

Increasing women's ownership of enterprises has been shown to promote gender diversity at the board level. In a study conducted by Sekkat and others (2015), analysing data from the Enterprise Surveys conducted by the World Bank in 74 developing countries from 2009 and 2012, having female owners in enterprises increases the likelihood that they will have women as their chief executive officers. The likelihood that a chief executive officer will be a woman is directly proportionate to the share of female owners. The impact of female ownership on the number of women chief executive officers is all the more significant if the dominant shareholder is a woman and if the firm is foreign-owned.

Other affirmative action measures include the implementation of workplace policies for recruitment, leadership training, fast-track career measures, including sponsorship, mentoring and pairing within existing networks, with governments providing the financial incentives to do so; and information and awareness-raising campaigns to encourage employers to recruit and promote women, in particular in the sectors and categories mentioned. The government should play a leading role in implementing such programmes for public sector employment. Affirmative action measures will be more effective when they are developed and applied through consultation and cooperation between the government and the employers' and workers' organizations concerned; when they suit the needs and possibilities of the employees and employers; and when they are effectively and periodically monitored and followed up (ILO, 2012c).

The International Organisation of Employers (IOE) also works in partnership with the International Federation of Business Women to encourage workplace diversity, gender equality and women's empowerment across the business community. Increasingly, corporate governance codes have made gender diversity policies a requirement. Companies are to report periodically on whether or not the goals or targets are achieved and provide an explanation if there has been no progress. For instance, the 2012 Malaysian Code on Corporate Governance of the Security Commission required company boards to establish a policy to increase boardroom diversity and take steps to recruit women candidates. The boards are asked to explicitly disclose gender diversity policies, measures, and targets in their annual reports. Similarly, in Nigeria, through the Banker's Committee, the Central Bank of Nigeria developed a three-year programme to empower women bankers in the financial system. Between 2012 and 2014, the Committee set a target of 40 per cent of top management positions in banks to be held by women. In addition, 30 per cent of boards in banks were reserved for women. Companies are also encouraged to monitor and report progress (ILO, 2015g).