



Servis

Dedicated Spaces for Working Women

How setting up a women-only footwear manufacturing unit and day care facility in Punjab has helped women find work and career progression opportunities, and helped Servis find talented employees.



The Company

Servis was established in Lahore in 1959 and is now one of the largest footwear manufacturers and exporters in Pakistan. Publicly listed, it controls almost 40 per cent of the market share for footwear exports and accounts for a thriving network of more than 500 retail outlets and 1500 independent retailers across the country. It has two footwear plants in Gujrat and Muridke, which employ a total of 8,764 people.



The Context

The leather sector plays an important role in Pakistan's foreign exchange earnings, contributing to almost 5 per cent of the country's total exports and providing almost one million skilled and semi-skilled jobs.

However, growth has been restrained by an inability to meet rigorous customer requirements, including a lack of a local ancillary industry/access to inputs to improve turnaround times, limited design skills and access to new markets, and most importantly,

access to skilled labour. Leather goods manufacturers find it difficult to hire and retain skilled workers. Turnover for men is high because they are mobile and can go to more distant locations, while women may not have family members who can take care of their children.



The Challenge

In the leather sector, female workers are particularly involved in stitching and perceived by the industry to have better focus and concentration abilities. However, challenges to provide segregated spaces and day care facilities prevail, limiting the employment of women in the industry.

A large number of women work from home so that they can attend to both their domestic and financial responsibilities. Additionally, women are often uncomfortable working in a mixed space with men and as most learning happens on job, the inability

to network leads to a lack of upward mobility for women or a chance to develop broader skillsets. The lack of appropriate transportation is also a major constraint for women to come to the workplace.

As demand for exports increased, Servis was keen to address the challenges listed above and turn the smaller facility into a unit geared specifically towards its female employees. However, Servis lacked the financial support to engage more women and to scale-up to provide for the greater export demand. The partnership with MDF was set up to help Servis put their innovative model in place and to support them with advocating its benefits to other footwear manufacturers.



The Solution

First, MDF supported the installation and commissioning of machinery for the stitching lines and assisted in hiring women workers and supervisors. The facility now employs women and provides them with more opportunities for income generation and upward mobility. This allows them to progress faster into more senior manufacturing positions - which is still rare for women in the industry in Pakistan.

Second, Servis went a step further and set up a day care centre. This support has allowed Servis to hire more women, and, as they no longer worry about their children, the women are more productive and staff turnover has reduced.

Servis also began to address other areas that would encourage more women into the workforce and make it easier for them to stay. Salaries are now fixed (rather than piece rate), full salaries are paid to trainees, lunch is subsidised and separate restrooms and canteens are provided for women.

A free pick-up and drop-off service is available to all of its women workers to ensure that they are safe.

Additionally, they have set up an ATM machine at the facility and provided bank accounts and ATM cards to all the women employees. This has resulted in women having greater control over their earnings: they can draw the amount of their contribution to the household income and save the rest for themselves.

MDF's support of the women-only facility created a win-win situation for women and the business: in this case, providing women with jobs and career-progression opportunities while also enabling Servis to grow and access new talent pools.

The Results



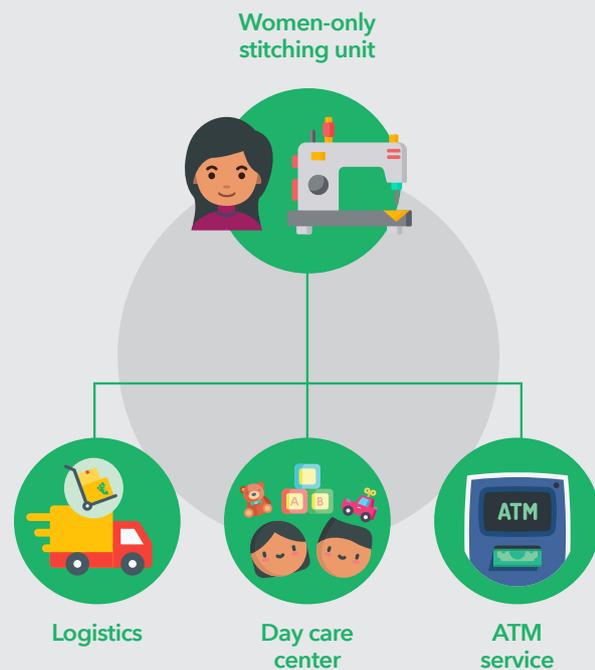
More than **147** women benefitted, earning **USD100** per month on average.



114 bank accounts.



Servis has **expanded** by independently creating another women-only stitching line.



Quote from the field

"I CAN NOT SPEAK OR HEAR BUT I CAN WORK."

Bahawal, a female Servis employee is deaf and mute, but has nevertheless progressed well in her work at Servis' stitching facility. She is very motivated to learn and does not feel any discrimination from her colleagues. Her supervisor talks to her in sign language.

“

I am brave and I want to achieve more for my daughter. I do not want my weakness to stop me achieving my goals. I will spend my energy and strength to work and earn more for my daughter. I can do everything with the support of my mother.

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