

Cloud7

Accommodation and food service activities (Hospitality)

Boosting Female Retention Through Family-friendly Working Conditions & Equal Pay



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FOREWORD: TOWARDS GENDER EQUALITY IN THE JORDANIAN LABOUR MARKET

The economic participation of women in the Jordanian labor market remains significantly low, with a decline observed in the post-COVID-19 era (Karbala & Kern, 2022). In order to motivate more women to enter the labour market and align with Jordan's Economic Modernisation Vision (EMV), it is crucial for companies to take the first step towards creating women-friendly and gender-inclusive work environments. Such an inclusive environment not only attracts and motivates well-qualified women but can also lead to a diverse, engaged and motivated workforce.

Overall, many studies show that investing in more women-friendly and gender-inclusive workplaces leads to higher productivity, innovation, improved corporate reputation and sustainable growth for businesses. Back in 2015, McKinsey showed that gender diverse companies are 15% more likely to outperform their competitors. This likelihood has increased over the years to 21% in the 2018 report and 25% in the 2020 report (McKinsey 2015; 2018; 2020). The benefits to companies are particularly high in a context where many women are not integrated into the labour market, as is the case in Jordan (UN Women 2018; World Bank 2020a; b; c).

GIZ and UN Women have joined forces to drive meaningful change in the private sector and the wider economy by developing business cases focused on SMEs in Jordan. The business cases document and showcase companies that have taken key steps towards becoming women-friendly and gender-inclusive. These cases highlight how these steps have paved the way for positive returns for these companies and the tangible benefits they have experienced. The focus is on SMEs as they are the largest (SMEs constitute approximately 99.5% of the total economic establishments and occupy approximately 60% of the total workforce (JCI 2024)) and most important part of the Jordanian economy.

The main objective of these business cases is to raise awareness among companies of the value and benefits of gender diversity and gender-responsive policies and practices for businesses by demonstrating the benefits for all – companies, their employees and the community – of employing more women and creating inclusive working environments.

The business cases were developed using a comprehensive methodology, including collecting data from company representatives, reviewing relevant documents, conducting field visits, interviewing CEOs and holding focus group discussions with employees.

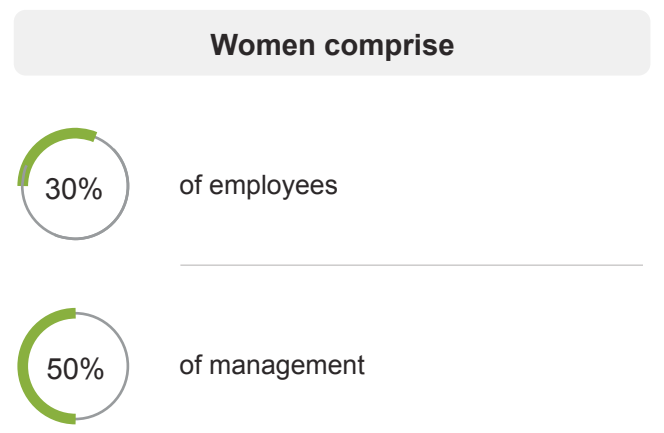
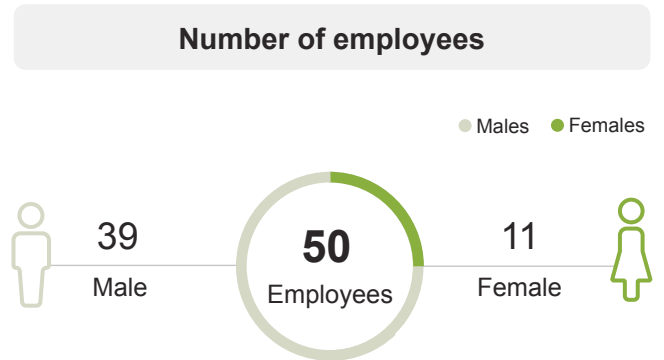
Overall, these business cases cover seven different sectors, in line with the priorities set out in the EMV: food industry, engineering, plastic and packaging, education, financial services, hospitality, and information and communication technology. Each case focuses on a specific thematic area, highlighting the apparent strengths and the clear business value. Collectively, these topics play a pivotal role in advancing gender equality: gender-responsive recruitment, supporting women in leadership positions, women on boards, family-friendly working conditions and equal pay, trust-based leadership, flexible working arrangements and tackling male teacher stereotypes, effective anti-sexual harassment policies and safe commuting practices, empowering women from disadvantaged backgrounds and with disabilities.

1. Company profile

Cloud 7, a well-established hospitality business, is owned by Ayla Oasis 33 Mixed Used Development Company Co and managed by Kerten Hospitality. After four years of successful operation, Cloud 7 has become a highly demanded destination along Jordan's Red Sea coast. Established in 2020 with an exclusively male workforce, Cloud 7 Aqaba has since undergone a significant transformation: by 2024, 30% of the company's employees are women.

This progressive shift reflects the company's commitment to diversity and inclusion, challenging industry practices. Notably, despite the global trend of women making up the majority of employees in the tourism sector according to the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the 2021 Gender and Inclusion Project Plan of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiques (MOTA) in Jordan reported that only 10% of employees in the hospitality and tourism sector are female and only 9% in the country's hotel industry (Jordan Ministry of Tourism & Antiquities 2024).

Cloud 7's commitment to fostering diversity also extends to employing a female employee with a disability and integrating students as full-time employees, demonstrating the company's dedication to inclusivity and progressive practices in the hospitality industry.



Summary of key initiatives



- Family-friendly policies
- Flexible working arrangements
- Equal pay



- Insurance for children and family members



- Gender-responsive procurement (GRP)

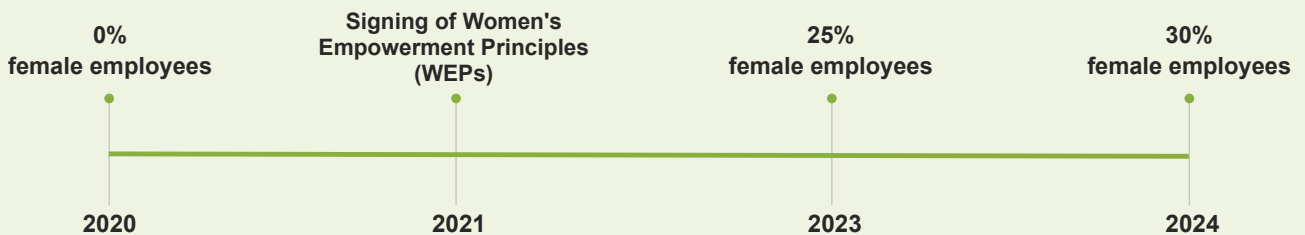
Summary of business benefits

➤ Growing number of female employees

➤ Enhanced employee engagement and productivity

➤ Challenging gender-based stereotypes

➤ Attraction and retention of talents: 95%



2. The business context of family-friendly working conditions and equal pay

Cloud 7 places great importance on inclusivity, diversity and the well-being of its employees, while promoting a positive and dynamic organisational environment. The hotel emphasises gender-responsive recruitment, a family-friendly working environment and personal development processes, with selection criteria based solely on job requirements without consideration of factors such as gender or marital status. This commitment is reaffirmed in the employee handbook, which is shared with and signed by all employees upon onboarding.

The company demonstrates its commitment to gender equity through its procurement practices, as shown by its collaboration with three women-owned businesses in the hotel's supply chain. Moreover, Cloud 7 supports the SoS Foundation and engages with the local community. The hotel employs gender-responsive marketing practices and promotes inclusivity through advertising in brochures and publications.

Cloud 7 provides a comprehensive capacity development plan to enhance the skills of its employees. This plan includes on-the-job training, cross-training in different departments and English language courses. Taken together, these practices demonstrate Cloud 7's commitment to creating an inclusive, diverse and supportive work environment.

“



Our commitment to gender equality extends across various aspects of employment, reflecting our dedication to creating an environment where every team member feels valued and supported, regardless of gender.

Interview with the Hotel Manager Jelena Prvulovic

”



2a | Flexible working conditions

In Jordan, cultural norms often dictate that women bear primary responsibility for family care and household duties, which greatly influences their decisions regarding paid employment. Recent studies (World Bank, 2019) indicate that the majority of Jordanians support women working outside the home. However, it is widely expected that women continue to fulfil their unpaid family responsibilities and return home by 5 pm every day (World Bank, 2020; 2021). Together with the lack of childcare support and public transportation, these are major barriers to economic participation for many women.

In Aqaba, cultural factors such as prevailing social norms and perceptions of the family's role in the tourism sector significantly shape the workforce dynamics, particularly for women. Cloud 7, however, takes a different approach by considering societal expectations related to women's roles and their potential impact on performance. The hotel acknowledges that gender-specific considerations play a role in work arrangements and recognises the different needs of male and female employees. Cloud 7 provides a flexible arrangement that accommodates individual needs, which can particularly affect married employees and parents. This reflects the hotel's commitment to promoting gender inclusivity in the workplace.

“



We acknowledge and prioritise the valuable contributions made by women in the tourism sector, recognising the unique challenges they may face, especially when balancing work and family responsibilities. This approach aligns with our commitment to creating a gender-responsive and inclusive workplace that considers and accommodates the diverse needs of our workforce.

”

Interview with the GM Figen Caglar

Cloud 7's key managerial initiatives include implementing flexible working hours to accommodate the diverse needs of the workforce. This approach enhances work-life balance and fosters a more inclusive and supportive professional environment.

“



Working for Cloud7 has been an incredible experience. The family-friendly environment, combined with the flexibility in working hours, has had a significant impact on my work-life balance. It's a place where you feel valued and supported.

”

Focus group interview with employees



2b | Equal pay, childcare support and transportation allowances

Equal pay for equal work is a fundamental labour rights principle that aims to ensure fair compensation for individuals in the same workplace. It primarily addresses gender pay disparities, striving to eliminate sex-based discrimination. The principle of equal pay for work of equal value is emphasised by the International Labour Organization's (ILO) Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (N°100), which has been ratified by 173 countries, including Jordan.

Cloud 7's proactive measures go beyond compliance, demonstrating the organisation's commitment to valuing

its employees and nurturing a positive and motivated workforce. This investment in employee satisfaction and commitment is key to long-term success. Cloud 7 ensures salary fairness and equality for both genders, actively promoting gender diversity with childcare support and insurance. The company further provides dedicated transportation for female employees, ensuring a convenient and secure commute. Cloud 7 recognises the positive impact of closing the gender pay gap and sees it as a win-win business strategy that attracts and retains staff, enhances workforce performance, and contributes to overall company and economic growth.

“



At Cloud 7, we believe that equal pay is not only a moral imperative but also a strategic business investment. It is a sound business strategy that enhances employee satisfaction, boosts productivity and positions us as an employer of choice.

Interview with the GM

”



3. Vision and profit: return on investment

Cloud 7 aims to create a future where gender equality is not only a core value but also a strategic advantage, driving both **social impact and profitability**. The number of women in the team has gradually increased, reflecting a positive trend towards a more diverse and inclusive workplace. This aligns with the hotel's dedication to providing equal opportunities for all.

This inclusive approach, combined with fair pay practices and family-friendly policies, has resulted in a **high retention rate**. It showcases the positive impact of Cloud 7's initiatives on **employee satisfaction and loyalty**. The emphasis on gender equality has contributed to a **harmonious and inclusive working environment**. Both male and female employees express **their high satisfaction with the inclusive culture**.

“



I prefer having a female manager because she provides a different perspective and more understanding. We consistently engage in valuable exchanges with her.

Focus group interview, male employee

”

“



For me, Figen is an idol and a real leader. I enjoy working with her.

Focus group interview, female employee

”



Furthermore, Cloud 7's proactive approach to gender equality serves as a powerful tool for **attracting and retaining top talent**, positioning the hotel as an **employer of choice**.

Cloud 7's remarkably **low turnover rate and high retention rate of 95%** demonstrate the economic benefits of **promoting happiness, commitment and satisfaction** among employees in an **inclusive working environment**. This statistic highlights the positive impact of Cloud 7's employee-centric approach and demonstrates the effectiveness of the company's strategies in cultivating a workplace where **employees feel valued and supported**. This, in turn, contributes to **long-term organisational success**.

“



We have minimal staff turnover at Cloud 7. As employees we are treated like family, we understand and support each other.

Interview with the HR Manager

”

From a business perspective, Cloud 7 recognises the importance of mitigating risks associated with harmful gender-based stereotypes. Cloud 7 values diversity and challenges traditional norms. The company's commitment to breaking gender stereotypes promotes **inclusivity and positions it as a leader in embracing positive social change**. This enhances its **reputation, attracts top talent and fosters innovation and creativity within the organisation**.

Numerous studies have echoed the experience of Cloud 7, indicating that implementing family-friendly measures such as flexible hours, remote work and childcare solutions can **reduce staff turnover, improve productivity and attract investment**, among other benefits (World Bank 2021a; IFC 2017; UNICEF 2019). A study conducted in Jordan suggests that 95% of organisations that have introduced flexible working practices have reported a positive impact on the workplace. Of those, 70% reported increased productivity for both male and female employees (World Bank, 2021a).

Equal and fair pay can bring significant benefits to companies. Studies show that employees who are paid fairly and equally feel more valued, trust the organisation and **are more engaged with their work**. This often leads to **higher motivation, a higher productivity and retention rates** (ILO 2011). As human resources research analyst Josh Bersin recently stated: "Equitable and fair pay is among the greatest drivers of employee satisfaction" and "If you want to win the war for talent (...), fair pay may be one of your biggest techniques" (Kim-Brunetti 2022). This principle also applies to Cloud 7.

This aligns with an **improvement in performance**. Employees have become more meticulous, focusing on every aspect of guest services to ensure client satisfaction.

Regular performance evaluations and feedback mechanisms are crucial in continuously enhancing Cloud 7's services.

The hotel's engagement for gender equity and inclusion **positively impacts its credibility, visibility and marketing**. Cloud 7's transparent communication about services, amenities and policies contributes to a **trustworthy image**. **Positive online reviews and guest testimonials further enhance the hotel's credibility** in the competitive hospitality market.

“
The team has demonstrated increased commitment and a stronger sense of ownership in their work. We have noticed a heightened attention to detail, which has positively impacted our processes and overall efficiency.
 ”

Interview with the GM

“
We aim to increase employee empowerment and foster a culture of continuous learning within our organisation.
 ”

Interview with the GM



4. Yes – but: challenges and solutions

Working in hotels can be negatively perceived due to cultural factors such as negative social norms and societal expectations, which can significantly impact the workforce. Most new entrants, especially females, are new to the hospitality industry. To tackle these issues, Cloud 7 employed several steps:

- > Implementing comprehensive training programmes and mentorship initiatives to bridge the experience gap and enhance the skills of new employees, particularly those who are new to the hospitality industry.
- > Creating success stories of female employees who have benefited from these programmes to inspire and motivate others, fostering a supportive and inclusive environment.
- > Establishing partnerships with universities and vocational training centres to create pathways for women to enter the workforce.
- > Recognising the importance of family considerations and inviting family members of potential employees to join recruitment interviews.
- > Providing gender-responsive recruitment training for managers and supervisors to ensure an inclusive decision-making environment with a diverse spectrum of perspectives.
- > Conducting regular evaluations to maintain an inclusive environment.



At Cloud 7, we aim to be a model in Jordan and the region, setting the standard for gender-inclusive work cultures not only within our establishment, but also as an inspiration for other hotels.

Interview with the GM



5. About the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs)

The Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs) are a set of 7 Principles offering guidance to business on how to advance gender equality and women's empowerment in the workplace, marketplace and community. Established by UN Women and UN Global Compact, the WEPs are informed by international labour and human rights standards and grounded in the recognition that businesses have a stake in, and a responsibility for, gender equality and women's empowerment.



Principle

1

- Establish high-level corporate leadership for gender equality.

2

- Treat all women and men fairly at work– respect and support human rights and nondiscrimination.

3

- Ensure the health, safety and well-being of all women and men workers.

4

- Promote education, training and professional development for women.

5

- Implement enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practices that empower women.

6

- Promote equality through community initiatives and advocacy.

7

- Measure and publicly report on progress to achieve gender equality

Resources and support

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