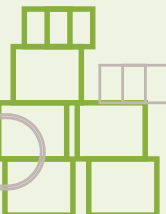


Rimara Pak Manufacturing (Plastic manufacturing)

Maximal Returns through Empowering Women from Disadvantaged Backgrounds and Women with Disabilities



Published by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH and UN Women

GIZ Registered offices

Bonn and Eschborn, Germany

The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women)

220 East 42nd St, New York, NY 10017, USA

GIZ Employment Cluster and UN Women joint project on Promoting Productive Employment and Decent Work for Women in Egypt, Jordan and Palestine

GIZ Office Jordan

Mohamed Bassem Al-Khammash St.13, Sweifieh

Amman 11190, Jordan

www.giz.de/jordan

UN Women Jordan Country Office:

6 Jeddah Street, Um-Uthaina

Amman 11183, Jordan

www.jordan.unwomen.org

The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, the United Nations, including UN Women or UN Member States.

Published

June 2024

Amman

Design

Ahmad Diranieh

Amman

Photo credit

Rajif Raman © GIZ

Text

Prof. Dr. Lucia Lanfranconi, an international expert in diversity, equity & inclusion and the Development for the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, Alexander Monden, Commission Manager, Maram Abed AlNabi, Economic Cooperation and Private Sector Development Advisor and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), Layla Al Qasem, Women's Empowerment Principles and Private Sector Specialist with the generous support of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida).

Suggested Citation

Lanfranconi, L. & Moden, A. & Abed AlNabi, M. & Al Qasem, L. (2024). Maximal Returns through Empowering Women from Disadvantaged Backgrounds and Women with Disabilities. Amman, Jordan: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH and UN Women.

Copyright © GIZ and UN Women, 2024

All rights reserved

Content

1) Company profile	05
2) The business context of empowering vulnerable women	07
2a) Female-exclusive environment: fostering empowerment and redefining gender roles	07
2b) Create your future: access to education	08
2c) Glimmers of Hope: empowering women with disabilities	10
3) Vision and profit: return on investment	11
4) Yes – but: challenges and solutions	13
5) About the Women’s Empowerment Principles (WEPs)	14



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

Founded in 2005 by the sisters Dr. Reem (CEO) and Tamara Al Baghdadi (COO), Rimara Pak is a Jordanian partnership company at the forefront of manufacturing plastic cutlery and packaging solutions. The company's name, "Rimara," is a blend of the founders' names, reflecting their collaborative spirit.

Rimara Pak is a reputable manufacturer and supplier of disposable cutlery kits, serving both local and international markets. Rimara Pak specialises in the development, production and provision of high-quality products and services. It has a well-equipped manufacturing facility, a large warehouse, customer service and plant administration. The company operates several production lines, including:

Automatic packaging and sealing of cutlery kits:

Rimara Pak utilises precise automated packaging processes to ensure the quality of each cutlery set.

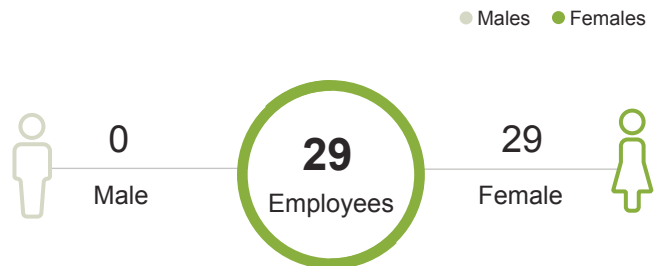
Automatic napkin production:

Rimara Pak uses automated napkin production lines to ensure process efficiency and product hygiene.

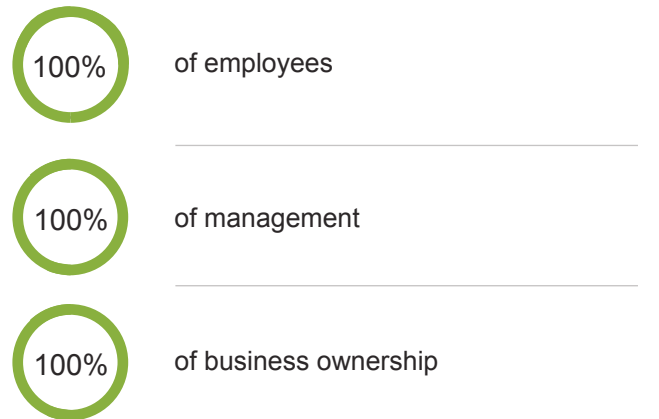
Disposable plastic cutlery production:

Rimara Pak uses modern technology to produce a wide range of disposable plastic cutlery.

Number of employees



Women comprise



Summary of key initiatives



Female leadership



- Empowering women with disabilities: "Glimmer of Hope"
- Flexible work arrangements



Access to education through zero interest loans: "Create your Future"

Summary of business benefits



Enhanced employee engagement and loyalty



Higher retention of talents



Improved reputation and brand value



Promotion of sustainable business practices



2. The business context of empowering vulnerable women

Rimara Pak is more than just a factory, it represents the empowerment of vulnerable women in Jordan. The majority of Rimara Pak’s female workers come from underprivileged households. For several years, the company has explicitly hired women with physical or mental disabilities. Dr. Reem and Tamara Al Baghdadi recognise the pressing need to promote women’s economic empowerment in their community by providing job opportunities and offering training to enhance skills and competencies.

Rimara Pak provides stable and sustainable employment opportunities in an inclusive work environment, making a significant contribution to reducing gender inequalities. This commitment is reflected in the company’s ground-breaking initiatives.



2a | Female-exclusive environment: fostering empowerment and redefining gender roles

The focus group discussions with employees about working in a 100% female company revealed a variety of views. All agreed that they have a very inclusive working environment.

“
We firmly believe and have observed that women can excel in any role. Our environment fosters a healthy workplace, characterised by reduced bullying, a robust anti-harassment policy and prioritised safety.”
 Interview with the CEO Dr. Reem Al Baghdadi

In addition, all female employees agreed that working in an all-female space empowered them to take on roles traditionally assigned to men in the world of work. This has helped Rimara Pak to become a workplace based on the principles of equity, free from conventional constraints.

“
*Working here doesn't feel like being part of a company, it feels like being part of a family.”
 “Even if men worked here, the climate would not change because the top management is female.*”
 Focus group interview with employees

“
Now we can develop the maintenance skills that the man brought in and apply them ourselves.”
 Focus group interview with employees

2b | Create your future: access to education

Rimara Pak aims to support the professional and personal growth of its employees through education. The company's commitment to this goal is demonstrated through the "Create Your Future" initiative, which is designed for individuals from vulnerable backgrounds who had to leave education early to support their families. This initiative provides support in two ways.

Firstly, this initiative allows employees to take time off work to attend classes, enabling them to actively pursue their educational goals through flexible working arrangements. Secondly, the initiative provides financial support in the form of interest-free loans to cover education fees.

The "Create Your Future" initiative has had a significant impact, enabling numerous employees to realise their dreams. Arabia, who had always aspired to become a lawyer, received the necessary support to enrol in the law school at the university in 2020. Other success stories include Salsabil who is currently studying for a bachelor's

degree in nursing, Jinan, who is studying English literature, Aya, who is pursuing a degree in dental laboratory technology, Ayat, who has just received a degree in medical laboratory science, and Hala, who is exploring cybersecurity.

“



We initiated this programme 7 to 8 years ago, providing interest-free loans to support the education of our female employees. Additionally, we offer them the necessary time off to complete their education. We are proud to celebrate a recent achievement: One of our team members has just obtained her law degree.

Interview with the CEO

”



Despite the initial challenges that prevented them from continuing their education and enrolling at university, Rimara Pak's employees showed perseverance. With the support of the company, they took the initiative to complete high school and subsequently enrol in universities. This commitment to promoting education demonstrates Rimara Pak's role in shaping a brighter futures for its employees.

“



I am taking time every Saturday to complete my law degree. To cover the financial burden of my education, I have received a loan from Rimara Pak. I am very grateful for this opportunity.

Focus group interview with employees

”



“



Rimara Pak is a supportive environment that helps me balance work and personal life by allowing me to manage both work and study through flexible arrangements. It's a place that encourages us to view mistakes as opportunities for learning and growth.

Focus group interview with employees

”

2c | Glimmers of Hope: empowering women with disabilities

As part of its commitment to equal opportunities, Rimara Pak has launched the “Glimmers of Hope” initiative, which aims to provide equal employment opportunities to women with disabilities. This initiative aims to overcome the challenges these people face in accessing employment, so that they can ultimately lead independent lives and contribute to society.

“



We have hired four women with disabilities and this required an investment in training and education for all (sensitivity training). The result has been remarkable: our team members with disabilities are now just as productive as their peers.

Interview with the COO Tamara Al Baghdadi

”

“



I have seen how my colleagues with disabilities have changed and succeeded here, and that is truly inspiring!

Focus group interview with employees

”

In partnership with disability organisations, Rimara Pak has recruited young women with disabilities who aspire to a career in the manufacturing industry. The factory is dedicated to creating an inclusive and accessible workplace and has made extensive provisions. Furthermore, existing employees have received ongoing training and support to ensure that they can effectively work with colleagues with disabilities. During the initial training period for employees with disabilities, machine speeds were customised to their needs. This enabled them to successfully carry out the tasks assigned to them. As these employees progressed and their skills improved, the machine speeds were eventually reset to the original settings.



The positive results of this initiative are already visible, as several young women with disabilities have been successfully integrated into Rimara Pak's workforce. These women have been empowered to develop valuable skills, gain financial independence and become active members of their community. Moreover, the initiative has enriched the existing workforce by bringing in diverse perspectives and experiences, which have contributed to improved morale, better team building, higher productivity and greater customer satisfaction.

“



In my opinion, the biggest success is the great pride our female employees take in their work. I am extremely proud of their achievements and how seamlessly they have integrated and are treated equally by everyone, regardless of their abilities. The gratitude of the families of these women is also really encouraging – a win-win situation.

Interview with the COO

”

3. Vision and profit: return on investment

The company's consistent focus on fostering a supportive and inclusive environment has resulted in **increased employee loyalty, production and satisfaction**. This, in turn, has contributed to a remarkable **retention rate**, effectively **reducing turnover costs** and maintaining a **competent and committed workforce**. The tangible **job satisfaction** expressed during the focus group interviews highlights the positive impact of Rimara Pak's dedication to fostering an environment where employees can pursue their ambitions with enthusiasm.

“



I would like to continue working here after I graduate. The work environment at Rimara Pak is truly wonderful and provides a fulfilling and supportive space for professional growth.

Focus group interview with employees

”

“



I am highly motivated to work here. It feels more like a personal project than just a job. This experience has significantly boosted my confidence and helped me refine my technical know-how. Even when I encounter mistakes, I see them as an opportunity for growth.

Focus group interview with employees

”



Rimara Pak's dedication to women's empowerment and inclusive practices has **strengthened its reputation as a socially responsible company**. This has **attracted potential partners** who align with Rimara Pak's values. The company has achieved success by **increasing employee engagement and productivity, attracting investments and expanding market access**.

“



When we started, we had only one production line. Now, with our continuous growth and success, we proudly operate 14 lines, and there are promising prospects for more lines in the near future.

Interview with the CEO

”

Rimara Pak's dedication to women's empowerment has a **positive impact on its relationships with all stakeholders**. This commitment resonates with customers, clients and suppliers who appreciate the company's **dedication to social responsibility**. The women's educational initiative has garnered **attention and support from international organisations** and communities that share Rimara Pak's values, creating potential avenues for **growth, funding and partnerships**. These efforts have **enhanced the company's relationship with the local community**, positioning it as a preferred employer and a valuable contributor to the community's well-being.

Essentially, Rimara Pak's investment in women's empowerment goes beyond social responsibility. It is also a strategic business move that promises significant returns in terms of **innovation, efficiency, reputation and growth**.

International studies indicate that "investing in disability inclusion taps into underutilised resources, benefiting not only employed individuals but also a company's bottom line" (Frank 2022; cf. GBC-Education 2022). Globally, there are approximately 1 billion people with disabilities, and their unemployment rate is about twice as high as that of people without disabilities (GBC-Education 2022; Getting to Equal 2018). Contrary to common misconceptions, investing in disability inclusion does not outweigh its benefits. Disability also does not equate to lack of ability. Small changes can have a significant impact and employing a person with a disability "can create huge returns

and help shape strategies to better reflect the communities they serve" (Frank 2022; cf. GBC-Education 2022).

Companies led by executives who prioritise disability engagement experience almost three times the sales growth and more than four times the profit growth compared to their competitors (Frank 2022; cf. GBC-Education 2022). Businesses practicing disability inclusion enjoy several benefits, including:

- Expanded customer bases
- Inclusive design and product development
- Enlargement of the talent pool
- Improved employee retention
- Improved corporate culture
- Increased brand value and consumer loyalty
- Higher productivity

According to Getting to Equal (2018: 4), companies that improved the inclusion of people with disabilities over time were four times more likely to achieve a higher total shareholder return than their peer group. Rimara Pak's remarkable investment in underprivileged women is expected to yield similar returns on investment over time. NTT (w.Y.) research shows that the benefits of a company's social sustainability journey increase over time. For instance, leaders have reported an average revenue increase of 9.6% due to their social sustainability initiatives, compared to 6.4% for beginners. In addition, leaders have experienced a productivity increase of 11.4%, while beginners have only seen a 9.4% increase.



4. Yes – but: challenges and solutions

Rimara Pak encountered opposition both internally and externally when implementing initiatives to empower women. Internally, concerns centred on feasibility, potential disruptions and resource requirements, while externally questions were raised about the return on investment. To tackle these issues, Rimara Pak employed several steps:

- > Utilising data and success stories from other international organisations to illustrate the positive impact of women's empowerment initiatives.
- > Actively involving sceptics in planning and discussions, providing them with a platform to voice concerns and contribute ideas.
- > Implementing clear and transparent communication to dispel misconceptions and provide evidence of long-term benefits.

“

Supporting women is not just a choice. It is the cornerstone of a thriving and inclusive future.

Interview with the COO

”

- > Emphasising the positive effects on performance, innovation and reputation, while highlighting the strategic advantages of measures that empower women.

According to the COO, it was initially challenging to train the female employees to accept those women with disabilities. To tackle resistance, Rimara Pak implemented the following measures:

- > Promoting inclusiveness and educating employees through workshops, seminars and open dialogues.
- > Leading by example through active participation in cultural change initiatives.

“

Rimara Pak takes pride in its achievements and aims to inspire other companies in Jordan to adopt similar initiatives. This will promote the education, development and inclusivity of their workforce.

Interview with the CEO

”

”



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.



Resources and support

EMV, Jordan's Economic Modernisation Vision. Downloaded at:

<https://www.jordanvision.jo/en>

JCI, Jordan Chamber of Industrie (2024). Small and Medium Enterprises Services. Downloaded at:

<https://jci.org.jo/Chamber/Services/Sectors/80095?l=en>

Karbala, G., Kern, J. Eds. (2022) COVID-19 and Women's Labour Force Participation: A Look into Women's Labour Force Participation Through the Lens of the Pandemic. Amman, Jordan: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH and UN Women.

Frank, Gary E. (2022). The Business Case for Investing in Disability Inclusion Worldwide. TriplePundit. Downloaded at:

<https://www.triplepundit.com/story/2022/investing-disability-inclusion/741416>

Getting to Equal (2018). The Disability Inclusion Advantage. Downloaded at:

<https://www.accenture.com/content/dam/accenture/final/a-com-migration/pdf/pdf-89/accenture-disability-inclusion-research-report.pdf>

GBC - Education, Global Business Coalition for Education (2022). Investing in inclusion. A handbook for businesses on disability-inclusive education, training, and employment. Downloaded at:

<https://gbc-education.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2022/03/GBCEducation-InvestingInInclusion.pdf>

Karbala, G., Kern, J. Eds. (2022) COVID-19 and Women's Labour Force Participation: A Look into Women's Labour Force Participation Through the Lens of the Pandemic. Amman, Jordan: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH and UN Women.

McKinsey (2015). Why diversity matters. Downloaded at:

<https://www.mckinsey.com/~media/mckinsey/business%20functions/people%20and%20organizational%20performance/our%20insights/why%20diversity%20matters/why%20diversity%20matters.pdf>

McKinsey (2018). Delivering through diversity. Downloaded at:

<https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/delivering-through-diversity>

McKinsey (2020). Diversity wins. How inclusion matters. Downloaded at:

<https://www.mckinsey.com/~media/mckinsey/featured%20insights/diversity%20and%20inclusion/diversity%20wins%20how%20inclusion%20matters/diversity-wins-how-inclusion-matters-vf.pdf>

Mc Kinsey & WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM (2023). Global Parity Alliance: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. Lighthouses 2023. Downloaded at:

https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Global_Parity_Alliance_2023.pdf

UN women: Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs, w.J.): <https://www.weps.org/about>

UN women: GAP analysis tool un women (w.J.). Downloaded at: <https://weps-gapanalysis.org/>

UN Women (2018). UNDERSTANDING THE BUSINESS CASE FOR GENDER EQUALITY IN THE WORKPLACE. A Policy and Guidance Brief Building on Results from the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) – Middle East and North Africa.

<https://arabstates.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20Arab%20States/Attachments/Publications/2018/Business%20Case/Understanding%20the%20Business%20Case%20for%20Gender%20Equality%20in%20the%20Workplace.pdf>

UN Women (2022). CASE STUDY: Trip.com Group. BUILDING A FAMILY-FRIENDLY WORKPLACE. Downloaded at:

<https://www.weps.org/resource/building-family-friendly-workplace>

UN Women (2022b). General Framework for Gender Equality in Jordan. Economic & Social Council of Jordan and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women). Downloaded at:

https://jordan.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/WC_General%20Framework%20for%20Gender%20Equality%20in%20Jordan_EN_f.pdf

Weber, Michael Weber; Heidi Stutz; Dragan Ilić; Ursina Jud & Martina Schläp. (2016). KMU-Handbuch "Beruf und Familie". Downloaded at:

https://www.seco.admin.ch/seco/de/home/Publikationen_Dienstleistungen/Publikationen_und_Formulare/Arbeit/Arbeitsmarkt/Frauen_Arbeitsmarkt/kmu-handbuch--beruf-und-familie-.html

World bank (2020a). Amin Kawar and Sons (AKS): Reaping the benefits of family-friendly policies:

<https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/648951629872045304/the-business-case-for-investing-in-women-s-employment-in-jordan-amin-kawar-and-sons-aks-reaping-the-benefits-of-family-friendly-policies-case-study>

World bank (2020b). Estarta Solutions: Supporting women in non-traditional roles. Downloaded at:

<https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/625671621402102045/the-business-case-for-investing-in-women-s-employment-in-jordan-case-study-estarta-solutions-supporting-women-in-non-traditional-roles>

World bank (2020c). Umniah: Safe and respectful workplaces. Downloaded at:

<https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/345681623916069293/the-business-case-for-investing-in-women-s-employment-in-jordan-case-study-umniah-safe-and-respectful-workplaces>

