



# Role Enhancement for Bahraini Women in the Private Sector

Mainstreaming Women's needs in the Private Sector

A Study conducted by  
Intellect Resources Management W.L.L in Collaboration with  
Supreme Council for Women

November 2015





مجلس الإمارات للمرأة  
Supreme Council for Women

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INTELLECT RESOURCES  
MANAGEMENT W.L.L.

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## Executive Summary

To ensure that the objective of ‘Mainstreaming women’s needs by promoting the principle of equal opportunities is achieved through effective implementation, the Supreme Council for Women appointed the Intellect Resources Management W.L.L. (IRM) to conduct a study. The study was conducted to identify tools for effective implementation and also ensure that the objective of mainstreaming women’s needs in the banking and financial sector is achieved through different mediums. It is based on a well structured methodology including both primary and secondary research in the banking and financial sector. Both IRM and the Supreme Council for Women introduced the National Plan for the Advancement of Bahraini Women 2013 – 2022, to institutions in this sector during one-to-one meetings and focus group discussion conducted during 6 round table meetings.

Global trends show that participation of women in the workforce varies across different countries. Compared with other countries in the GCC, it is at a modest level in Bahrain, but when compared with countries like Australia, Singapore and China, it is low. According to the World Economic Forum, 2014, “The Global Gender Gap” report, Bahrain ranks 126 in terms of equal opportunity, while Qatar and Kuwait rank 101 and 106, respectively. More specifically, globally participation of women is low in senior management despite high levels of education. Globally, growth of women employees is slow along the corporate pipeline and they are mostly concentrated in the entry and middle level management roles, despite being proficient. Most common barriers to greater participation of women include challenges faced by women in balancing work and domestic responsibilities and high expectations at work.

In 2014, 26 percent of the workforce in Bahrain was accounted by women.<sup>1</sup> Percentage of Bahraini women in entry and middle level management is close to 33 percent, and at managerial positions it is at 18 percent, of the total number. However, it diminishes in senior management positions and above. According to the Central Bank of Bahrain’s (CBB) survey of banking and financial services institutions, 3 percent of board members and 2 percent of Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) of institutions in this sector are Bahraini women respectively.<sup>2</sup>

The primary research findings indicate that working women in Bahrain are well qualified, proficient at work, possess good communication skills, are well organized, motivated and are confident of their

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<sup>1</sup>Extracted from Labor Market Regulatory Authority (LMRA), Bahrain Labor Market Indicators, [http://blmi.lmra.bh/2015/03/mi\\_dashboard.xml](http://blmi.lmra.bh/2015/03/mi_dashboard.xml)

<sup>2</sup> Extracted from CBB survey of Banking and Financial Services Sector Institutions

capabilities. They can multi task and are hard working and committed. They have contributed to the growth of their respective organization and supported and fostered their subordinates along their career path. However, despite these qualities and the contribution they make, it is not very easy for them to grow along the corporate ladder due to several barriers. The survey found women face both challenges in their current leadership position and barriers to grow along the corporate ladder and reach higher positions in the organization. Some of these include lack of equal opportunities, greater preference to male colleagues and lack of training and coaching support.

The study recommends that these barriers and challenges can be overcome by establishing an 'Equal Opportunity or Equivalent Committee' at the institution level, with clearly defined terms of references. It is also recommended that to measure an impact of the committee, monitoring and evaluation is an important requirement. The study also recommends that there should be diversity and representation of women on boards of companies. To ensure that women possess the required qualities, competencies for effective board member are outlined. In addition, it is recommended that special training and coaching programs should be developed for women employees to develop skills that help them grow along the corporate ladder.

## **Introduction: National Plan for the Advancement of Bahraini Women 2013 - 2022**

The Supreme Council for Women was established in 2001. During its first term (2001 – 2004), the Council formulated a National Strategy for the Advancement of Bahraini Women.

In 2011-12, the Supreme Council for Women started an objective evaluation process based on systematic mechanisms, through studying and analyzing what was achieved in real, as well as highlighting the challenges and obstacles and as a result launched the National Plan for the Advancement of Bahraini Women (2013-2022).

The Objective of the Plan is to create **Impact** in the following 5 areas:

1. Ensure family stability for women, in the context of family bonds
2. Mainstreaming women's needs by promoting the principle of equal opportunities and empowering women to enable them to meet development competency requirements
3. Supporting women to excel with lifelong learning
4. Supporting women to develop quality of life and
5. Enabling the Supreme Council for Women to become a national house of expertise, specialized in women's affairs

Following this stage the Supreme Council for Women entered the next stage of 'Implementation through partnerships and alliances (2013 – 2022)'. The National Plan for the Advancement of Bahraini Women (2013 – 2022) is based on a clear comprehensive vision leading the mission of the Supreme Council for Women at the next stage.

### **The Vision**

Equal partnership towards building a sustainable and competitive society.

### **The Mission**

1. Empowerment of Bahraini women and integrating their needs in development programs to ensure family stability and maintaining family bonds.
2. Enhancing the principle of equal opportunities to ensure the competitiveness of Bahraini women and the continuity of lifelong learning.
3. Ensuring the diversity of alternatives available to Bahraini women in order to enhance their quality of life through a framework of legislations and policies.
4. Collaboration with allies and partners in institutional work to enhance the status of women.
5. Establishment of a house of expertise specialized in women-related issues based on international standards and national expertise.

The Supreme Council for Women aims to fulfill this mission by adopting the following **four mediums**:

1. Budgets
2. Policies
3. Knowledge Management
4. Measuring Impact

Under the National Plan for the Advancement of Bahraini women (2013-2022), the priority for 2015 is to ensure **‘Mainstreaming women’s needs by promoting the principle of equal opportunities and empowering women to enable them to meet development competency requirements’**. For its effective implementation, the Supreme Council for Women appointed the Intellect Resources Management, W.L.L. and commissioned a study with this objective. Since the inception of this project in March 2015, the Supreme Council for Women and IRM have worked closely to integrate women’s needs into human resources development plans of institutions in the banking and financial services sector, based on the principle of equal opportunities so as to implement the framework for 2015.

Intellect Resources Management, W.L.L. (IRM) was established in 2013 by Mrs. Sabah Khalil Almuayyed, a veteran in the banking industry. The IRM has been actively providing advisory services and participating in the implementation of the Plan in the Banking and Financial sector. Based on a well structured methodology including both primary and secondary research, IRM has analyzed secondary data and deliberated with the industry representatives on mainstreaming women’s needs in the sector. The conclusions are summarized under the following titles:

1. Secondary data analysis
2. Primary research findings
3. Recommendations:
  - a. Implementation of the Equal Opportunity – Proposed Terms of Reference
  - b. Monitoring and evaluation
  - c. Proposed Competencies for Board of Directors - Supporting women involvement in decision making positions
  - d. Developing and promoting ‘Leadership Program for Women’ - Dissemination of the culture of mainstreaming women’s needs

This report will be divided into different sections based on these conclusions and the recommendations.

## Objectives

The objective of the project is to ensure *Greater participation of women in the Private Sector based on the principle of equal opportunities*. This can be achieved through the following steps:

1. Ensuring greater representation of women in Senior Positions (Executive Positions and representation on Boards of Companies)
2. Providing training, mentoring and counseling for career progression and leadership
3. Integrating women’s needs into human resources development plans of companies

## Methodology

During the study that was conducted between March 2015 and November 2015, an in-depth secondary data analysis and a primary research were completed. The secondary research involved an extensive literature review to assess the global trends and draw a comparative picture with the trends in Bahrain.

The primary research included One-on-one meetings and focused group discussion with private institutions in the banking and financial sector to introduce and activate the National Plan for the Advancement of Bahraini women (2013-2022). In addition, questionnaires based survey was conducted of employees in selected private institutions in the banking and financial sector. The details are as follows:



1. **One-on-one meetings** were conducted with senior management (including CEOs, General Managers, Managing Directors, etc.) of 27 institutions including companies in the Banking and Financial Sector, regulatory body including the Central Bank of Bahrain and Economic Development Board, associations including the Bahrain Association of Banks and Bahrain Insurance Association and academic institution including the Bahrain Institute of Banking and Finance (Details of companies are available in Appendix A). The objective was as follows:
  - Introduce and activate the ‘National Plan for the Advancement of Bahraini Women (2013-2022)’
  - Assess support services offered to employees at present
  - Identify the existing gaps and barriers to mainstreaming women’s needs in this sector
  - Identify the steps proposed by the Supreme Council for Women and development of an Equal Opportunity Committee
2. **Focused group discussion** were conducted during 6 round table meetings with women executives in middle to senior management, HR managers, female board members, CEOs, representatives of equal opportunities committees and disabled employees of companies.
  - The objective behind the workshops was to create awareness about the ‘National Plan for the Advancement of Bahraini Women (2013-2022)’ and receive inputs on mainstreaming women’s needs in this sector

The **Questionnaire based survey** included open-ended questionnaires circulated to women executives of selected institutions in this sector. The questionnaires covered questions on demographic trends, qualities of a good leader, personal achievements and fear at work, reasons behind gender imbalance in executive positions, and steps to be taken to promote female participation in senior management.

In addition, IRM participated in a conference ‘11th Annual World Islamic Funds and Financial Markets Conference’ (May 18 & 19, 2015), to present topical issues on women empowerment.

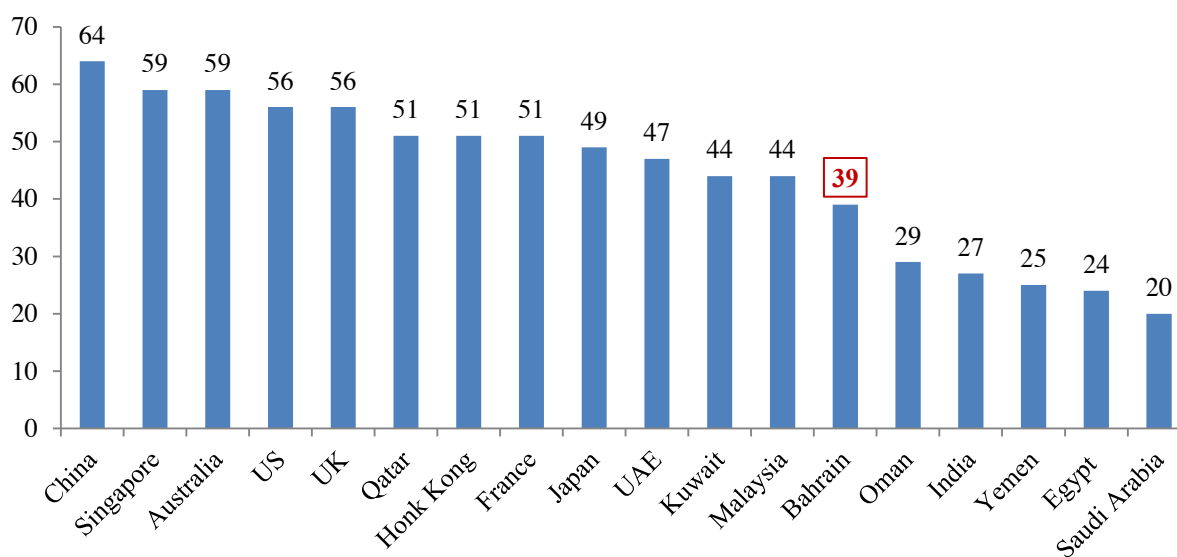
Detailed findings of the secondary and primary research are presented in the following sections.

## Secondary Research Findings

### Global Trends in participation of women in the workforce

Secondary research on percentage of participation of women in workforce and participation of women in senior positions (executive positions and on boards of companies) was conducted to understand the global trends and compare them with trends in Bahrain. As shown below, overall participation of women as a percentage of the total women in the workforce is significant for countries such as Australia, Singapore and China. However, compared with other countries, participation of women in GCC countries, particularly in Bahrain is below 40 percent, except for Qatar and UAE. According to global standards, workforce participation age is defined as 15 years +.

**Figure 1: Global Trends on Participation of women as a percentage of women in the work force for 2013 (15 years +) (percentage, %)**



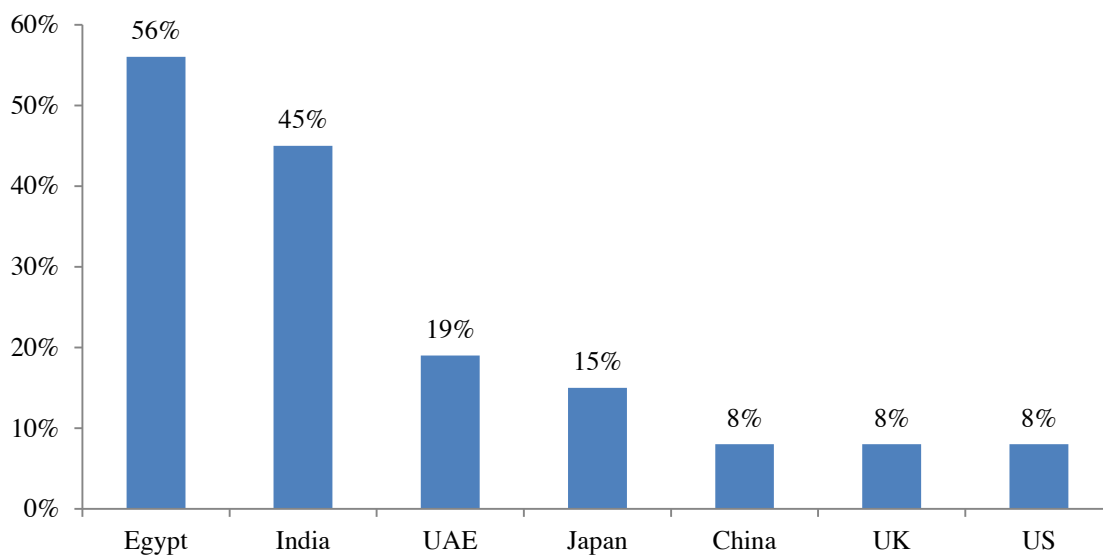
Source: Extracted from World Bank Data on Labor force participation rate, female (percentage of female population ages 15+) (modeled ILO estimate)

It is important to identify the benefits of greater participation of women and diversity across senior management. There is no dearth of literature supporting greater participation of women and highlighting its positive impact on the economic growth. A Booz & Co. report quantifies the incremental impact of greater participation of women on gross domestic product (GDP) for selected countries. As shown in

Figure 2, the estimated incremental impact on GDP for countries with greater participation of women (US, UK and China) is below 10 percent. However, it is above 50 percent for countries such as Egypt and India that have below 30 percent female participation rates.

In addition, European Commission (2012), “Women in Economic Decision Making in the EU: Progress Report”, suggests that companies with a gender-diverse board performsignificantly better than their competition. This includes a 42 percent higher return in sales, 66 percent greater return on invested capital, and 53 percent higherreturn on equity.

**Figure 2: Gross Incremental Impact on GDP based on the Proposed Equation for Selected Countries**



Source: The Booz & Company, 2012, “Empowering the Third Billion Women and the World of Work in 2012”

### Box 1: Quantifying the economic contribution of women

Based on the World Economic Forum data, the Booz & Company proposes a measure to determine the relationship between economic activity (GDP) and employment for a given country by using the following equation:

Per capita GDP = labor productivity x amount of work produced per person x employment rate x age factor

A more scientific form of the equation looks like this:

$$\text{Per capita GDP} = \text{GDP/H} \times \text{H/E} \times \text{E/WAP} \times \text{WAP/P}$$

where: GDP/H = GDP/hour worked (labor productivity)

H/E = hour worked/employment (annual average in working hour per employed person)

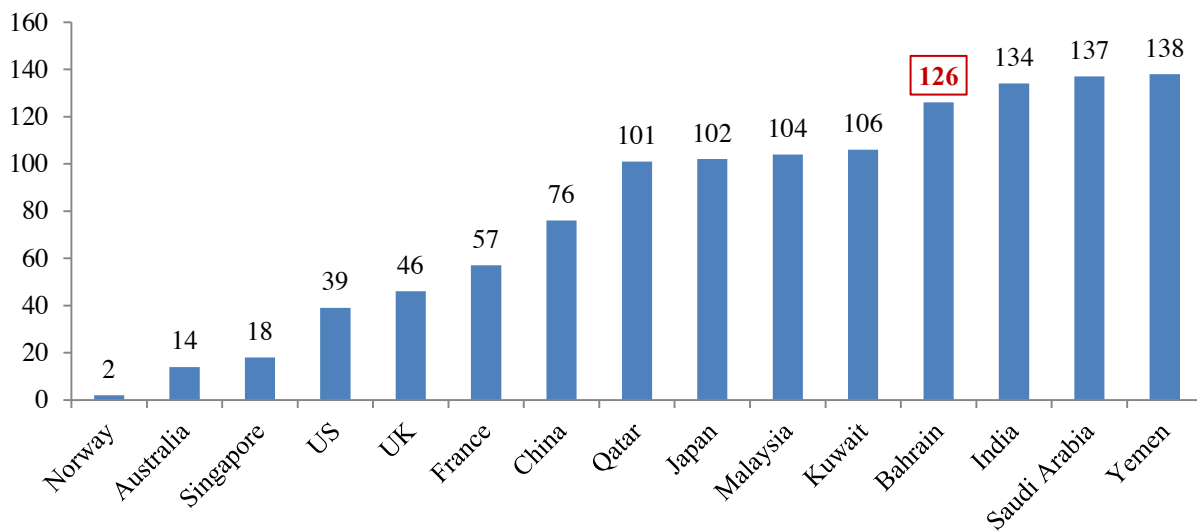
E/WAP = employment/working-age population (15–64) (employment rate)

WAP/P = working-age population/population (“youth dividend”)

Source: The Booz & Company, 2012, “Empowering the Third Billion Women and the World of Work in 2012”

Assessment of equal opportunity to women was also done based on the economic partnership and opportunity index developed by the World Economic Forum. It is an indicator of female labor force participation and equal opportunity to women in terms of wages and access to technical jobs and senior positions in both public and private sector. The variables include female versus male participation ratio, wage equality for similar work, female versus male income earned ratio, female versus male holding senior position ratio and female versus male having technical and professional jobs ratio. Data shows that ranking of GCC countries, and countries including Malaysia and India are comparatively low compared with other countries such as Australia, Singapore and China (see Figure 3).

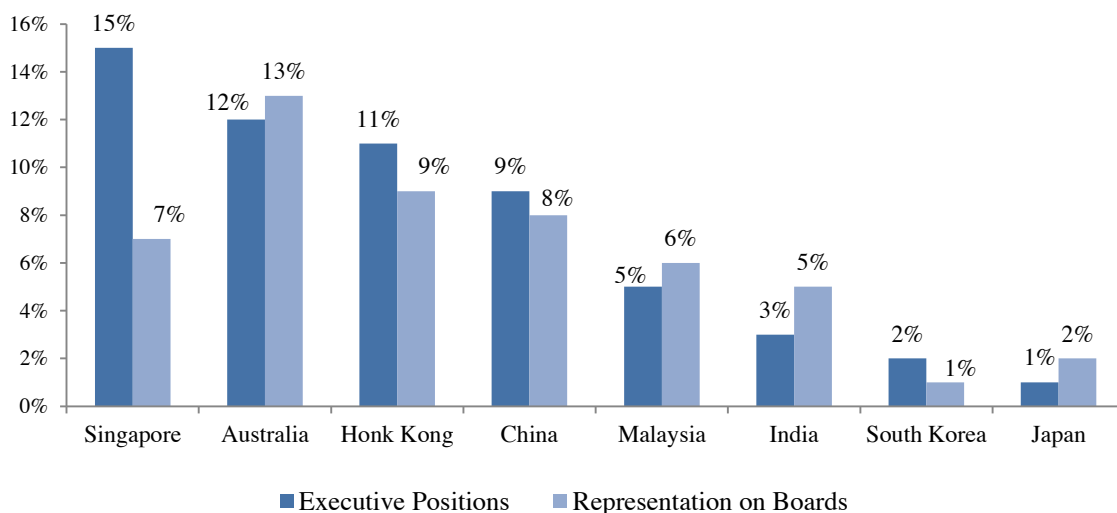
**Figure 3: Economic Partnerships and Opportunity – Global Ranking**



Source: World economic forum, 2014, “The Global Gender Gap Report”

Country-wise global data on proportion of women in senior positions shows that diversity in senior management is low across the selected countries. Even though participation of women in workforce is high in countries such as Australia, Singapore and China, percentage of females in senior positions (executive positions and on boards of companies) is not very high (see Figure 4). A comparative picture for Bahrain cannot be presented due to unavailability of data on this indicator.

**Figure 4: Global Trends on Proportion of Women in Senior Positions, 2011**



Source: McKinsey & Company, 2012, “Women Matter: An Asian Perspective Harnessing female talent to raise corporate performance”

Global trends indicate that despite high education levels across females, the level of diversity across senior positions is low. Even though female graduates across the selected countries is above 50 percent, female representation narrows down along the Corporate Pipeline and is not a priority in company strategies (see Table 1). Even in Bahrain 57.7 percent of females were reported to attain high school diploma or higher in 2010.<sup>3</sup>

**Table 1: Global Trends on Losses along the Corporate Pipeline**

Country	University Graduates (%)	Entry level Management (%)	Middle-senior level Management (%)	Executive Positions (%)	CEO (%)	Boards (%)
China	50	55	21	9	1	8
India	42	29	9	3	<1	5
Japan	49	45	11	1	<1	2
Singapore	49	50	20	15	8	7
Malaysia	57	53	11	NA	5	6
Australia	57	45	NA	12	3	13
Honk Kong	54	52	23	11	2	9

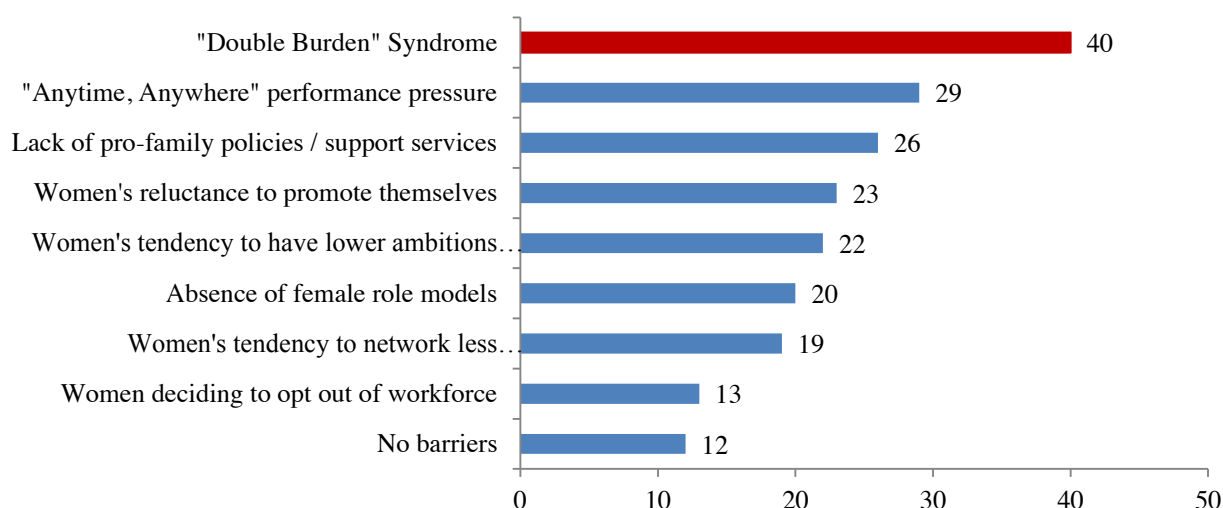
Source: McKinsey & Company, 2012, “Women Matter: An Asian Perspective Harnessing female talent to raise corporate performance”

The number of Bahraini female students enrolled in higher education was higher at 20,422 compared with Bahraini male students at 12,652 in the academic year 2013-14. It is interesting to investigate the barriers to greater diversity across senior management present globally. Based on a survey of selected participants, a McKinsey & Co. report concludes that balancing work and domestic responsibilities is the most popular barrier. In certain markets, the level is much higher (see Figure 5). In India, South Korea, and Japan, it is close to half, indicating the strength of the cultural views, held by many women as well as men that

<sup>3</sup> Extracted from Higher Education Statistics, Ministry of Education (Last accessed on October 17, 2015)

hinder women’s progress. In Australia, China, Hong Kong, and Singapore, family duties appear to exert less influence over women’s decisions about their working lives.

**Figure 5: Barriers to gender diversity within Senior Management**



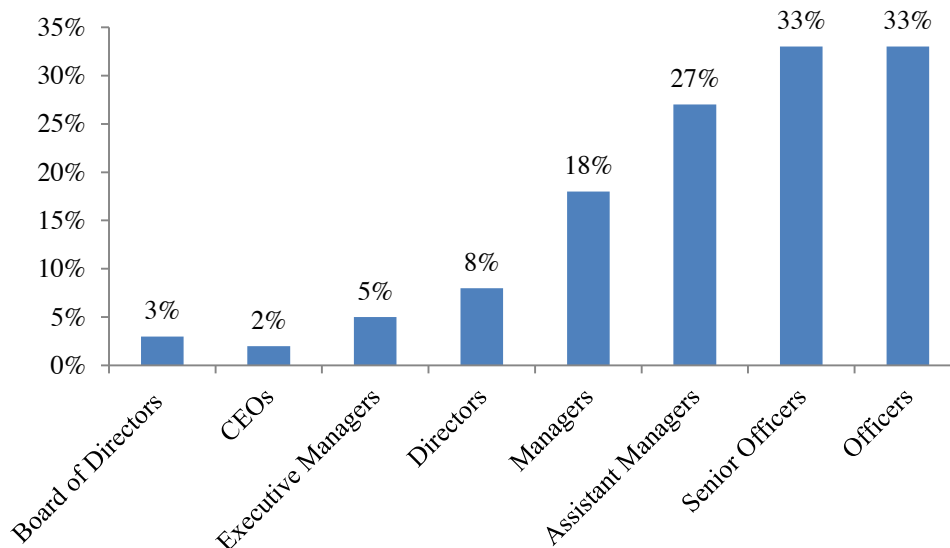
Source: McKinsey & Company, 2012, “Women Matter: An Asian Perspective Harnessing female talent to raise corporate performance”

## Trends in the Kingdom of Bahrain

According to the LMRA data, in 2015, 55,535 Bahraini women were employees across all sectors of the economy and in 2014 number of women owning business (commercial registration) were 29,793. The results from an annual survey for banks and financial services sector conducted by CBB show that in 2014, 26 percent of the workforce was Bahraini women.

According to the CBB data, majority of the Bahraini women employed in this sector were occupying entry to middle management positions in 2014. As shown in figure 6, percentage of Bahraini women occupying senior positions diminishes as we move up to senior positions including CEOs, executive managers, directors and board members across institutions in this sector.

**Figure 6: Percentage of Bahraini women occupying senior positions**



Source: Extracted from CBB survey of Banking and Financial Services Sector Institutions

Note: The percentage figure for each position is a percentage of total number of employees occupying that position in the banking and financial services sector

Gender and citizenship wise data for selected positions are provided and it shows that the percentage of Bahraini females employed in this sector is far greater than non-Bahraini females (see Table 2).

**Table 2: Gender and citizenship wise data for selected positions (percentage %)**

Citizenship	Directors		Managers		Assistant Managers		Senior Officers		Officers	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
<b>Bahraini</b>	8	40	18	38	27	45	33	41	33	45
<b>Non Bahraini</b>	2	49	5	40	6	21	6	20	6	16

Source: Extracted from CBB survey of Banking and Financial Services Sector Institutions

Note: The percentage figure for each position is a percentage of total number of employees occupying that position in the banking and financial services sector

In terms of support services provided by different institutions in this sector, the CBB recorded data on certain select indicators. The data is summarized in Table 3.



**Table 3: Banking and financial services institutions that provide selected support services to their employees**

Support Services	Number of Institutions (%), 2014
Flexible Working Hours	93 (45%)
Insurance Coverage (including Maternity Insurance)	117 (57%)
Nursery at workplace	6 (3%)
Work from home	39 (19%)

Source: Extracted from CBB survey of Banking and Financial Services Sector Institutions

## Important conclusions from the Secondary Research

Analysis of secondary data from different sources suggests that participation of women in the workforce and equal opportunity varies across different countries. Compared with other countries in the GCC, it is at a modest level in Bahrain, but when compared with countries like Australia, Singapore and China, it is low. More specifically, globally participation of women is low in senior management despite high levels of education. Globally, growth of women employees is sluggish along the corporate pipeline and they are mostly concentrated in the entry and middle level management roles, despite being proficient.

On evaluating the most common barriers to these trends, it was found that double burden syndrome and high expectations at work are among the most common barriers that restrict women's career growth. Hence, an assessment of ways to overcome the barriers is important, especially against the backdrop of the contribution women make to economic growth of a country. Globally, several studies show that higher female participation lead to higher incremental impact on GDP in case of countries with low levels of female participation at present. A similar measure can be adopted to estimate the contribution of Bahraini working women on economic growth and it is expected that there will be a high incremental impact on the GDP if female participation increases.

## Primary Research Findings

### Key Findings from the One-to-One Meetings

During the one-to-one meetings with senior management (including CEOs, General Managers, Managing Directors, etc.) of select banking and financial services sector institutions, the National Plan for the Advancement of Bahraini women (2013-2022) was introduced. In particular, steps towards mainstreaming women's needs into the policies of institutions based on the principle of equal opportunities were discussed.

It was observed that several steps are being taken across few institutions to promote equal opportunities for employees. The CEOs and top executives of the selected institutions support the growth of women employees. They provide support services like flexible working arrangements to balance personal and professional life and introduce measures to fast track career progression of employees to reach leadership positions across institutions. In addition, questionnaire based surveys and focused group discussions are conducted on a regular basis to identify gaps and training and mentoring programs for employees are organized.

However, despite these trends, participation of women employees is low in senior management positions due to barriers such cultural restrictions, career stagnation at middle level management and fear of inability to manage expectations in senior positions.

During the meetings, pertinent measures were identified necessary for overcoming the existing barriers and achieving the objective of mainstreaming women's needs across these institutions. These are summarized below:

1. **Equal Opportunity:** Provide equal opportunities to all employees and establish a committee that will work for the integration of their needs into company policies
2. **Training:** Develop leadership and technical skills training programs for employees that will aid their career progression
3. **Support Services:** Provide support services to employees to improve performance at work. These include flexible working hours, succession planning, well developed career path and healthy work environment and infrastructure support for all employees and customers

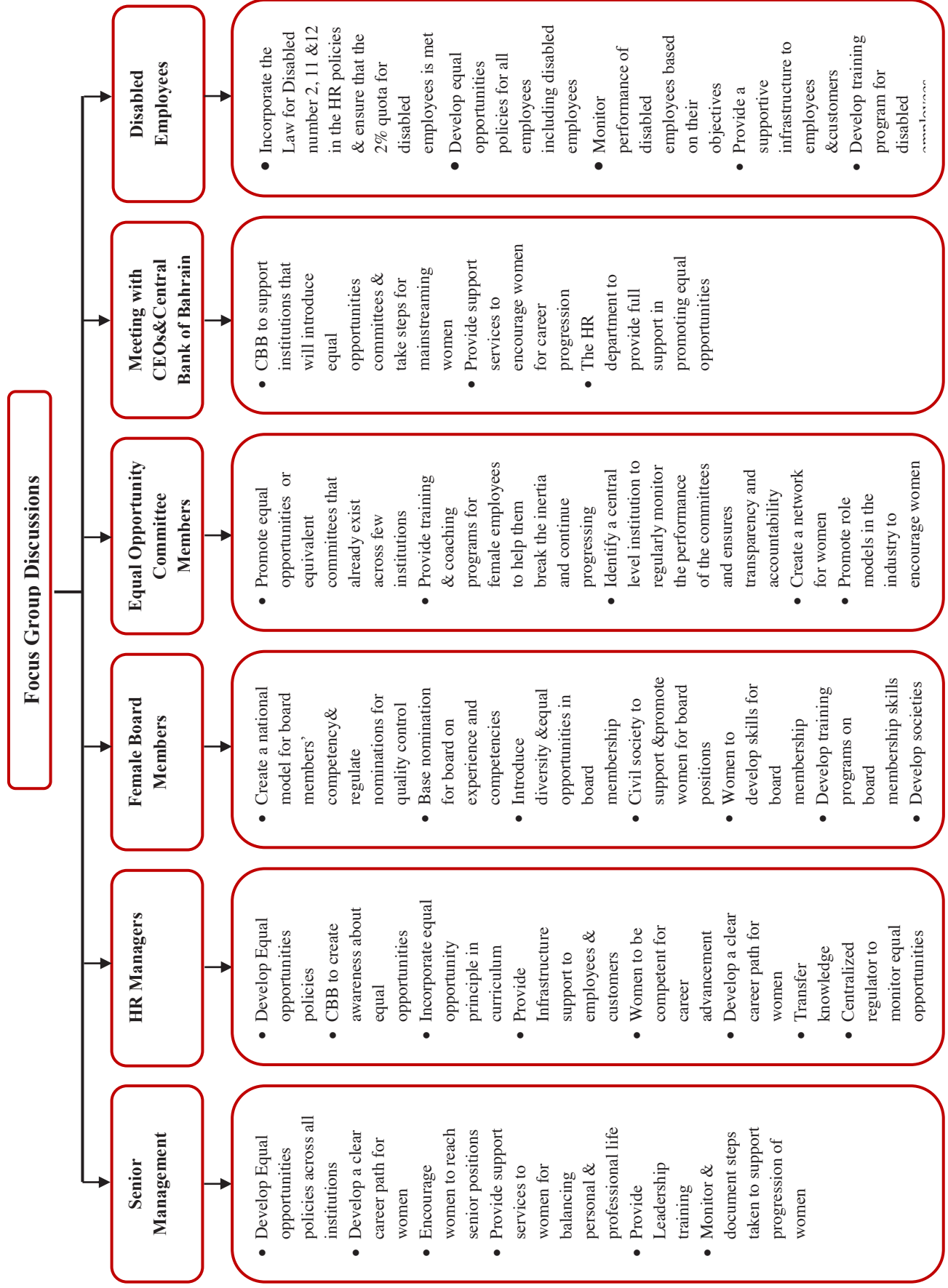
4. **Awareness:** Implement awareness programs for company employees about the concepts of equal opportunities
5. **Knowledge Management:** Share successful stories of role models in the industry and encourage networking among employees to support knowledge transfer
6. **Measuring Impact:** Record gender-wise statistics on select indicators including budget and monitor and document best practices

## Key Findings from the Focused Group Discussions

During the tenure of this study, 6 focused group discussions were conducted with senior management executives, human resources managers and female board members of institutions with participation of women on board, selected members of institutions that have equal opportunities committees, chief executive officers of selected institutions and female disabled employees of selected institutions.

The objective of the discussions was to identify steps needed for achieving the goal of mainstreaming women's needs by promoting the principle of equal opportunities and empowering women. Findings from the discussions are summarized below. These measures to be taken at institutional level were recognized as necessary for the National Plan for the Advancement of Bahraini women (2013-2022) (see Figure 7).

**Figure 7: Findings from Focus Group Discussions**



## Key Findings from the Questionnaire Based Survey

Out of a sample of randomly selected sample of 30 female employees in the banking and financial sector,17 responded to the open-ended questionnaires. The questionnaire covered questions on demographic trends, qualities of a good leader, personal achievements and fear at work, reasons behind gender imbalance in executive positions, and steps to be taken to promote participation of women in senior management.

Majority of the respondents are in the age group 30 – 50 and have more than 10 years of experience. They occupy leadership positions in their respective organizations. Majority of them are married, with dual responsibilities in personal and professional life.

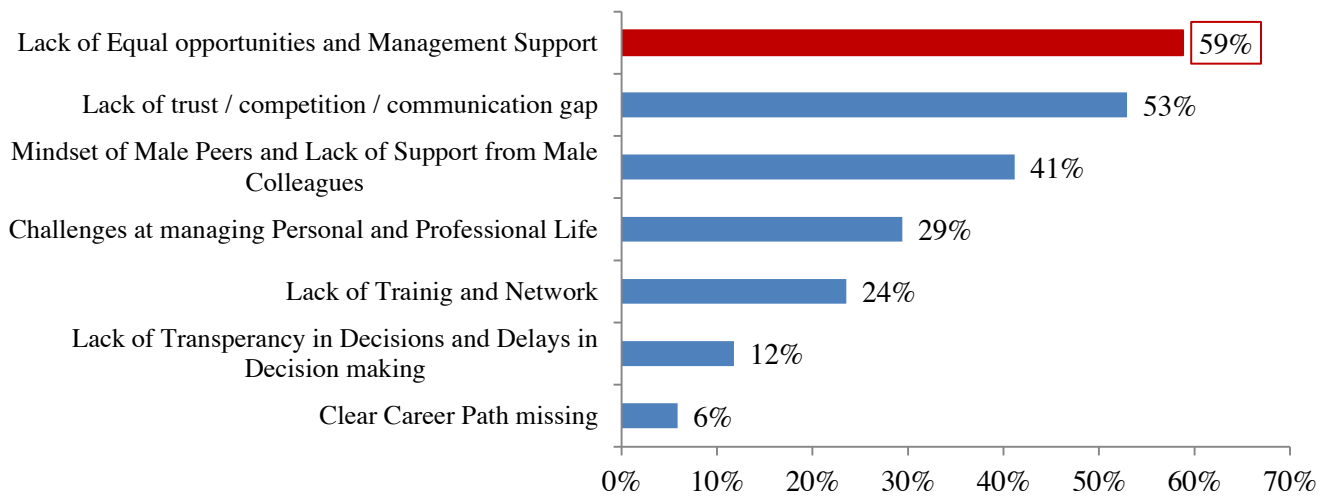
The respondents are well qualified, proficient at work, possess good communication skills, are well organized, motivated and are confident of their capabilities. They can multi task and are hard working and committed. They maintain cordial relationships with their bosses and subordinates in their respective work place and manage to balance their professional and personal life. They have contributed to the growth of their respective organization and supported and fostered their subordinates along their career path. Their bosses and peers appreciate them and consider them to be important employees of the organization.

However, despite these qualities and the contribution they make, it is not very easy for them to grow along the corporate ladder. While partially it is due to their internal fears and inability to handle pressure occasionally, the main reason behind the slow growth is the barriers they face at workplace.

The survey found that 29 percent of the respondents are able to handle their work well but face problem at balancing personal and professional life. They get stressed while managing time and expectations at work and at home. They feel that in addition to family support having a coach or mentor at workplace to guide can help in overcoming this.

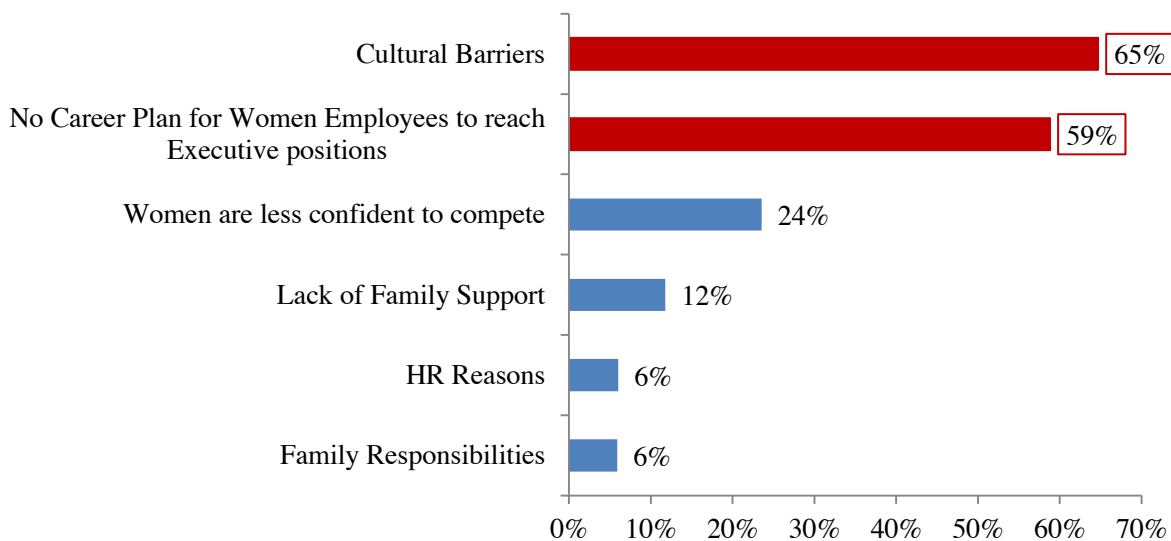
Regarding barriers faced at the workplace, they can be divided into two categories – 1). Challenges they face in their current leadership position and 2) barriers faced to grow along the corporate ladder, to higher positions in the organization. These are illustrated in figures 8 and 9.

**Figure 8: Challenges faced at current leadership position by respondents**



Source: Based on primary research findings

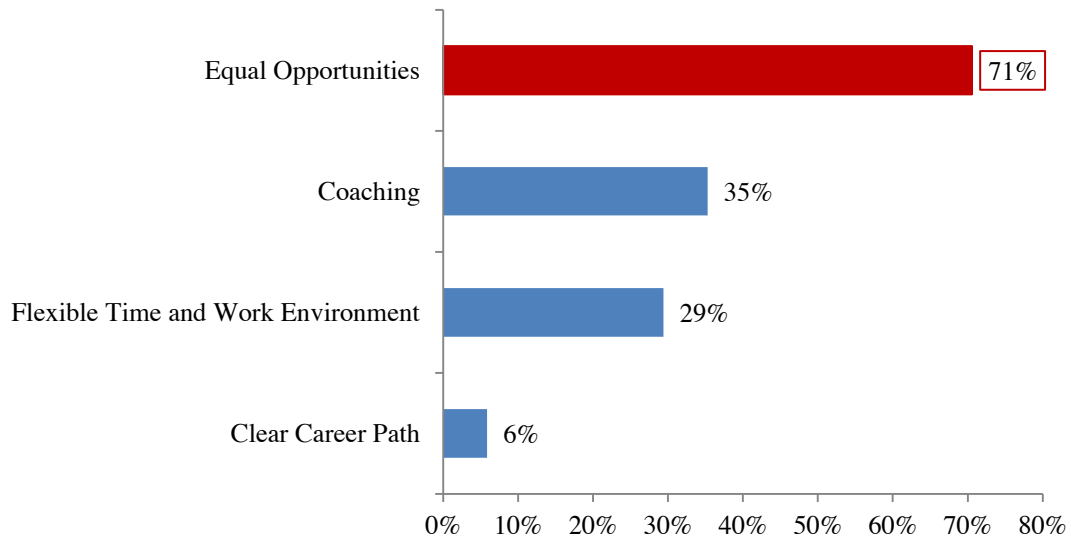
**Figure 9: Barriers faced to growth along the career path**



Source: Based on primary research findings

Respondents were asked to highlight areas where support is needed to grow along the corporate ladder and reach executive positions. 71 percent of the respondents want equal opportunities at workplace for career progression, followed by coaching and mentoring to guide them through the growth process (see Figure 10). Respondents are competent to ‘think out of the box’ and do not want any glass ceilings at work so that they can bring their ideas to the table.

**Figure 10: Support needed to reach executive positions**



Source: Based on primary research findings

## Important conclusions from the Primary Research

The primary research concludes that following steps have to be taken by different stakeholders in fulfilling the objective of equal opportunity and diversity in the private sector.

### Employers' Support

- Emphasis on equal opportunity and higher female participation in senior roles in the HR plans
- Greater initiatives like workshops and mentoring and training programmes to prepare leaders and encourage greater female participation in decision-making roles
- Outlining a clear career path for women
- Development of a conducive environment for women to 'think out of the box' and bring their ideas on 'the table'

### Government Support

- Policies to guide industry to promote greater female participation and diversity in senior positions in the private sector
- Schemes to incentivize equal opportunity and diversity at in the private sector
- Educational initiatives that focus on developing a balance between women's academic understanding, and work ethics and motivation to grow in the workplace

### Bahraini Women Employees

- Support from family and society
- Flexible arrangements for balancing personal and professional life
- Motivation and confidence to grow at workplace
- Female role models to look up to for mentoring and guidance
- Showcase and promote their skills when required

Source: Based on primary research findings

## Recommendations

To achieve the objective of equal opportunity and diversity, it is recommended that the following steps are taken.

1. Establishment of the Equal Opportunity Committee
2. Implementation of the Equal Opportunity Terms of Reference
3. Monitoring and evaluation
4. Board members' Competencies
5. Leadership training and mentoring programs for women employees



## 1. Equal Opportunity Committee – Proposed Terms of Reference

The objective of the ‘National Plan for the Advancement of Bahraini Women (2013-2022)’ is to ensure equal opportunity for a competent and sustainable society and protect employees against any discrimination. The National Plan for the Advancement of Bahraini women (2013-2022) was advocated to the institutions in the banking and financial sector during the one-to-one meetings and focus group discussions and important findings were detailed in the previous sections.

Based on the findings of the one-to-one meetings, focus group discussions and questionnaire based survey, it is recommended to form equal opportunity committees at institution-level across all institutions in the banking and financial sector. The committees should develop its operations and guidelines based on a common set of terms of reference. A set of terms of reference for the committees are outlined below, these terms of reference may act as a guideline for each institution to adopt it in line with its company policies and vision.

It is recommended that members of this non-decision making committee report to the CEO or Deputy CEO and all recommendations are made to the CEO or Deputy CEO of the respective institution.



The committee shall be independent of the human resources and corporate governance committees of the institutions. To create awareness of diversity and promote equal opportunity, the equal opportunity committee should include representation from at least the following departments within private institutions:

1. The executive management
2. The product and business development division
3. The human resources department
4. The operations department

It is recommended that the equal opportunity committee adopts the following **four mediums to achieve the objectives of the National Model:**

1. Budgets

2. Policies
3. Knowledge Management
4. Measuring Impact

Based on the findings of the primary research, it is recommended that an equal opportunity committee operating on the following guidelines will facilitate the achievement of the objective of the ‘National Plan for the Advancement of Bahraini Women (2013-2022)’.

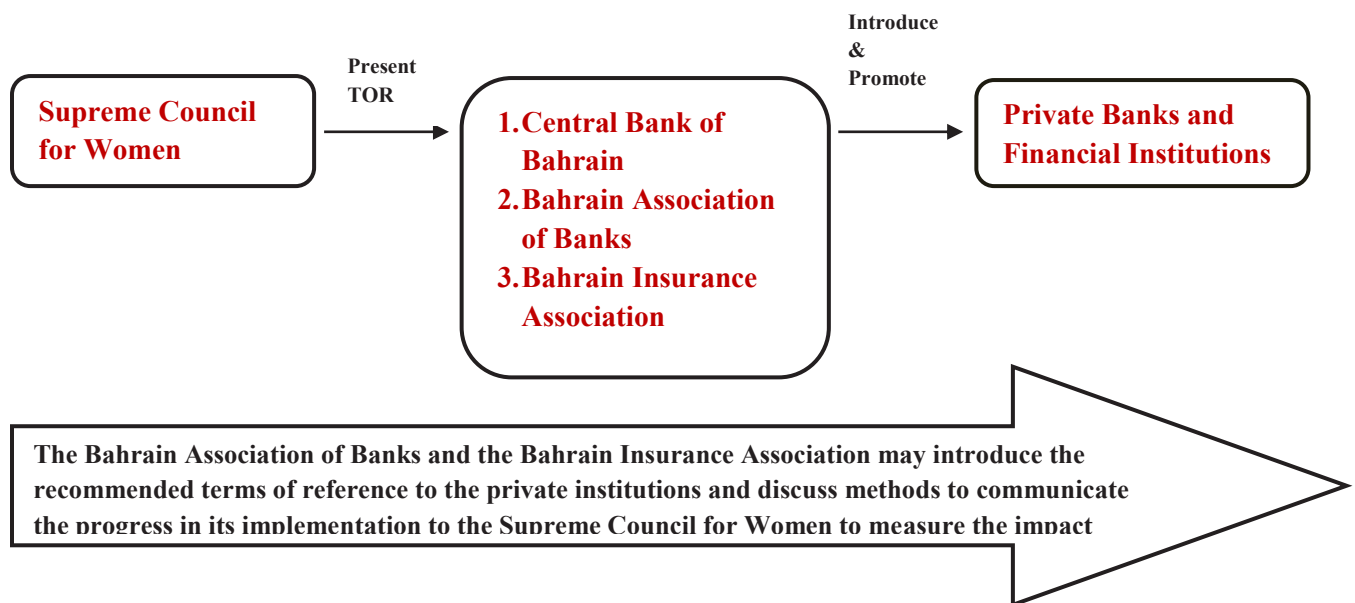


<b>Terms of Reference</b>
<b>Equal Opportunity Practices in the Private Sector</b>
<b>Networking</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage ‘networking programs’ for employees within a single institution and its branches (local and international), in order to promote smooth flow of information, problem solving, greater awareness about company’s policies and practices, knowledge transfer and stimulation and team building</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage networking among employees at three different levels – junior level management, middle level management and senior level management to provide greater understanding of the dual role (work-life balance) of women and introduce culture of collaboration and understanding</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support networking through suitable communication tools, for examples, through an online communication web portal that connects employees and provides them the resources (education, tools</li> </ul>

and multimedia) that can help them share experiences and best practices
<b>Training &amp; Development</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intensify systematic guidance, professional mentoring and coaching for women employees to aid them to overcome challenges and support their progression</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support greater diversity in senior positions and on boards of directors through equal opportunities in representation of employees at these levels</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that workplace's organizational structures and processes enable women to further access to work-based training, transparent promotionsystem or flexible working arrangements</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote skill assessment and development, support career progression and knowledge management among employees to ensure fair provision of opportunities among employees regardless of gender</li> </ul>
<b>Awareness</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage employees in social responsibility initiatives that support equal opportunities</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raise awareness among employees on the organization's policies to promote knowledge and awareness in the field of equal opportunities</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highlight the positive impact of practices which support equal opportunities and diversity at all levels on overall productivity and for the success of the organization</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adopt relevant global best practices and success stories in the field of equal opportunity and diversity</li> </ul>
<b>Support Services</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure the health, safety and well-being of women employees</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure availability of support facilities services to maintain work-life balance for employees</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement enterprise development, supply chains and marketing practices that support women development</li> </ul>
<b>Evaluation</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Measure the impact of women's performance in leadership and executive positions, support career development and fair pay for all employees</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess the progress to achieve gender equality and provide periodic update to the Deputy / or Chief Executive Officer on the progress achieved in applying the principle of equal opportunities, and publicly report success stories</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review gender sensitive allocation of institutional budget to assess the proportion of total funds allocated for the development of employees</li> </ul>

## 2. Implementation of the Equal Opportunity Terms of Reference

It is recommended that the Supreme Council for Women presents the Equal Opportunity Terms of Reference to the CBB, Bahrain Association of Banks and the Bahrain Insurance Association. These three institutions introduce the Equal Opportunity Terms of Reference to the private institutions and encourage them to adopt these guidelines.



## 3. Monitoring and evaluation

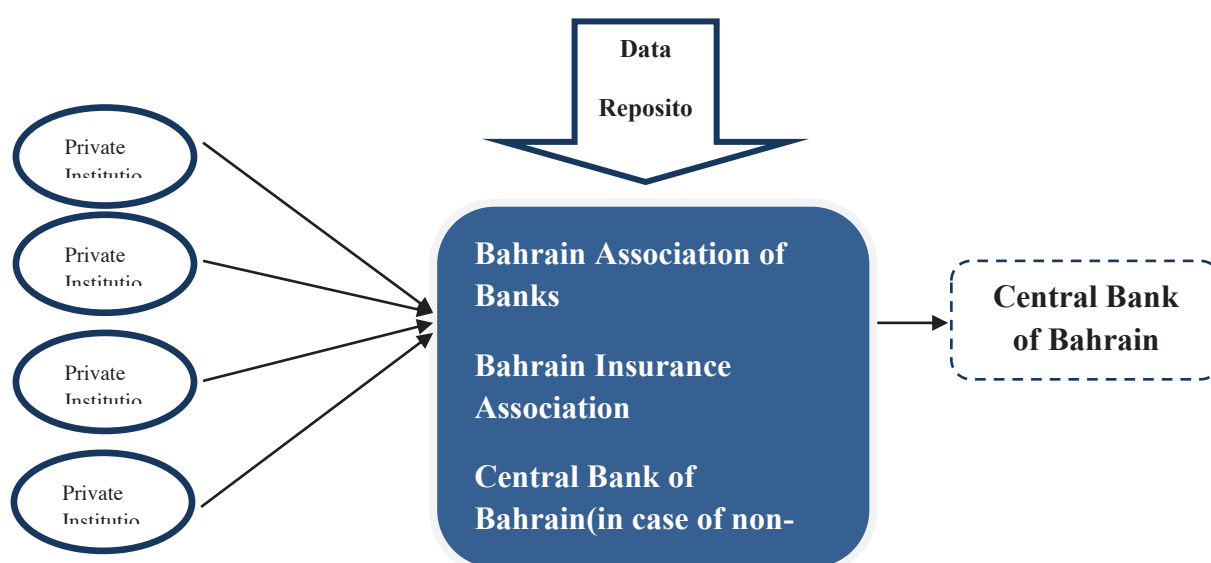
Monitoring and evaluation of the performance of equal opportunity committees across the private institutions is important. This can be done by collecting data on indicators that capture information on the following:

1. Demographics – age and gender related
2. Budget allocated for training and development of women employees
3. Policies adopted for promoting women to senior positions
4. Collecting statistics on career progression of women
5. Initiatives for knowledge management through networking, coaching and mentoring programs

It is recommended that each committee at the institutional level can develop a ‘Monitoring and Evaluation’ form including questions on indicators mentioned above and circulate it amongst the employees of the respective company for data collection on a periodic basis. This data can be used to

assess the level of equal opportunity and diversity within the respective organization and conduct comparisons over a period of time to monitor the impact of policies executed in the interim.

It is recommended that data on the selected indicators is collected on a periodic basis and compiled by the Bahrain Association of Banks, Bahrain Insurance Association for member organizations, and the CBB for non-member organizations. These institutions will form the ‘data repository’. The data can be shared with the CBB to monitor and evaluate the impact of steps taken to promote equal opportunities and diversity across the institutions.



Research on global experience suggests that globally different countries have taken steps to promote equal opportunity. They have established commissions at the central level and have developed dedicated legislations, laws and acts that govern and regulate equal opportunity and diversity among employees in their respective country. Some cases of global best practices are illustrated in table 4.

**Table 4: Global best practices for monitoring and evaluation**

Country Name	Policies
<b>France</b>	‘Real Equality Between Women and Men’ Bill requires 40 percent female board representation of large listed companies by 2017
<b>Germany</b>	Introduced a quota that requires 30 percent of nonexecutive directors of large listed companies should be women
<b>India</b>	The new Companies Act mandates that all listed companies must have at least one

	woman on their board of directors
<b>Norway</b>	Introduced a law in 2003, outlining a quota for women on boards – set at 40 percent
<b>United States</b>	Established the ‘Equal Employment Opportunity Commission’ is responsible for enforcing federal laws that make it illegal to discriminate against a job applicant or an employee because of the person’s race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy), national origin, age (40 or older), disability or genetic information. The government has developed and implemented several Acts to achieve the objective
<b>Singapore</b>	Set up the Diversity Task Force regarding Women on Boards (DTF) in 2012 under the Ministry of Social and Family Development to examine the state of gender diversity on boards, and its effect on performance and governance
<b>Australia</b>	In 2012 the ‘Victorian Women’s Governance’ Scholarships in partnership with the Victorian State Government were launched to increase the skills, qualifications and confidence of Victorian women to enable them to join private, public and community sector boards and to effectively contribute as a Director
<b>United Arab Emirates</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Established the UAE-government led ‘Gender Balance Council’</li> <li>UAE Cabinet made it compulsory for corporations and government agencies to include women on their board of directors</li> </ul>

Source: Compilation from secondary research

#### 4. Proposed Competencies for Board of Directors – Supporting women involvement in decision making positions

To ensure greater diversity in senior positions, it is recommended that there is greater participation of women on boards of companies, there is equal gender representation on the Board and there is some age diversity at the board level. In addition, for employees to reach the board level of a company, it is important that they possess the necessary qualities of a board member.

It is recommended that the following set of competencies for boards of directors are be adopted by companies. At the same time to provide a level playing field to women we recommend that diversity is encouraged at the board level and women are provided specialized training programs that prepare them for occupying board of directors’ positions. The following competencies can be presented to the Economic Development Board (EDB) to promote their adoption across institutions.

Desired competencies of board of directors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to think strategically and identify and critically assess opportunities and threats and develop effective strategies in the context of the organization's objectives</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Posses expertise in setting goals and developing programs to accomplish a mission and have the ability to identify key issues and to develop appropriate policies and define the parameters within which the organization should operate</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Possess strong industry skills and business related knowledge for the respective industry the company belongs to</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Posses specialize qualifications and experience in accounting and/or finance and the ability to:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- analyze key financial statements</li> <li>- critically assess financial viability and performance</li> <li>- contribute to strategic financial planning</li> <li>- oversee budgets and the efficient use of resources</li> <li>- oversee funding arrangements and accountability</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to identify key risks to the organization in a wide range of areas including legal and regulatory compliance, and monitor risk and compliance management frameworks and systems</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Posses experience at an executive level including the ability to:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- appoint and evaluate the performance of the CEO and senior executive managers</li> <li>- oversee strategic human resource management including workforce planning, and employee and industrial relations</li> <li>- oversee large scale organizational change</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Posses high level skills in fundraising, solicitation of major and minor sponsorships, development of fund-raising activities and grant writing proposals and have a network of connections in industry, education and government to facilitate fund-raising activities</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A commitment to:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- understanding and fulfilling the duties and responsibilities of a director, and maintaining knowledge in this regard through professional development</li> <li>- being transparent and declaring any activities or conduct that might be a potential conflict</li> <li>- maintaining Board confidentiality</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- listen to, and constructively and appropriately debate, other people’s viewpoints</li> <li>- develop and deliver cogent arguments</li> <li>- communicate effectively with a broad range of stakeholders</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to work as part of a team, and demonstrate the passion and time to make a genuine and active contribution to the Board</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A visible commitment to the purpose for which the organization has been established and operates, and its on-going success</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to negotiate outcomes and influence others to agree with those outcomes, including an ability to gain stakeholder support for the Board’s decisions</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to critically analyze complex and detailed information, readily distill key issues, and develop innovative approaches and solutions to problems</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Posses leadership skills and have the ability to:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- appropriately represent the organization</li> <li>- set appropriate Board and organizational culture</li> <li>- make and take responsibility for decisions and actions</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

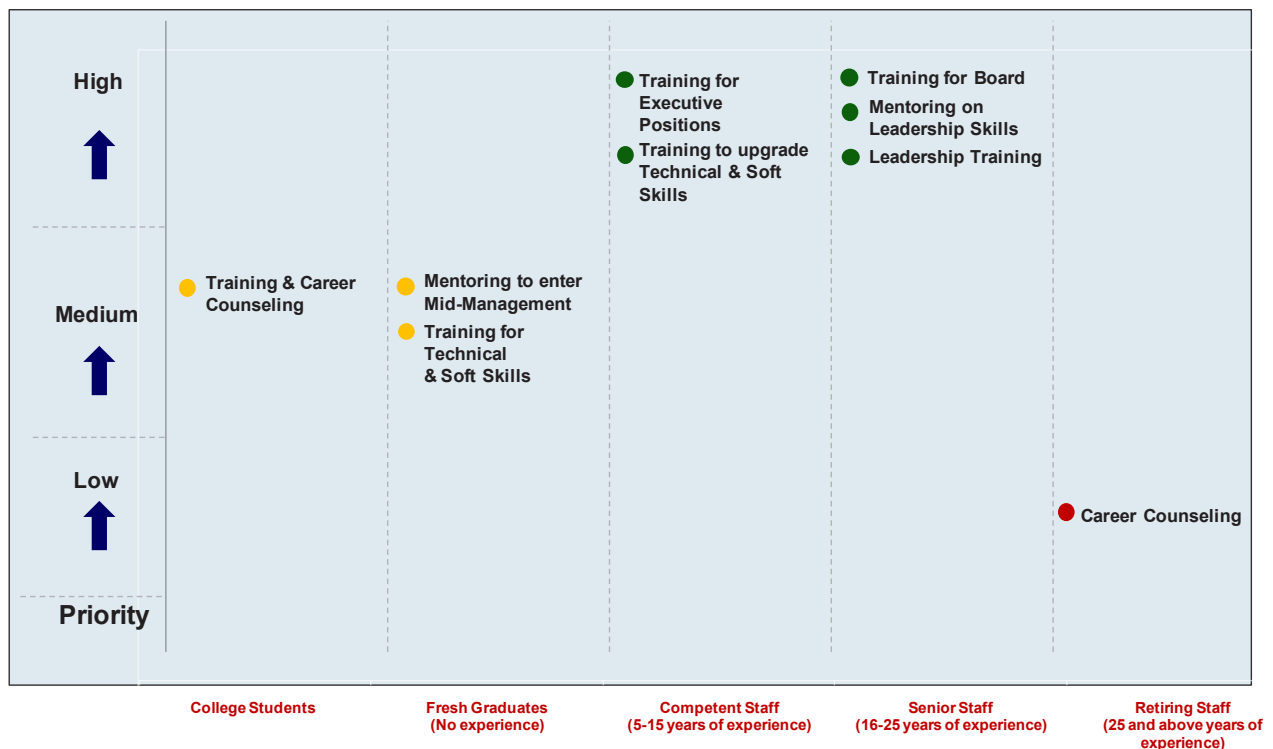
## 5. Developing and promoting ‘Leadership Program for Women’ – Dissemination of the culture of mainstreaming women’s needs

Based on the findings of the primary research, it can be concluded that there is a need for training and mentoring programs for women employees. Such programs will help foster talent and facilitate growth of the employees along the corporate ladder. The outcome will thus feed into the objective of achieving greater diversity in senior management across institutions. In addition, it will create a positive impact on the customers of the banks and insurance companies. Better performance of employees in this sector will in turn lead to inclusive growth wherein both employees and customers benefit from career growth and improved services, respectively.

Since the level of proficiency and the skill set of employees vary at different levels in their career path, it is important that such programs are customized to suit the requirements at a particular level. This has been illustrated in below in figure 11.



**Figure 11: Training needs at different levels on a career path**



A phased approach can be adopted and the beneficiaries at different levels can be trained through different programs.

At present, a leadership training program for women employees in the banking and financial sector has been developed jointly by Intellect Resources Management W.L.L. and KPMG. The program will be a 3-day training program organized under the patronage of the Supreme Council for Women.

The ‘Learn to Lead’ training program is targeted at middle to senior managers in the banking and financial services sector, and aims to support and accelerate the development of women in senior and executive leadership positions. During this program, participants will engage in the following:

- A strategic review of opportunities and challenges in the industry.
- Executive coaching in order to develop a life plan and career map for future success in the workplace, at home, and in the community.

- Personal development with the use psychometrics related to understanding of behavior preferences.
- Soft skills development around conflict management and negotiation skills.

This program is the first phase of training Bahraini women leaders to access the Board of Directors and there will be an advanced stage including specialized professional certificates to qualify women leaders to access boards of directors.

## Conclusion

To ensure that the objective of ‘Mainstreaming women’s needs by promoting the principle of equal opportunities is achieved through effective implementation, several steps have been taken to introduce and activate the National Plan for the Advancement of Bahraini women (2013-2022) to private institutions in the banking and financial sector. There has been a positive response to this initiative and CEOs and senior management of several institutions have extended their supporting in ensuring equal opportunity for all. Current trends in Bahrain indicate that male to female ratio in the country’s working age group is 1:1 and there is tremendous scope for absorbing women into the working population. Even though women employment has grown in the past, women representation in senior positions and on boards of companies continues to remain low and disproportionate compared to male representation. These trends are similar to global trends. Globally several steps such as formation of equal opportunity committees with clearly defined guidelines, quota for women representation on boards and laws and acts governing equal opportunity are being taken to change this trend.

It is important that similar initiatives are taken and supported in Bahrain. This can be done by establishing an ‘Equal Opportunity or Equivalent Committee’ at the institution level, with clearly defined terms of references. It is also recommended that to measure an impact of the committee, monitoring and evaluation is an important requirement. The study also recommends that there should be diversity and representation of women on boards of companies. To ensure that women possess the required qualities, competencies for effective board member are outlined. In addition, it is recommended that special training and coaching programs should be developed for women employees to develop skills that help them grow along the corporate ladder.

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## Appendix A: List of One-to-One Meetings during the study (April and November, 2015)

S. No.	Date	Organization Name
1	April 12, 2015	Central Bank of Bahrain
2	April 16, 2015	Standard Chartered Bank
3	April 21, 2015	Bahrain Association of Banks
4	April 27, 2015	T'azur
5	April 27, 2015	Bahrain Insurance Association (BIA)
6	April 29, 2015	Economic Development Board
7	April 29, 2015	Central Bank of Bahrain(follow-up meeting)
8	May 4, 2015	National Bank of Bahrain
9	May 4, 2015	Kuwait Finance House
10	May 6, 2015	Bank of Bahrain and Kuwait
11	May 6, 2015	Bahrain Institute of Banking and Finance
12	May 12, 2015	Bahrain National Insurance Company
13	May 12, 2015	Gulf International Bank

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14	May 13, 2015	Bahrain Development Bank
15	May 13, 2015	Citibank
16	May 18, 2015	Takaful International
17	May 18, 2015	Solidarity Insurance
18	May 19, 2015	Al Ahlia Insurance Company
19	May 20, 2015	Osool Asset Management
20	May 24, 2015	Bahrain Bourse B.S.C.
21	May 24, 2015	Central Bank of Bahrain (follow-up meeting)
22	June 3, 2015	HSBC Bank
23	June 9, 2015	Ithmaar Bank
24	July 7, 2015	Bank of Bahrain and Kuwait (follow-up meeting)
25	July 15, 2015	AlSalaam Bank
26	August 11, 2015	Arab Bank
27	August 19 2015	Bahrain Islamic Bank
28	August 19 2015	Pinebridge Investments

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29	August 23, 2015	Al Baraka Group
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30	August 26, 2015	Khaleeji Commercial Bank
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## Appendix B: List of Focused Group Discussions during the study (April and November, 2015)

S. No.	Date	Organization Name
1	April 28, 2015	Focused Group Discussion with Senior Management employees of selected companies
2	May 5, 2015	Focused Group Discussion with HR Managers of selected companies
3	May 11, 2015	Focused Group Discussion with Women on Board of selected companies
4	June 7, 2015	Focused Group Discussion with representatives of Equal Opportunities Committees from selected companies
5	June 14, 2015	Focused Group Discussion with CEOs of selected companies
6	June 30, 2015	Focused Group Discussion with Disabled Employees of selected companies

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