter member of the Billion Dollar Roundtable (BDR), a coalition of 28 companies that spend at least $1 billion each year with diverse suppliers.

Over 12 months ending on November 30, 2021, Verizon spent $5.5 billion in goods and services with diverse suppliers, including businesses owned by people of color, women, veterans, service-disabled veterans, LGBTQ+ and people with disabilities. This brings total spend to more than $53 billion over the past 10 years.

Surround Yourself with Those Who Teach You

When asked about advice for young professionals, Daudeline emphasized the importance of networks. "Working in a vacuum is never a good thing. It's beneficial to talk to people who have been there before and who can give you advice."

"Exposure is critical.If you see a certain role or position as an option, then you're more likely to see yourself in that role and work hard for it," she says.

Looking back at her younger days, Daudeline says she had an influential mentor in her early 20s who helped her grow professionally. Daudeline's second job after college was as a paralegal in a New York City law firm. United States Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, who was then a partner at the firm, was her boss. "She was an amazing mentor who took the time to advise me on how to work collaboratively with everyone on the team, how to get my point across and how to navigate stereotypes."

Having More Faith in Yourself

Daudeline encourages young women to make connections by getting out of their comfort zones and meeting people in other fields. "When it comes to career growth, you can't do it on your own. And it won't happen just because you're a good at your job – that's table stakes. You need to distinguish yourself by getting to know people and being in different positions."

Daudeline recalls a dedicated female attorney she met in her career. "She would spend hours at her desk every day and produce really good work. She had a colleague in the same group, who also did good work but spent less time behind the desk and more time getting to know the partners at the firm and socializing with his colleagues. He was promoted before she was."

"It's about getting to know the people who make decisions and having them know you and understand you… it's important for women to have that kind of network. There's a social element [to it]."

Especially for people who have a nonlinear career path, an open mind is key to career development. "Be open to new experiences," Daudeline says, "even if it's not a promotion. Maybe it's a lateral move that will get you to the next promotion."

"New opportunities are important. Try to think: is this an opportunity for me to grow in a different area where I can ultimately advance?" she adds.

Daudeline believes that women should have more faith in themselves and be proactive when pursuing their careers. She observes that many women don't apply for jobs unless they think they meet all of requirements while their male counterparts are not inclined to do the same.

"Maybe you don't meet every single qualification, but you have the capacity to do it. You should take a chance on yourself and get that job."

Giving Everyone a Chance to Talk

Jayne Stancavage

Global Executive Director for Digital Infrastructure Policy, Intel (USA)

Jayne Stancavage is the Global Executive Director of Digital Infrastructure Policy at Intel Corporation. She is responsible for Intel's policies on digital infrastructure including policies concerning connectivity, Internet of Things, Artificial Intelligence, and Autonomous Driving. Jayne joined Intel in 2000 and has since progressed from coordinating with various Intel business units to shaping Intel's communication policy domestically and internationally. While Jayne guides the tech field that values different ideas for innovations, she encourages making a space for all to achieving diversity and creating an inclusive workplace culture.

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Have different perspectives, and understand how things may be perceived by different people. Those are some of the values and strengths [you gain] when you have a diversity of opinions in a diverse workforce.

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—— **Jayne Stancavage**

How does it feel to work in a traditionally male-dominated industry?

When Jayne Stancavage embarked on her career in the tech policy field, she often found herself to be the few women in professional meetings.

"There was a meeting with 500 people many years ago, and there were only three women there—two of them in marketing and me. I was also on the board of directors, and every other member of the board was a male."

"We do see an increase in gender diversity now, whether it's a meeting or a trade association. I have seen progress over time," says Jayne, who currently serves as Intel's Global Executive Director of Digital Infrastructure Policy.

Making Space for All

People's perception of what an ideal workplace is has changed. According to an Intel-funded study, diversity and inclusion have become factors influencing the career decisions of Gen Z, namely those born between 1997 and 2012. Over half of the respondents said they would be hesitant to accept a job from an organization without underrepresented minorities in senior leadership roles.
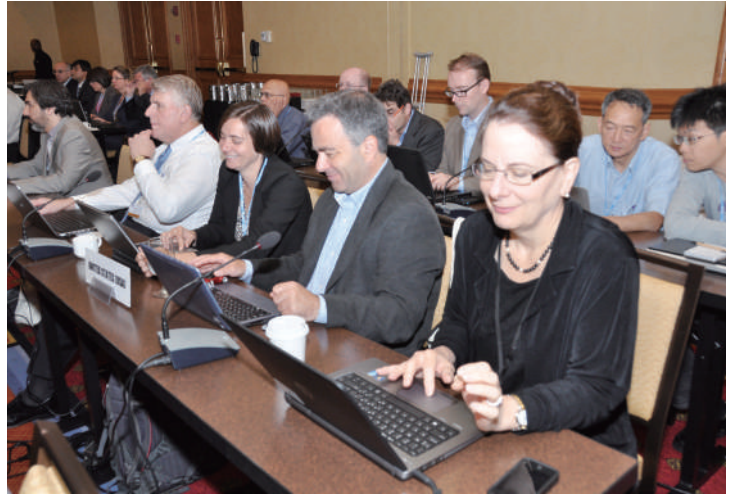
Despite the overall progress in advancing gender equality, Jayne believes that there is still much we can do in our everyday work life.

For Jayne, building an inclusive atmosphere is not simply about hiring people from all backgrounds. "In terms of leading a team, I try to bring opportunities—Is everybody getting a chance to speak?"

"Are you making space for everyone when you think about who's going to chair a discussion or lead a meeting? Are you thinking through and giving opportunities [to everyone] without just giving the floor to the same people who have been doing the job for 20 years? If you've been doing it for 20 years, there is a higher chance that you're a male in the place, right?"

She stresses the importance of making everyone's voice heard. "Have different perspectives, and understand how things may be perceived by different people. Those are some of the values and strengths [you gain] when you have a diversity of opinions in a diverse workforce."

In this regard, Jayne thinks male colleagues can play an important role in fostering an inclusive and open

culture for all.

She recalls how a male mentor has left a considerable impact on her early career. "The [informal] mentor was a senior colleague who worked in our research labs. And I was not even a member of his team. He was a huge advocate for women's development programs."

"I have repeatedly seen some males do a great job of being strong advocates of gender equality and giving opportunities."

Changing the STEM Workplaces

According to Jayne, subtle stereotyping might still be pervasive.

One might expect women to be more silent or submissive than men at work, especially in a male-dominated workplace. But that is not the case for Jayne. "I have never been accused of being quiet."

She also notices that people's common expectations of appropriate behavior, such as dress codes for the workplace, may not be friendly enough for everyone.

"When you first start in any position, you'll be trying to make sure that you're meeting the expectations [of the team]," she says. "But I don't wear a tie. What am I supposed to wear in a black-tie event if I don't want to wear a ballgown?"

Jayne also considers the gender gap in the STEM fields and workforce development a pressing issue. "There's a shortage of engineers and technical experts, but you still see a gender imbalance in STEM education."

She thinks employers need to attract talents beyond pay. "We need to do a better job of upskilling so that people have options."

Jayne also cited a study showing the difficulty of speaking up for women as a minority. "Research shows if you only have one female in the team, she is less likely to speak up. But if you have another

female in the same team, the effect will be much greater than one plus one."

"We have to show that it's an attractive field for women."

As of early 2020, less than 25% of Intel's technical positions were occupied by women. Intel expects to engage female technical talent through various programs, with a target of exceeding 40% representation of women in technical positions and doubling the number of women in senior leadership by 2030. The aim is to continue to expand opportunities for employees and the industry through technology, inclusion, and digital readiness initiatives.

Using Metrics Well

Asked about the gender pay gap, Jayne says setting metrics can play a significant role in identifying and solving existing inequalities.

Why are metrics important to a company? She sees data transparency as a key component of a sound equity strategy as the results can prompt decision-makers to ask the first "why" when they notice the discrepancy in numbers.

"Maybe it's perfectly understandable and there's a good explanation [for the difference]. Maybe there is not. And the metrics give you the data to ask the question: What's the reason behind it?"

Jayne says her company places high importance on collecting and examining data. And the company is constantly looking at metrics to make sure things are not creating or contributing to a pay gap.

"We have diversity and inclusion metrics throughout the pay practices. If we're seeing more females take other jobs or leave the company than males, why is that?"

Intel was one of the first US tech firms to share detailed pay disparities in 2019. Even though the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission no longer requires employers to report pay information, the company continued collecting the wage data and disclosing it in 2020.

Embracing A Learning Mindset

For Jayne, her career is probably filled with surprises and uncertainties. "I did not envision working for a very large company at a young age... If you asked me that long ago, I would not have envisioned it."

From her observations, women are less likely to apply for jobs if they don't think they're fully qualified. Meanwhile, men are more willing to give it a shot and to ask for higher starting salaries. "It appears that most gender pay gap may be related to the starting salary."

Jayne suggests young female professionals be more ambitious when applying for jobs, even if they lack certain skills or don't meet all the criteria. "You can't do it now. But you're confident you can learn how to do the job within six months and how you will get there."

"Take advantage of opportunities. And it's okay to try something that you do not perfect in. I don't want to do things I can do perfectly or that I already know how to do. I'm not going to learn anything that way."

"Give yourself the freedom to do things outside of your comfort zone," Jayne says.

Section 2

BEST CORPORATE PRACTICE

Championing Gender and Diversity and Inclusion

TELUS
(Canada)

TELUS is a world-leading communications technology company. Its social purpose is to leverage its global leading technology and compassion to drive social change and enable remarkable human outcomes, TELUS is committed to fostering a diverse and inclusive culture and believes that honouring the diversity of its team, customers, and communities leads to new perspectives, strengthens its ability to connect for good and create remarkable outcomes for Canadians. Recently, TELUS was recognized as one of Canada's Best Diversity Employers, received a Gold Certification on Gender Parity, and was a Global & Mail 2022 Women Lead Here Honouree.

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Diversity is deeply ingrained within our culture, shaping us as an organization and helping us achieve success in the marketplace whilst creating stronger and more caring communities.

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—— **Darren Entwistle, President & CEO, TELUS**

Seeing diversity and inclusion (D&I) as a cornerstone of its culture, TELUS has been actively developing and implementing initiatives that further equality and inclusion since 2006. The company has made D&I central to its operations, from introducing new products and services to talent development and community engagement. D&I is the responsibility of every team member and leader at TELUS.

Improving the Gender Ratio

To improve the gender ratio of employees, TELUS revised its hiring process in 2018 in the hopes of increasing the number of women candidates applying for positions. This included neutralizing the language in their career postings and adjusting the structure roles to attract and encourage more women to apply. This has proved to be effective, where the company saw a significant increase in the percentage of women applicants.

Similar efforts continued within their Leadership Now program, an initiative designed to prepare participants for leadership roles, where TELUS successfully achieved parity of gender representation in 2019 with 52% women participants and 55% for the 2021 cohort.

The success of these efforts is reflected in the company's current gender ratio, where women make up 46% of their Board, 30% of executive officers, 32.3% of senior management, 37.6% of middle management, and 37.3% of the overall workforce.

Achieving Diversity Targets

TELUS first adopted a written Board diversity policy in 2013. As part of the annual review cycle, TELUS periodically updated the policy over the ensuing years. The policy was updated in late 2020, and by the following year, TELUS already surpassed its targets, where six out of 13 directors are women, and three of them represent a minority or an Indigenous group.

In 2021, TELUS evolved their Diversity Council from a working group to an appointed Advisory Board of Directors and Vice Presidents who are accountable for elevating strategy and delivering even more measurable impact with the support of the D&I team. With the evolution of the Council, they also progressed the Council Chair position to a Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer role that supports the work of the Advisory Board. The D&I strategy is facilitated by TELUS's D&I team, and the Advisory Board works alongside the TELUS Resource Groups to strategize and implement D&I initiatives.

"Our collective progress relies on the integrity of our actions to cultivate an inclusive, compassionate and reflective society," Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer Ruth Nyaamine describes. "As allies, colleagues, and global citizens, we must continue to take tangible steps to nurture, support, and embrace the voices and experiences of our diverse team Members."

The progress and effects of these initiatives are closely monitored through the company's annual Pulsecheck engagement survey. In a 2021 survey, 91% of the members agreed that "TELUS values diverse backgrounds, different ways of thinking, different points of view and different ideas." This was supported by a score of 85% in the company's new inclusion index, demonstrating that a majority of employees feel a strong sense of inclusion in TELUS.

Efforts Beyond the Company

Moving beyond its own company, TELUS has participated in a number of external gender diversity initiatives. This includes signing the Catalyst Accord 2022 which pledges to increase the percentage of women on boards and in senior leadership positions in Canada to 30% or greater by 2022. TELUS also takes part in the Women in Governance Parity Certification, which helps organizations increase the representation of women in sectors where they have historically been underrepresented, as well as in senior management positions.

Other programs that TELUS has been involved in to uplift women and workers representing minority groups include the Prosperity Project, the BlackNorth Initiative, and a research project by Women in Tech World (WiTWorld).

By participating in these initiatives and pledges, TELUS is able to map out, implement, and enforce policies that can help women, and those of minority backgrounds, succeed within the company and in the wider telecom industry.

Developing a Supportive Network for Women

Recognizing the importance of networking for women to succeed, TELUS established Connections - the TELUS Women's Network in 2006 to foster a community of support for women in the company. The program's activities are driven by the following objectives: supporting women in their career choices, fostering a community of connected women, and influencing corporate culture on gender issues to promote gender equality.

This initiative quickly grew and expanded, whereby in 2018, the network had a membership of over 4,600 women, with 15 chapters across Canada and many internationally in India, Romania, China, the United States, Philippines, Guatemala, Ireland and El Salvador.

"Through my involvement with Connections, I interacted and formed relationships with other like-minded women that I would normally not get to

meet just through my job alone," Susan Yu, Senior Program Manager, reflected. "This network of women helped me navigate my own career, learn from each other, and appreciate the culture of women supporting women at TELUS."

Building on the success of the Connections Network, a global annual awards celebration was introduced in 2011 called the CHLOE (Connections Honours Leaders of Excellence) Awards. This recognition program profiles and celebrates exceptional women who have made a profound difference at TELUS or in their community, as well as leaders who have made a significant contribution to the advancement of women at TELUS.

"I was really moved by my CHLOE award nomination," described Amanda Alderman, Senior Business Systems Analyst, "it made me feel recognized and appreciated by my team and proud of what I've accomplished in my time here at TELUS. It is also reassuring to know that the choices you make on a daily basis are leading you on a path to success and that people value those choices."

Supporting Working Mothers during the Pandemic

To navigate the disruption of COVID-19 on their workforce, TELUS expanded their well-established Work Styles® program that provides employees with flexible, work options, both in and out of the office, supporting the balance between work and personal life. As a long-standing program, TELUS was well-positioned to expand and rapidly adopt an at-home work style in the face of the pandemic.

TELUS has further implemented a Well-being Strategy to ensure a "thoughtful, integrated, and sustainable approach" to the well-being of their employees. To ensure that the effects of the strategy are optimal and impactful long-term, TELUS is continuously assessing against, and aligning with, the National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace.

Additionally, a grassroots program called Mama Bear had been stood up just prior to the pandemic, which

particularly contributed to helping working mothers manage their work-life balance. The "for-moms, by-moms" program not only uplifts, empowers, and celebrates the capabilities of working mothers, but also recognizes the challenges they face in balancing career and family.

It's particularly telling of how important such a program is, as research has shown that the COVID-19 pandemic disproportionately affected women in the way it increased the burden of unpaid care – labor that is disproportionately carried out by women.

With the vision of creating a generational step-change, TELUS's demonstrated and positive track record of engaging and developing inclusive initiatives brings great hope to both career women and future generations of diverse backgrounds.

Well-Being Focused: Support Women at Different Stages of Life

Vodafone New Zealand
(New Zealand)

Vodafone New Zealand is a long-term supporter of gender equity. They focus not only on balancing gender ratios, but also on empowering women through comprehensive programs that support them at different life stages. Vodafone NZ is also a member of Global Women, and has been committed to helping women navigate their career development. In their dedication to gender equity, the company also hopes to inspire men to lean into the conversation around feminism and equality.

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> *The symptoms [of menopause] for many women are debilitating… We have workshops and tool kits to help women realize that A, they're not alone, B, there are resources to help them and C, set up conversation starters with leaders to normalize it, rather than women having to go through that period of life without support.*
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—— **Emma Kelly, Head of Centers of Excellence, Vodafone NZ**

Emma Kelly, Head of Centers of Excellence at Vodafone NZ, stresses gender equity at the company over gender equality.

"Equality implies that both genders have the same opportunities," she says. "But in some cases, it's reasonable to accelerate the opportunities for women to even the scales a bit."

Women make up 46 percent of the senior leadership positions at Vodafone that directly report to the executive team, but the general workforce is only 35 percent female. Kelly says it's important to encourage female talent on all levels so there may be more women candidates for leadership roles.

"You can't just expect to have people willing and waiting to step into those roles if you haven't done the work of developing them," Kelly says.

In addition to opportunities and development, Vodafone has launched a number of measures to ensure that women feel supported, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Kelly says she has yet to receive complaints and concerns by men that these programs are taking away their opportunities. "It's naive to think there wasn't a level of concern," she says. "But I think we have a very inclusive CEO who really makes sure the messages he delivers are inclusive in nature."

Supporting Women

Equity begins with the basics, such as fair compensation. Wage gaps may not be due to policy bias, Kelly says, but to factors such as women missing out on pay increases or performance bonuses when they take time away from work after having children. One way to close the wage gap is to closely examine and compare the remuneration for employees of the same role level during the performance management process.

In 2018, Vodafone was recognized at the NZ Equal Pay Awards as the Supreme Winner for their ongoing commitment to Equal Pay. As Kelly explains, "we have addressed many of the systemic issues that

support equal pay such as gender bias in recruitment and unconscious bias training is available to support our team. More recently, in 2021, we worked with an independent consultant (EY) to review our market benchmark for every role in Vodafone using two reputable remuneration surveys from EY and Aon, which is the NZ IT and Telco survey, to ensure we continue to deliver fair pay."

Pay aside, it's immensely important to make sure new parents feel supported, Kelly adds. For example, Vodafone's return-to-work program, mostly attended by women, provides practical tips such as logistics management and how to set boundaries as a working parent. There's also a policy that allows women to work 30 hours a week and get paid for the full 40 hours during the first six months of their return.

Acknowledging that many women sometimes have to care for elderly relatives at the same time, Vodafone also offers more accessible and flexible well-being leave – "whether it's related to caregiving or for a reason that typically wouldn't be perceived as significant enough," Kelly says.

narcissistic," Kelly says.

To combat this problem, during the hiring process, a talent acquisition team will work closely with leaders to help inform their decisions.

"Often the discussion is 'Look, I think it's great that they have the same skills you have, but actually here's someone who's got a different set of skills that complement you or the team," Kelly says.

There's also a menopause workshop, as Kelly understands that "the symptoms of menopause are debilitating for many women." She explains that the workshops and tool kits are designed to "help women realize that A, they're not alone, B, there are resources to help them and C, set up conversation starters with leaders to normalize it, rather than make women go through that period of life without support."

Vodafone's comprehensive program extends beyond parental leave, as it's important to provide support in "all the stages of a woman's life" as she continues to work, Kelly emphasizes.

Unconscious Bias

Even though there's little overt discrimination at Vodafone these days, unconscious bias remains a going concern, Kelly says, to ensure it doesn't become a problem, new leaders are offered training to help identify which ones they may harbor.

"One of the most common biases is that people will make recruitment or development decisions based on people who are like them, rather than celebrating and supporting differences," she says.

This means that in a male-dominated industry such as telecommunications, male leaders tend to, whether intentionally or not, hire or promote people who share similar characteristics with them. "I think that's a very common one that's really underrated; nobody wants to admit that because it sounds a bit

When there's a team where the gender ratio is heavily skewed toward males, Vodafone will take measures such as mandating that every shortlist for the team has at least one woman, "even if they have to work harder or look longer to find one," Kelly added.

Vodafone also spotlights female role models in the company – especially in predominantly male departments – and encourages them to share their achievements and stories through social media and other internal channels.

"There's an old expression, 'You can't be what you can't see,'" Kelly says.

Career Development

Recognizing the importance of peer support for women in their career development, Vodafone established the Mana Wahine Network ("strong women" in Maori) that serves as a support group for female staff and their male allies. It helps them connect and share through social events, panel talks and soft skills development workshops. The network also provides employees with a channel to contribute their ideas, as well as discuss opportunities and obstacles regarding development for women at Vodafone.

One of the challenges is the lack of career pathway examples for women to develop and advance in the telecommunications industry.

"One of the barriers for women coming in at the

entry level is 'what are the opportunities available for me?'" Kelly says. Vodafone hopes to facilitate new career progressions through, for example, offering leadership opportunities and technical training for service-oriented frontline employees.

Vodafone is big on mentoring, having both internal and external coaches working with their employees, and the company is also part of the Global Women's Breakthrough Leaders Programme that supports those in their mid-careers and beyond.

The company also has a talent pipeline through P-Tech, an organization that supports students from primarily underserved communities in pursuing an education and a career in the tech field.

"The issue starts long before women enter the workforce, and begins from when they're picking subjects at school," she says. "We need to make sure we're doing our best to influence those choices at an early age, so that young girls know that they have options."

Focus On Well-Being

Vodafone is highly concerned about their employee's well-being, especially with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Kelly says Vodafone already provided a certain level of remote working before the pandemic hit.

"It wasn't a massive transition for us as we were already well-versed in having flexibility about the way we work," she says, although the pandemic has accelerated this digital transformation.

In addition to surveys, workshops, one-on-one interviews and online "town hall sessions" with executives, employees can use the anonymous Joyous app to further discuss their experiences with the company.

"We talk a lot about the importance of giving and receiving feedback and creating opportunities for people to do

so," Kelly says. Recently, the top needs that have been requested are customizable benefits, healthcare, and flexible working hours.

The pandemic has driven an outpouring amount of support within the company towards affected coworkers. Kelly has seen many women volunteer to provide support and get people the supplies they need, even making home deliveries during more serious times.

From the experience, Vodafone has begun offering more one-on-one check-ins that revolve around well-being rather than work performance. Employees working remotely remain connected through Vlife, an application for flexible workplace and communication, and leaders can also check in with people who haven't been signing in to see if they're doing okay.

Other resources include financial well-being seminars, psychologist-run webinars on how to support depressed children during the pandemic, and sessions with tips and tricks on alleviating the stress of working from home with kids.

"Our executives talk about putting family first and making sure that's a priority," Kelly says. "Because if you're not okay at home, you're not okay at work."

Embracing Gender Equality By Setting Up Inclusive Initiatives

Globe Telecom
(Philippines)

The Philippine-based digital solutions provider Globe Telecom sets examples to support 10 UN SDGs and the 10 UN Global Compact Principles. Advocating gender equality and women empowerment, Globe has been promoting female leadership to ensure an inclusive and diversified workplace. Its 2021 report shows that more than 47% of Globe's workforce are women, half of them mothers. Recognizing working mothers' difficulties in balancing work and family during the COVID-19 pandemic, Globe provides a counseling service and a chatbot for employees to address issues surrounding their mental and physical health.

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Female employees who feel recognized and valued become more productive and ultimately contribute to the success of the company.

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—— **Irish Salandanan-Almeida, Chief Privacy Officer, Globe Telecom**

In Asia, the Philippines is known to have a high representation of women in its labor market. It ranked first in gender diversity in the workforce among 10 economies in the region, according to the 2019 Gender Diversity Benchmark for Asia (GDBA) report by Hong Kong-based non-profit Community Business.

Among Filipino companies, Globe Telecom stands out with its pioneering efforts to achieve gender equality and women empowerment. The digital solutions platform won Asia's Best Workplace of the Year 2021 in the Asia Corporate Excellence & Sustainability Awards (ACES). It has been pushing for positive change in the work environment for years through employee empowerment, collaboration, innovation, and diversity. All of these contribute to the company's gender-equal culture, according to Globe's Chief Privacy Officer Irish Salandanan-Almeida.

Inclusivity in Diversity

In January 2020, Globe made a landmark move to promote gender equality. It began recognizing the qualified dependents and beneficiaries of same-sex legal couples in its employee base. In respecting these unions, Globe became the first Filipino-owned company to extend similar benefits to dependents of its employees who come from the LGBTQ+ community. Among these benefits are in-patient and out-patient medical coverage, life and accidental death insurance, and leave credits due to illness in the family.

"Globe has always been respectful and cognizant of gender equality. We hope that by showing concrete examples of how truly diverse and inclusive our company is, our LGBTQ+ employees will be more inspired, motivated to work harder, and feel the importance and care we now formally extend to their legal spouses," says Globe Chief Human Resources Officer Renato Jiao.

The policy change stemmed from a broader commitment. Globe became a signatory to the United Nations Global Compact in 2019, with the aim of implementing universal sustainability principles.

"We are committed to supporting the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, including advocating UN SDG No. 5 to achieve gender equality and to empower all women," Irish explains.

Apart from showing support for the LGBTQ+ community, the company also pays attention to the well-being of its female employees, especially those who take on the responsibility of raising children.

Working mothers account for a significant portion of the company's total workforce. Of Globe's over 8,300-strong employee base, 45 percent are women, including 2,083 mothers, company data show.

Irish shares how parenting became even more difficult during the pandemic.

"I gave birth to my daughter at the height of the pandemic so it was extremely challenging to juggle work and my responsibilities as a wife and mother, caring for a newborn while attending to my two sons who were likewise making the difficult adjustment to online learning," she says.

"Fortunately, Globe provided constant support for me throughout my pregnancy, the birth of my baby, until today," Irish adds.

She further recalls how the company provided paid maternity leave and covered certain medical expenses. In addition to regular benefits and allowances, Globe has taken measures to ensure the mental health and well-being of its employees, including working mothers. Employees were encouraged to access HopeChat, Globe's virtual counseling service, for free 24/7 mental health support. In 2021, an average of 100 employees used HopeChat monthly.

These efforts were fruitful. In 2021 alone, 55 male employees, 90 female employees, and 75 solo parents took their parental leave. In the same year, Globe recorded a 100 percent return-to-work rate post leave.

Women Empowerment and Visibility

With regard to the corporate atmosphere, Irish believes that Globe provides equal opportunities and promotes a culture where gender is not part of the promotion criteria.

"Even roles traditionally held by men are now being occupied by women at Globe," she says, citing the company's Chief Commercial Officer Issa Guevarra-Cabreira and Chief Finance Officer/Chief Risk Officer Rosemarie Maniego-Eala. "When it comes to hiring and promotion, the criteria is merit-based."

She believes that acknowledging women is crucial to creating an inclusive and uplifting atmosphere in the workplace.

"When employees feel valued and seen, they perform better. They become more productive and contribute to the success of the company," Irish says. "Happy employees are the most productive employees," she concludes.

She also stresses the importance of visible role models in young women's career development.

"When we see women in leadership positions, we become motivated to work harder to attain the same success," she adds.

In 2021, there were 6 male and 6 female key officers at Globe, reflecting the company's commitment to gender equality.

Irish acknowledges the importance of knowing other women's success stories. They have served as her inspiration as she moved up the corporate ladder.

"Their success stories made me believe that I can rise to those positions as well. Stories like theirs inspire me to support and encourage my peers and colleagues" she adds.

Globe provides its employees with leadership courses through their learning platform Globe University. Besides that, Irish says, the new mentorship program has been helpful for young employees who are given the opportunity to learn from their role models at Globe.

"You can choose your own mentors based on your career goals. Women can select strong leaders for guidance," she adds.

Opportunities in the Digital Era

In response to lockdowns and movement restrictions, people are changing their ways of working and learning. Globe, like many other companies around the world, has been pouring resources to help employees adapt to the new working style faster.

At the onset of the COVID-19 outbreak, the company quickly implemented a remote working policy and started to move most in-person training programs online. In 2021, there was an 11% increase in reach in terms of employees who completed courses through digital platforms, and a 2.7 fold increase in learning hours, compared to data in the previous year.

Irish says Globe still hopes to stay flexible with work

schedules and has adopted a hybrid policy for now.

"We are results-driven. It's not a nine-to-five job in the traditional sense."

She believes the wave of digital transformation has created new roles in digital services as there is massive demand for data-related services. Those emerging positions could be more appealing to women compared to traditionally male-dominated roles in the tech sector.

Irish says Globe expects to see its portfolio companies continue to provide great value to the Philippines, where people are embracing digital services due to the shift to work-from-home and distance learning arrangements.

She says Globe's initiatives could create a positive, far-reaching impact on the telco sector, as the company has a number of portfolio companies including mobile wallet GCash, telehealth provider KonsultaMD, and corporate venture builder 917Ventures.

And across this growing network of portfolio companies, Globe is expanding its gender equality practices now deeply embedded in its core telco business.

"Globe has extended its best practices on gender equality, inclusivity, and diversity to all the Globe Group portfolio companies," Irish says.

Female Leadership: A More Inclusive Workplace

Far EasTone Telecommunications
(Chinese Taipei)

Founded in 1997, Far EasTone Telecommunications is one of the leading telecommunications companies in Chinese Taipei. Aligned with the UN's Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) criteria, the company has developed a sustainable strategy focusing on the fair, inclusive, connecting of informational society. Far EasTone has achieved a ratio of having at least 30% female managers among all its managerial positions as part of the inclusive goals. In 2019, Far EasTone invites Chee Ching as a General Manager, marked the only telecommunication company led by female executive.

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We have to ensure that our policies can accommodate those (employees') needs.

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—— **Chee Ching, President, Far EasTone**

There is a general perception that men own most of the business or hold the highest power within the telecommunication industry – a gender stereotype that might not be surprising. Far EasTone Telecommunications challenged this traditionally male-dominated field by appointing Chee Ching as President in 2019, making her the highest and female executive in telecommunications sector today.

Leading a team of more than 6,000 employees, Ching has been pushing for the transformation of Far EasTone since her first day. The industry veteran aims to create momentum within the Taipei-headquartered company by promoting an inclusive culture that prioritizes open communication, transparency, and empathy.

A Comfortable Workplace is Needed

Ching embarked on her journey in the telecommunications industry after receiving her doctorate degree in management information system from Purdue University in the US. She first worked as an engineer at AT&T, where she gained hands-on experience in network control and operations planning for 23 years. Now back in her home town, Ching is expected to bring her management expertise and international experience to transform the company.

When asked about how to create an inclusive environment, Ching says that the ideal workplace should make everyone feel comfortable. Given the unpredictability of everyday life, employees might need to change the way they work. This includes taking parental leave or switching to working remotely. "We have to ensure that our policies can accommodate those needs," Ching addresses.

In her opinion, providing employee benefits is not just about being in compliance with labor laws, but it's also about helping her colleagues manage the balance between work and family life.

"Put yourself in their shoes," Ching emphasizes.

Constraints to Women's Career Advancement

Ching describes how in most societies, the women are expected to take on more household responsibilities than their male partners. As a result, women often find themselves struggling to take good care of both their family and their career.

In this context, some women choose to leave the workforce to become stay-at-home-moms. In Ching's opinion, the unemployment gaps disconnect them from their profession and industry, even if they already have years of experience. "They might need to start from scratch if they hope to return to work," she adds.

Far EasTone aims to support its female employees and encourage continued workforce participation as they recognize talent retention as a pressing issue. At the company, maternity and parental leave arrangements are generally better than the legal standards. As outlined by the Ministry of Labor, parents are entitled to 56 days of paid maternity leave and six months of paid parental leave. Far EasTone employees can take four additional days of maternity leave on top of that, and also receive higher allowances – the telecommunications company is planning to raise maternity allowance to NT$5,000 from NT$1,200 in 2022.

Furthermore, Far EasTone has been in cooperation with nearby kindergartens and nurseries to provide after-school programs to support young parents, who can arrange work schedules flexibly to pick up their children.

As part of its inclusion policy, the company paid tribute to working mothers by launching a video titled "They are engineers, They are mothers" on Mother's Day last year. In the video, four female engineers shared how they perform dual roles of a mother and a professional in the STEM sector.

Flexible Working Policy is Key

In response to the ongoing pandemic, Far EasTone has also implemented a flexible working policy to reduce the employees' risk of infection and to assist them with finding a work-life balance.

Ching believes that employers should focus on the results, and not the hours. She stresses that the company evaluates employee performance based on the quality of their work, instead of when or where they work.

Citing her own experience as an example, Ching says that she once commuted across state borders to look after her sick family member when she was working for AT&T. "The work from home policy (of AT&T)

gives flexibility, allowing me to take care of both my family and work without interruptions," Ching added.

Last year, Far EasTone started to streamline the application process for employees who hope to work remotely.

The company currently has four flexible work time schedules, and staff members can choose the option that works best for them. Employees can now seek permission from their managers to work from home or long hours outside the office at different times and places.

Breaking Gender Stereotypes

When asked about the company's hiring policy, Ching believes that meritocracy should be the core principle of recruitment.

She says that gender should not be a decisive factor when one is selecting the right person for promotion. In her opinion, the world has changed. As more women are joining the workforce in the tech industry, the future of the sector will be continuously reshaped.

In 2020, women accounted for around half of Far EasTone's total workforce, according to the company's annual CSR report. The report also shows that women occupied 31.27 percent of all management positions, reaching the company's initial target for the ratio of female managers among all managers: no less than 30 percent.

Despite the principle of meritocracy, Ching thinks that female leaders in the telecommunication sector need to address specific challenges as stereotypes about working women remain evident in the workplace.

Looking back at her career at AT&T, Ching recalls that she was once stereotyped as a passive and silent Asian woman by one of her white male subordinates. Apart from identifying cultural differences and improving emotion management skills, she points out the best way to respond to such situations is to simply show your capabilities and talents.

 "Knowledge is power. Show your muscles!" she says.

Given her experiences, Ching finds it crucial to engage more female colleagues in training sessions. Given this, Far EasTone has organized three seminars tailored for female executives. In 2020, a total of 94 female high-level executives participated in those events, where Ching shared her work experiences and family life to help female managers change their mindsets and cope with damaging stereotypes better.

Advice for Young Females Professionals

What advice can she give to young women who aspire to succeed in the telecommunication sector?

Ching says women should not limit themselves, even in a male-dominated workplace. "Sometimes women can easily stand out because they are a minority," she adds. Their hard work and achievements will ultimately be seen and recognized.

She sees soft skills as an advantage for women and believes that sometimes stereotypes can be embraced and transformed into beneficial qualities.

For example, one typical perception about women is that female managers are more considerate than their male counterparts. This existing perception is actually helpful, as it allows for female leaders to check in on their employee's well-being without being seen as intrusive. She also believes that teamwork is an important skill for young female professionals.

"Do your best and help others. A positive work attitude is always appreciated," says Ching.

Workshop

Workshop Summary

Date: July 27-28, 2022
Format: Hybrid conference
Hosting Economy: Chinese Taipei
Participating economies: Australia, Korea, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, the Philippines, Thailand, United States

This Workshop consisted of four panel sessions and one keynote speech. Female leaders and representatives of telecom companies were invited to share their career development experience and workplace diversity and inclusion measures. The speakers also discussed how to help women to enter, stay, and advance in the telecom industry via company and government policies.

Opening Remarks

1. Ping-cheng Lo
Minister without Portfolio (Chinese Taipei)

Mr Lo welcomed all the online and onsite participants from the APEC economies. He cited international and domestic data to highlight the phenomenon of gender occupational segregation and glass ceiling effect in the telecom industry. With the efforts on advocating for women's participation in non-traditional fields in the past few years, Chinese Taipei conducted this project to echo not only the trend of digital transformation but also APEC's concern on building an inclusive digital economy and improving women's digital skills. Mr Lo expected that this workshop can help both the public and private sectors to understand the current situation of women's participation in the telecom industry and improve relevant policies, thereby creating a gender-friendly workplace for women to fully achieve their potential.

2. Renee Graham
Chair of Policy Partnership on Women and the Economy (New Zealand)

Ms Graham highlighted the importance of cooperation between the public and private sectors in the work of PPWE and recognized that this project is a stunning example that leaders in the private sector play a crucial role in promoting women empowerment and encouraging change. She also stressed that women's empowerment and economic development cannot be achieved alone. Collective efforts are required to address challenges such as the division of unpaid work and caring responsibilities, accessible childcare, and financial and digital inclusion. For economies to remain productive and globally competitive, a highly skilled and innovative workforce is needed, especially diverse leadership. But we should not ignore the importance of bringing an intersectional lens in the discussion on women's empowerment, recognize that women are not a homogenous group.

3. Nam Sang-Yirl
Chair of Telecommunications and Information Working Group (Korea)

Although the COVID 19 pandemic has affected the global economic and social environment, it has escalated the ongoing digital transformation. Mr Nam pointed out that inclusiveness is one of the

most important focus areas in the APEC initiatives, including the APEC Internet and Digital Economy Roadmap. Seeing that various socioeconomic groups may be affected differently by digital transformation, Mr Nam suggested that it is critical to transform the challenges into opportunities by developing and utilizing their full potential. Collective efforts among various stakeholders in the private and public sectors are particularly crucial to address relevant challenges such as those related to privacy, data protection, and digital gender divide.

Project Introduction and Progress

In the era of digital transformation, the demographic landscape of the telecom industry, which is traditionally male dominated, is likely to change. The shift of business models and the development of new digital services requires more highly skilled talents and provides more job vacancies, which would be an opportunity for women to play a role. Therefore, this project aims to facilitate women's entry, stay, and promotion in the telecommunication industry through the Pilot Survey, Best Practice Collection, Workshop, and Seminar. The entire project results will be presented in the Final Project Report.

The findings of the Pilot Survey and Best Practice Collection can be summarized into three points. First, glass ceiling effect and gender pay gap are obvious in the telecom industry and require solutions. Second, there are three major aspects that influence women's entry, stay, and promotion in the telecom industry, namely education, career development, and workplace diversity and inclusion. Third, company policies echo female leaders' experiences, and government policies support the needs of employees and companies. Thus, public-private partnership would be critical for promoting gender equality in the telecom sector.

Session 1

Moderator:
Chih-Chieh (Carol) Lin, Professor, National Yang Ming Chiao Tung University (Chinese Taipei)

1. Daudeline Meme
Vice President and Associate General Counsel, Federal Regulatory and Legal Affairs, Verizon (United States)

Ms Meme started by making a distinction between mentors and sponsors, both of which are critical to women's career advancement. In addition, promoting company cultures that value diversity and inclusion and having the right initiatives and support for diverse employees are also crucial to women's retention and success at their workplace. She continued her sharing by elaborating on how her company, Verizon, has implemented a strategic framework to practice the value of diversity, equity, and inclusion. The company has ten employee resource groups focused on employee professional development, including programs to equip women with skills required for career advancement. The company also put efforts to ensure 100% pay equity and supplier diversity. In the end, she gave some data and records from Verizon to demonstrate that fostering an inclusive environment and a diverse workforce can make a company more competitive and serve its customers better.

2. Myrna Lira
Associate Vice President of Technology, AT&T Mexico (Mexico)

Ms Lira started her talk by describing the challenges women may encounter when entering the technology field or hoping to be promoted. According to the government data, in Mexico, men get a 34% higher income than women; besides, only 47% of women participate in the labor market. Moreover, men are promoted more frequently than women in all roles and all levels. The situation in the technology sector is more alarming. Only 3 in 10 jobs in the telecom industry are practiced by women, and women only account for 36.2% of the workforce in the telecom industry. Recognizing the importance of increasing women's representation and securing their rights in the telecommunications industry, AT&T Mexico has taken some actions, including eliminating salary gap, adopting zero harassment tolerance policy, defining diversity key metrics, incorporating gender

perspective into hirings and promotions, promoting work-life balance, and implementing gender equality campaigns.

3. Nuraslina Zainal Abidin
Group Chief Executive Officer, Theta Edge Berhad (Malaysia)

Ms Abidin firstly shared her career development experience over the past 23 years. As the minority in the technology industry, she has endeavored to transform her minority into opportunity to win support. According to her observation, many women have worked hard to earn the same salary as men. But instead of working hard, women should work right to showcase their values and uniqueness. Moreover, many women feel alone when working in the male-dominated industry, which brings them much stress. Therefore, it is crucial to develop career-building relationships, which requires a proper structure in the company. In this regard, Ms Abidin used her company as an example to highlight the importance of setting goals and processes to bring more women into the company and the decision-making levels. She also provided several suggestions for increasing female leadership, including building an inclusive culture, providing hybrid working environment and flexible working hours, and tax benefits for companies and employees.

Session 2

Moderator:
Ting-I (Nicole) Chan, Vice President, Digital Transformation Association (Chinese Taipei)

1. Hua-Pei (Vivian) Chiang
Sr. Director of Network Logistic Management, Far EasTone Telecom (Chinese Taipei)

Ms Chiang started her talk by sharing the transformation of Far EasTone Telecom from a traditional mobile operator to a service provider with capabilities of 5G, IoT, and AI. During this process, the company implemented various measures to create a more friendly and inclusive environment including culture buildup, environment setting, and employee engagement. In Far Eastone, the percentage of men and women is almost the same, which she believes can be attributed to the company's recruitment criteria and process. Candidates are selected according to their proficiency, rather than gender or age. To build a diverse workforce, Far Eastone also offers benefits such as paternity and maternity leaves, nutritional allowance for pregnant women, and flexible working hours. Finally, Ms Chiang suggested that upgrading key talents is critical for the telecom companies to accelerate digital transformation, and leadership, agility, growth mindset, and diversity are the characteristics they need.

2. Saravanan Karumanan
Head of Talent and Organisational Development, Digi Telecommunications (Malaysia)

Mr Karumanan started with a global perspective, as his company belongs to the international telecom company Telenor Group. Since 2014, the company has systematically created a diverse environment by raising awareness across businesses, setting global standards toward gender balance, and taking actions to set the tone at the top. They even broadened the diversity agenda to go beyond gender. The company further formulated a 2020–2023 plan, committing to recruiting more women at the top, building an inclusive culture, measuring progress, and developing and retaining talents. Mr Karumanan further shared what his company Digi in Malaysia has achieved, such as gender balance in workforce and no gender pay gap. He particularly highlighted female employees' high retention rate and attributed this to the company's 6-month fully paid maternity policy. The policy is supported by practical business actions such as hiring sub-term employees, proper re-entry planning, cash benefits, fertility treatments, and flexible work arrangement. With comprehensive measures, the company is able to build an ecosystem that supports the business, employees, and their families.

3. Janette Toral
Director, i-Metrics Asia-Pacific Corporation (the Philippines)

Ms Toral firstly shared the achievements of two local telecom companies in the Philippines, Globe Telecom and PLDT & Smart. Both the companies have a high percentage of women in workforce and at top levels and has provided support for women employees and leaders. However, as working remotely or in a hybrid environment has become a trend during the pandemic, women still face many challenges. From the perspective of training, she suggested three dimensions of skills required for leadership in the setting of hybrid or remote work. First, personal & team leadership emphasizes the abilities of building social and interpersonal relationships and a person's attitudes toward their work and colleagues. Second, cyber policies & responsibilities refer to skills of ensuring data privacy and recognizing disinformation and cyber frauds. Third, personal resilience highlights the importance of a supporting system for female workers to develop personal growth plans and realize their full potential.

Keynote Speech

Melike Yetken-Krilla
Head of International Organizations, Google (United States)

Ms Yetken-Krilla described how Google has actively worked with both the private and public sectors and various international organizations. More importantly, Google has taken many actions to address gender inequality, including ensuring pay equity, implementing career development and promotion programs for women employees, adopting internal policies to alleviate stress that disproportionately impacts women, and providing paid care leaves. Google's efforts have gone far beyond its workforce. The company provides economic empowerment programs, digital skill trainings, and mentorship programs for women around the world. It also supports women and girls in Asia who are interested in STEM and the technology field. In the end, she shared three recommendations for women: (1) be a leader and a changer because your voices are worth being listened to; (2) always be well-prepared for challenges because that will be the time to be seen; and (3) find what

brings you joy and create the balance between work and life.

Session 3

Moderator:
Charles Chou, Secretary General, Chinese Taipei Pacific Economic Cooperation Committee (Chinese Taipei)

1. Ximena Gil Hidalgo
Head of Public Affairs and Sustainability, Telefonica (Peru)

Ms Hidalgo introduced that Telefonica has four strategic axes of action to work for diversity and inclusion, namely gender equality, disability, LGBTQ+ community, and cultural/generational inclusion. Observing the lack of women in the infrastructure maintenance area, they created the "Mujeres en red" project that aims to promote the training and employability of women in technical service. In implementation, this project works on the following five areas with the contractors in a sustainable way: (1) selecting suitable candidates through NGOs and ministries; (2) providing trainings not only for women regarding technical skills but also for male technicians to raise their awareness; (3) ensuring women's security through security protocols; (4) communicating women's success stories to inspire more women to participate; and (5) implementing indicators for improvement. With all these efforts, they have trained more than 2,500 women, and the percentage of women in technical services has increased from 0.5% to 10%.

2. Sarah Bellett
Learning and Capability Manager, Vodafone New Zealand (New Zealand)

Ms Bellett shared the efforts Vodafone New Zealand has made to achieve gender equity. For example, the company ensures pay equity through the unconscious bias training for hiring managers and through remuneration surveys. They also endeavor to increase female leadership and have achieved that

48% of senior leadership are women. Recognizing the difficulty for the technology industry to retain women, the company empowered women to grow connections and established a women's network called "Mana Wahine" (meaning "strong women"). This network, led by active volunteers and sponsored by directors, provides not only peer support for women employees, but also mentoring, leadership development, and skill training. Moreover, the company recognizes how parenting could negatively influence women's career advancement and therefore implements comprehensive programs such as compensations, paid leaves, and "return-to-work" program, aiming to support women at different life stages. Finally, the company also works on promoting future generations of women leaders in STEM, implementing several programs to stimulate girls' interests in technology and telecommunications careers.

Session 4

In session 4, five panelists discussed the five key topics related to women's entry, stay, and advancement in the telecommunications industry. The panelists are as follows: Ximena Gil Hidalgo, the Head of Public Affairs and Sustainability from Telefonica Peru; Han-I Chiang, the Principal Analyst of the Institute for Information Industry from Chinese Taipei; Chi-Hsueh Hsu, the Section Chief of National Communications Commission(NCC) from Chinese Taipei; Keeya-Lee Ayre, the Head of Communications and Influence in BFA Global from United States; and Mylene Abiva, the chairperson of Women's Business Council Philippines.

1. Female leadership:

Ms Chiang underlines the importance of resilience for the telecommunications industry under the trend of digital transformation, and female leadership and its characteristics such as empathy and communication and coordination abilities could help to increase such resilience. She suggested that to increase female leadership, it is crucial to change the organizational culture and establish an inclusive mechanism that takes into account different stakeholders.

2. Digital gender gap:

Ms Hidalgo shared that digital gender gap is a large challenge in Peru and Latin America. Therefore, she suggested several solutions to address this challenge: coordination and collaboration between public and private sectors; capacity building; public and private investment in areas such as promoting research, enhancing connections, and providing digital skill training.

3. Work-life conflict:

Ms Chiang pointed out that the pandemic offers a chance to innovate new working styles that may help women to juggle work and family. To increase women's retention rate, although policies are indispensable, it is more critical to create an inclusive environment enabling women to propose innovative ways to increase their participation in economic activities.

Ms Ayre further acknowledged the importance of caregiving policy, as women across industries are 3 times more like than men to be responsible for housework and childcare. She believes that true equity comes from offering the same flexibility for both men and women. Therefore, policies are required to eliminate the assumption that women by default are caregivers.

4. Collection of sex-disaggregated data:

On behalf of the NCC, Ms Hsu said NCC collects data from telecom companies every year, including sex-disaggregated data and companies' achievements of promoting gender equality, which can be used to encourage other companies to follow. She observed that the telecom industry has higher percentage of male employees as technicians and engineers. But this situation may have started to change because the industry is now transforming to a service-delivery model, which would have more room for women to exert their abilities.

Ms Ayre agreed that many governments around the world have created legislative requirements to ensure the collection and analysis of gender-disaggregated data. Such data not only allow companies to track their progress, but also enable policymakers to assess

the situation and intervene with evidence-based responses and policies. She reminded policymakers that gender-disaggregated data should across gender spectrum and intersect with other factors to avoid an oversimplified picture. The data should also cover several years to allow changes being tracked and corrective actions being taken. Finally, she recognized that industry-wide collaboration and transparency through mechanisms such as annual index are also helpful for assessment.

5. Public-private partnership

From the government perspective, Ms Hsu suggested that the public sector can cooperate with the private sector in ICT education and vocational training for women. Efforts should also be put to encourage companies to take gender equality, diversity, and inclusion as their core value.

Ms Hidalgo used Telefonica's "Mujeres en red" program as an example to underscore the importance of public-private partnership. This female technician training program is the combined efforts between public and private sectors for reducing gender gap. She particularly pointed out that the private sector needs to provide opportunities for women to arise and occupy leadership positions in the telecom sector.

Ms Abiva stressed that the lack of women in senior roles may create negative financial and cultural consequences for companies. From the perspective of the private sector, she proposed several recommendations for the government: (1) developing sex-disaggregated statistics and case studies for developing informed policies; (2) reviewing relevant policies and legislations from a gender perspective for necessary amendment; (3) providing financial assistance packages for women to access to ICT applications; (4) promoting supportive social systems such as childcare services; and (5) organizing regular seminars and training workshops to discuss gender issues in the ICT field.

Closing Remarks

1. Sunee Srisangatrakullert
Deputy Director-General, Department of Women's Affairs and Family Development (Thailand)

In the closing remarks, Ms Srisangatrakullert stated that gender equality should be considered as an indicator for telecommunication industry. She summarized four key points from the workshop: (1) Gender inclusive policies implemented by both telecommunication companies and government authorities can promote women's entry and stay in the telecom industry; (2) Gender inclusive workplace enables organizations to have different perspectives, develop new services, expand to new market, and respond to new challenges; (3) Gender inclusive policy recommendations contribute to eliminating barriers for women and increasing the number of women in decision-making positions; and (4) collaboration and networking are paramount to achieving gender equality.

2. Hsiu-Chen Wu
Director-General, Department of Gender Equality (Chinese Taipei)

Ms Wu concluded that the two-day workshop has enabled us to understand the key approaches for facilitating women's retention and promotion in the telecom industry: building a diverse and inclusive workplace, reducing women's care responsibilities, eliminating gender stereotypes, and eliminating vertical and horizontal occupational segregation. From the telecom companies' perspective, recruiting diverse talents has become an important means to innovate and grow. Therefore, talent cultivation programs have been implemented and female role models being established to increase women's entry in the industry. Finally, echoing the "The La Serena Roadmap for Women and Inclusive Growth 2019-2030," this workshop recognized the importance of data collection and analysis for policymakers to identify gender gaps and develop gender-inclusive policies for women's economic empowerment.

Policy Dialogue
Webinar

Webinar Summary

Date: October 6, 2022
Format: Virtual meeting
Hosting Economy: Chinese Taipei
Participating economies: Australia, Chile, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, the Philippines

In the Policy Dialogue Webinar, we invited representatives from governments and telecom companies in APEC region to share their effective policies and measures on increasing women's entry and retention/promotion in the telecom/ICT industry. The sharing and discussion results were then used to refine our drafted policy recommendations.

Actions taken by Public Sector

Mexico ——
Federal Telecommunications Institute (IFT)

Presented by Jessica Covarrubias, Director of Gender Perspective Mainstreaming

Ms Covarrubias shared the low female representation in STEM field in Mexico. For example, currently only 3 out of 10 professionals in STEM-related careers are women. There is also a lack of managerial positions for women in both the academy and labor market, resulting in the persisting wage gap between men and women. Therefore, the IFT currently has a comprehensive gender equality plan called "Women who Transform," which aims to recognize and promote the role of female specialists in the telecom and broadcasting sectors. The actions taken under this plan include collaborating with academic institutions to promote the participation of female experts and producing videos in which women share their success stories. IFT also make special calls for vacancies to be occupied only by woman to generate affirmative actions.

The benefits of including more women in the telecom industry are reducing gender gap and increasing highly specialized human capital. However, prejudices and discriminatory ideas have resulted in women's low representation in the telecom sector. Therefore, education is vital to recognize the role of women and to raise the awareness of the needs and benefits of including women in the telecom sector in equal conditions. She also suggested other actions to increase female representation, including developing government and company policies that promote women's empowerment and leadership and having mechanisms to prevent and address workplace violence and discrimination against women.

Chile ——
Undersecretariat of Telecommunications (SUBTEL)

Presented by Daniel Urbina, International Affairs Specialist

Mr Urbina firstly introduced the "Plan + Mujeres" (meaning More Women) program, which aims to advance the participation of women and improve gender indicators in the telecom industry. Under this program, SUBTEL has worked with the Ministry of Women and Gender Equality and six telecom providers to identify what are lacking in these

companies for achieving gender equality, such as the lack of gender quotas and measures to incentivize the hiring of women. These companies were then encouraged to create action plans in areas they voluntarily chose to focus, such as collaborating with educational institutions to encourage girls to study STEM subjects, providing professional internships, promoting female leadership through mentorship, raising workers' awareness on gender violence, and reviewing internal policies that may contain unconscious bias.

Chile is now implementing a new plan "Chile para Todas" (meaning Chile for all Women), which comprises several dimensions such as a law for parenting responsibility and support for caregivers. Mr Urbina particularly stressed that the co-responsibility of care work is crucial for women's career progression and should be supported by laws. He further suggested some strategies for involving the private sector, including collecting data to construct a baseline with indicators and establishing a legal framework to promote gender inclusion.

Actions taken by Private Sector

the Philippines ——
Globe Telecom
Presented by Irish Salandanan-Almeida, Chief Privacy Officer

Ms Salandanan-Almeida introduced that Globe is not only a telecommunications company, but also a technology and digital solutions provider. Ranking first in gender diversity in the workforce among 10 economies in Asia, the company has 47% of the employees and 43% of leadership roles being occupied by women. She shared that Globe has implemented many programs that empower its employees, including Globe University that provide training programs and development courses. In addition, as visible role models are crucial, the company has mentorship program for young employees to learn from their mentors. There are also mechanisms for employees to make their voice heard and chart their own career paths. In particular, the company just announced a new policy in 2020

that extends employee benefits to same-sex legal spouses. With all these efforts, Globe won Asia's Best Workplace of the Year 2021 in the Asia's Corporate Excellence and Sustainability Awards.

Chinese Taipei ——
Intel Microelectronics Asia LLC
Presented by Mei SHIH, APJ HR Business Partner

Ms Shih described that Intel has strived to build a diverse workforce and create an inclusive workplace where all employees can exert their full potential and feel valued. To increase workforce diversity, Intel has set ambitious goals and tried to achieve them through innovative ways, and a referral program was implemented to encourage employees to refer female candidates. As for the retention and development of female talents, Intel built an inclusive workplace through compensation and benefits programs. For example, parental leaves, hybrid working model, and Gradual Return Program are all helpful for working mothers to stay in the workforce. Other measures include pay equity exercise to fix pay gap, inclusive language training, and learning opportunities for talent connection and psychological safety.

Ms Shih further introduced the Women at Intel (WIN) network, which is voluntarily organized by employees to enable female talents to share and learn experiences and feel they are not alone. Mentorship and sponsorship are also part of the WIN programs to support female employees' career progression. Particularly, men are also encouraged to join WIN, so that they can become the ally for female colleagues and the advocate for gender equality.

Project Findings & Policy Recommendations

Project Findings & Policy Recommendations

I. Project Findings

The findings and observations of the Pilot Survey, Best Practice Collection, Workshop, and Policy Dialogue Webinar can be summarized and concluded as the following:

1. With limited sex-disaggregated data available, the data show obvious glass ceiling effect and occupational segregation in the telecom industry.

In the Pilot Survey, data from 7 governments and 13 companies were collected. However, not all economies have data specifically for the telecom industry, with some reported data on Information and Communications sector and Information, Culture, and Recreation sector. Therefore, it would be difficult to produce average data for the APEC region or conduct cross-economy comparison. In addition, there is still a lack of sex-disaggregated data for the telecom industry, especially the proportion of women across different levels and departments.

Across the 7 economies, the percentage of women working in the overall workforce of the telecom industry ranges from 25% to 43%. However, women account for only 5% to 22% at leadership levels. At the company level, the average percentage of women in the overall workforce is 41%, but the figure drops to only 31% and 23% for senior leadership roles and board of directors, respectively. In addition, the average percentage of women in ICT-related departments is only 21%.

In terms of gender pay gap, the collected data shows that men's average salary is higher than that of women in the telecom industry. The gender pay gap reaches 22% at the economy level and 17% at company level.

2. While both government and companies have put efforts on women's entry in the telecom industry, actions made to facilitate women's retention and promotion are mainly from companies.

For women's entry in the telecom industry, government policies have been implemented to encourage girls to study STEM subjects, such as presenting female role models to schoolgirls, connecting them to STEM career women, and offering scholarships. Telecom companies have also put effort on talent cultivation. They provided not only internship opportunities for female students but also leadership training for female employees and skill training for women who are interested in the jobs.

For women's retention and promotion, the actions are mainly taken by companies. For example, in terms of childcare, paid parental leaves, inclusive facilities, and return-to-work support are provided by companies. Flexible working hours and remote-work options are also policies helpful for women to juggle family and work. In addition, companies may facilitate female leadership and foster inclusive company culture by supporting women's network and providing unconscious bias training, both are crucial for women's career advancement.

By comparison, governments work from a higher level to enact a wide range of laws and regulations on building a gender friendly workplace, eliminating gender discrimination and sexual harassment in the workplace, and ensuring reasonable standards of working conditions. A legal framework is established for employees to be entitled to labor welfare, including parental leave, maternity leave, and family

care leave. Furthermore, governments also provide incentives and guidance for companies to adopt gender diversity and inclusion policies, such as issuing certificates and presenting awards.

3. Technologies have created new opportunities for women, but challenges remained.

With the development of new technologies and the deployment of 5G network, the telecom industry has gradually shifted its business models and developed new digital services. This means more highly skilled talents are required and more job vacancies are open, an opportunity for telecom companies to diversify their workforce and for women to enter the industry.

Despite the new opportunities for women, as well as the efforts made by the government and companies, there are challenges remained.

First, the continued low representation of women in the STEM education results in women's less access to STEM-related employment opportunities. The small number of women in the current talent pool also constitutes a challenge for telecom companies to recruit more women. In addition, women's lack of digital skills and even lack of Internet access have led to their low capability of adapting to technological changes and low employability in the telecom (or more broadly ICT) sector.

Second, unpaid care and domestic responsibilities remain to be an obstacle impeding women's career advancement. Women are more likely than men to leave the workforce due to caregiving responsibilities. This explains why many female leaders interviewed in the Best Practice Collection reported that they were "lucky enough" to focus on career development since they have support from their families to take care of their children.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, work from home and flexible working hours becomes popular options for women to manage family and career. However, the responsibilities of unpaid care and domestic work still fall on women's shoulder. Working from home sometimes even makes women more difficult to switch between life and work, causing them to shoulder extra physical and emotional labor and experience more stress, anxiety, and depression, which may lead to mental health problems.

4. Three features that make the telecom industry different from other male-dominated industries in terms of gender equality

First, telecom companies are mostly large companies or even international companies who may pay more attention on environmental, social and governance (ESG) goals and gender equality. With abundant resources and well-segmented organizational structure, many of the companies have a team or committee dedicated to workplace diversity and inclusion. They are also able to launch large-scale campaigns and work closely with governments to promote gender diversity and inclusion.

Another feature of the telecom industry is that the workforce comprises not only plant and machinery technicians and technology-related professionals, who are mostly men, but also a large number of sales and service personnel, many of whom are women. Therefore, the sex-disaggregated data show that the representation of women in the overall workforce is not extremely low, but the glass ceiling effect and the occupational segregation within companies are significant. The percentage of women drops significantly as the career ladder goes up, and female representation in ICT-related departments is low, which echoes the phenomenon of "leaky pipeline". Therefore, strategies for increasing women's leadership and women's participation in the ICT field would be imperative.

Lastly, compared with other industries, the telecom industry has the advantage of adopting remote-work options, as they possess the Internet infrastructure as well as many digital services and equipment required for hybrid work environment. As women usually shoulder the burden of unpaid care and domestic work, flexible work arrangement can be conducive for women to stay in the workforce. Therefore, with the remote-work technologies, telecom companies are more likely to provide flexible working hours or

adopt work-from-home policies, especially for those with care responsibilities to juggle career and family.

II. Policy recommendations

To support more women to enter, retention, and advance in the telecom industry, actions must be taken by governments and telecom companies at the same time. Based on the above findings, this project proposes the following policy recommendations in three aspects:

A. Environment and structure

1. Collecting and monitoring sex-disaggregated data

Sex-disaggregated data is a crucial piece of evidence that can help raise the awareness of gender inequality and build gender indicators and baselines for decision-makers to develop responding measures for improvements. Therefore, both companies and governments should collect sex-disaggregated data regularly and monitor the data in the long term to allow changes being tracked and policies being developed for improvement. To avoid an oversimplified picture of women's participation in the telecom industry, the data should include the percentage of women across different occupational levels and departments/job functions, gender pay gap, the retention rates of women and men, among others. The data should also be intersected with other factors, such as age, working years, race, educational level, and disability status, to further identify the inequalities within employees with more comprehensive analysis.

2. Eliminating gender stereotypes and bias

Governments should take actions to eliminate gender stereotypes embedded in the society, such as that boys are more suitable than girls to study STEM subjects, women are responsible for caregiving and domestic work, and men are more capable of being a leader. It is suggested that education, both in family and in school, would be most fundamental for reducing prejudices and promoting non-discriminatory practices.

Companies are recommended to create an inclusive company culture that make all employees feel being respected and valued. For example, using gender-neutral language can make female employees feel more comfortable and gain the sense of belongingness. Transparent and open conversation between employers and employees as well as among employees is also crucial to foster an inclusive culture where everyone's voice can be heard. Moreover, companies can review their internal policies to address the hidden unconscious bias, and provide unconscious bias training for workers, managers and human resource teams to eliminate gender-based bias that may affect the recruitment and promotion processes.

3. Enhancing public-private partnership to promote gender diversity and inclusion

Governments and companies should work together closely to facilitate women's participation in the telecom industry. As company policies could make direct impact on women's career development, it is important that governments provide incentives for companies to adopt diversity and inclusion policies, and establish a legal framework to guide companies to achieve certain goals, in addition to offering financial support. Furthermore, companies are also encouraged to work with governments, such as providing recommendations for governments to develop feasible policies, participating in the policy making process, and joining government's related initiatives and campaigns.

B. Women's entry into the telecom industry

1. Enhancing STEM education and skill training for women and girls

To increase female representation in the telecom industry, it is crucial to strengthen their employability. Governments and telecom companies can collaborate with educational institutions to cultivate more female talents in STEM fields. This may include stimulating girls' interest in studying STEM subjects, familiarizing them with STEM careers, providing internship opportunities for female students, and providing related skill training for women.

2. Presenting female role models

Female role models, especially in male-dominated industries, are critical for young women to discover their potential and envision their success. In this regard, companies and governments can work together to identify and establish female role models and introduce them to schoolgirls and young women to foster a more gender-balanced future workforce.

C. Women's retention and promotion in the telecom industry

1. Supporting employees with care responsibilities

Care responsibility has been a major obstacle to women's advancement in career. At the government level, social support systems such as affordable and accessible childcare services should be provided. Policies should be implemented to encourage men to share the care responsibilities, and campaigns should be launched to raise public awareness on the co-responsibility of unpaid care and domestic work between women and men.

At the company level, flexible working hours and work-from-home policy are important for working parents to juggle childcare and career. Paid parental leaves, inclusive facilities such as lactation rooms and childcare centers, as well as other parental benefits are also helpful for women to stay in the workforce. Companies should also provide comprehensive return-to-work support to help women return to the workplace and advance in their career.

2. Providing leadership training and mentoring program

Women are often less expected to be leaders, and they are also less likely to aspire to leadership. Therefore, leadership training would be crucial for them to take on leadership roles. Such training should not only focus on the development of skills required for leadership, but also help women boost their confidence and discover their leadership potential. Mentorship is also conducive to women's career progression as they can receive professional advice, career development and psychosocial support, and role modeling from their mentors.

3. Supporting women's network

Companies are recommended to support women's network, as it can be a platform where women at different levels and positions are connected and support each other. Apart from peer support, female employees can also receive mentoring from female leaders and learn how to navigate gender stereotypes as well as how to be seen and heard. This is particularly important for women in a male-dominated industry, where women may find it hard to fit into men's circle and join men's conversation. Men should also be encouraged to join the network, to understand female colleagues' difficulties and therefore become their allies.

4. Addressing and preventing workplace sexual harassment

Studies have indicated that sexual harassment is detrimental to women's psychological wellbeing and career development and contribute to the leadership gap. Therefore, government should enact laws to prevent and address workplace sexual harassment; companies should also take related measures, such as providing trainings to raise employees' awareness, creating effective channels for complaints and remediation, and fostering a culture to speak out against the perpetrators and support the victims.