

Sponsorship as a Tool to Break the Glass Ceiling

Investing in Women (IW) conducted case studies of PT. Vale Indonesia and PT. Adis Dimension Footwear to examine executive sponsorship practices and their impacts on Workplace Gender Equality (WGE). It formed part of a series on WGE changes in Indonesia, Vietnam, and the Philippines, and was facilitated by the Indonesia Business Coalition for Women Empowerment (IBCWE).

Sponsorship

Sponsorship refers to a systematic effort to develop a professional for a targeted promotion under the guidance of a senior professional using networks and strategic capacity building approaches. It is an especially promising approach for promoting workplace gender equality because sponsorship “plugs” women into the pipeline for C-Suite positions in which men are overrepresented. The case studies highlight that sponsorship can take different approaches and have different levels of formality, but overall, it is an effective way of moving women up the corporate ladder.

Sponsorship at Vale Indonesia and PT. Adis Indonesia

Vale Indonesia and PT Adis Indonesia were looking to recruit new CEOs, and for both



companies the preferred candidates were women. In Indonesia, where only 4% of the 200 top listed companies have a female CEO, this was a progressive decision by the company executives. The results show that sponsorship was an effective mode for succession planning in both companies. At Vale, Ms. Febriani Eddy was sponsored by Mr. Nico Kanter and at Adis, Ms. Margaret Vikta was sponsored by Mr. Harijanto. With guidance and on-the-job support, each woman was scaffolded to the top position by the sponsor, alongside other contributing factors.

Several activities of the Indonesian companies in this case study highlighted the potential for sponsorship to increase the proportion of women in positions of corporate power. Both Febri and Vikta benefitted from their sponsors' guidance by:

- Receiving knowledge and wisdom;
- Being put in active roles to learn by doing on-the-job functions as the 'shadow' CEO;



- Being given opportunities to meet and connect with influential people, and especially to develop government relations skills needed at top level position holders.

These benefits address several contributing factors of 'glass ceiling.' This is true for both men and women alike, but especially for women at work. Contributing factors include:

- Lack of opportunities to learn stereotypically 'male' skills;
- Lack of opportunities to build networks; and
- Lack of confidence.

PT. Vale	Sector	Mining
	Market	Global
	Employees (male/female)	Approx. 3,000 (92%/8%)
	Executive Management	25% women*)

For Vikta, sponsorship provided her with targeted support; thereby strengthening her skills in external relations - a competency highly valued in executive roles and that men have more opportunity to develop. For Febri, Nico's unwavering support at critical points helped her overcome self-doubt and take opportunities that she might have not taken without his encouragement.

Benefits for WGE

Sponsoring women to become the CEOs has generated a momentum towards challenging gender norms and driving improvements in WGE. Positive impact of the sponsorship process, includes:

- Catalysing improved human resource analytics within the companies (improved data collection and analysis of human resources);
- Attracting and retaining more women into the companies or into training and development programs within the company;
- Inspiring and motivating men and women that promotion is based on merit regardless of their gender;
- Reinforcing wider company policies and programs to improve diversity and workplace culture; and
- Building workforce morale and motivation by being a company that "walks the talk" and demonstrates a "next level" commitment to personnel.

What have we learned about doing sponsorship well?

Based on the experiences at Adis and Vale, IBCWE have identified that sponsorship is a powerful intervention to improve women's representation in leadership. Companies can learn from this strategy which links women with sponsors to develop their leadership potential to help smash the glass ceiling. Factors that contributed to successful sponsorship in Vale and Adis include:



Sponsor's awareness that gender balance improves creativity, innovation, and openness to new ideas



The unswerving commitment of a sponsor to encourage and build the confidence of the sponsee



Continued advocacy of the sponsor for the sponsee within the company structure (the board and other senior company members)



A sponsee who is willing to expand their networks and skills, especially in external relations.



The support of male figures at home and work who are willing to share and use their power to support women realise their potential

Sector	Footwear	PT. Adis
Market	Global	
Employees(male/female)	Approx. 11,300 (47%/53%)	
Executive Management	40% women (IBCWE Adis GEARS Data 2021)	

The case study on sponsorship highlights success in Indonesian companies and shares experiences that can benefit others. It is timely then that IBCWE has developed a sponsorship toolkit incorporating this case study, to support other companies to adopt sponsorship as a strategy to improve gender imbalance at the top levels of business.

The views expressed in this publication are not necessarily the views of the Australian Government. Photos: IBCWE, PT Vale, PT Adis.

*) <http://www.vale.com/indonesia/EN/governance/board-of-directors/Pages/default.aspx> (accessed on Oct, 12 2022)