

Appendix

Part A

1. Can you share your overall experience working in your current or past workplaces as a manager?

Aziza (28 years old, call center operator):

- *Oh... overall, there is a mix of challenges and opportunities at the same time as have found fulfillment in my role as a manager, where I have been able to demonstrate my leadership abilities, contribute to team success, and pursue my passion for driving positive change within the organization. However, I have also encountered instances which are not so pleasant for me to remember. I am still struggling to be taken seriously but I think my female identity as well is a factor which questions my decision-making abilities, and which often could put me in a worse position especially in front of most of our Uzbek patriarchic men and it still frustrates me.*

Maftuna (27 years old, accountant):

- *Looking back at my path I am grateful for all the people who ever tried to drag me down or to create obstacles in achieving my goal of becoming a manager as it made me stronger, more confident and mature because for us, for women it is hard as you might know for sure. Now I am a big contributor to the success of the company I have been working for 5 years and I am grateful for all these challenges that I have received from different sides including my family, as my father used to be against me working. And now I am making everyone proud, so I glad I made the right decision and never gave up.*

Dildora (36 years old, secretary):

- *You know, I used to have supportive colleagues, we were always having good times together. My prior manager gave me opportunities to develop but I did not want it at first*

because I was scared for some time as I thought I will not handle it, but later on I found myself in it, started becoming more respectful to others and my family started supporting me afterwards.

- **As far as I understood, your family was against your promotions, right?**
- *Not only my family, but even my uncle's family and father's side of the family, they were always giving me more household activities to prevent me from always working. Of course, there are and there will be side shows in society, but I do not care.*

Zarina (38 years old, call-center operator):

- *I was running from the time when it was my turn to become a manager because I knew it was very nervous and stressful work. I am sorry to say but manager was not a good person, not a good manager in general because I thought he was trying to prove me that I am not worth it, as I thought at first glance. When I took my leadership role, I understood that I can handle and it is fine.*
- **Do you know why he would do this to you? Was it related to some sort of discrimination?**
- *Maybe there could be many reasons why, maybe because I was woman, it is possible, yes.*

Kamila (45 years old, secretary):

- *You know our Uzbek mentality, right? Here everyone wants to see you as a good wife. I was always nervous about the way of combining these responsibilities. And I think I was right, because being a leader is extremely responsible and takes much energy from you. My children started forgetting me... ahah*

Sitora (47 years old, call-center operator):

- *I recognized my power when I became a manager, honestly. Looking back, I handled somehow four children and my job at the same time and this made me understand how powerful I am. Of course, much thanks to the support of my husband and my family.*

Kamola (55 years old, secretary):

- *Generally, I have seen difficulties and I know what it is like. Dealing with stereotypes on work and family life—it is like walking a tightrope! But I am proud of the impact I've made and of everything I have. Yes, it has been tough, sure, but incredibly rewarding. My family is very proud of me!*

Sabohat (57 years old, accountant):

- *“It has been a long story and for now I am already tired of everything to be honest, but I would not trade it for anything. Women can do everything, and I am a nice example I think hahaha.*

- **2. Have you observed or experienced any disparities in opportunities, promotions, or salary based on gender?**

Sabohat (57, accountant):

- *Within my career I noticed that men usually have higher salaries. I do not know, maybe it is a coincidence, but it is just my observation. Unfortunately, it has always been like that, men are always ahead of us women at work and we cannot do anything with it, it is our traditions. Who are breadwinners first of all? Firstly, men.*

Aziza (28, call center operator):

- *Hah, women are always paid less or left behind and you know I am a part of it and there were couple of cases with my salary and promotion, I think not only the fact I am a woman but also my age was a problem for our 'men's' world.*

Zarina (38, call center operator):

- *Honestly saying – yes, my salary was slowly growing, I do not know about my male colleagues, but my increments are quite rare as well.*

Kamila (45, secretary):

- *I think yes, but the difference does not seem obvious, maybe just a slight difference between promotions.*

Dildora (36, accountant):

- *Definitely I cannot state, but it feels like I would say yes, because my prior manager seemed to promote faster... or maybe it was due to the fact that rate of our company decreased a bit.*

Sitora (47 years old, call-center operator):

- *I do not think so, at least I did not notice it obviously, but maybe it happened, I just did not feel it directly on myself...*

Kamola (55 years old, secretary):

- *Promotion? Maybe men overcome, yes, but it is probably because they want it more than women first of all, they do not have household activities in addition to their work, accordingly it is also influencing their "better" salaries huh!*

Maftuna (27 years old, accountant):

- *Of course, I can also refer to my age saying that some of my male colleagues already became managers at 25, so I would say there are disparities.*

- **3. What changes or improvements do you think could make the workplace more inclusive and equitable for every female manager in Tashkent?**

Sabohat (57, accountant):

- *We women should never give up and show our power to do anything we are claiming to do even if there are obstacles, because if you will it, it is no dream, no matter of what anyone tries to say or do to you and this is how we can overcome this cult of bias and discrimination from patriarchal sides and I know that only capable and dedicated girls can change it.*

Aziza (28, call center operator):

- *It all depends on our government at first only government can embed education, not everyone in our country wants to learn something unfamiliar to them.*

Zarina (38, call center operator):

- *Maybe different trainings can help women not to be afraid. Parents should also pay attention to their daughters, to raise leadership characters.*

Kamila (45, secretary):

- *Education. Only education can help, even if we cannot alter way of thinking of most adults in our country, at least we can bring up new differently thinking generations.*

Dildora (36, accountant):

- *Many ways, I think the main point is that we should educate our daughters not to be afraid of anything and to go for challenges.*

Sitora (47 years old, call-center operator):

- *Governments and organizations can encourage their citizens and their employees, but at the same time smart parents will encourage their children to become leaders.*

Kamola (55 years old, secretary):

- *It all depends on people's perceptions and desires. Once there is a desire, there will be result, I think.*

Maftuna (27 years old, accountant):

- *Well... unfortunately, I think it is in the blood of our people, these traditional thinking and so on, you know what I mean, so everything will work only in collaboration. This is a mechanism and if some details are lost, it is not going to work.*

Part B

1. Do you think women have the necessary skills and competencies to perform in managerial positions?

Timur (38, IT):

- *I believe that women have it all to grow in managerial positions for sure, they can also contribute very well.*

Farkhod (42, mechanical engineer):

- *Women can get these important skills to become managers, yes, but not every woman and it is only minority, I suppose...*

Zafar (47, engineer technologist):

- *It is not necessary. What are the men for then, huh?*

2. Would you want your sister/wife/daughter to build her career and become a manager?

Timur (38, IT):

- *I would not generally mind it that much, but I wish they would rather stay at home and mind their part of household responsibilities caring about their family.*

Farkhod (42, mechanical engineer):

- *If they want to work, they should just do it for themselves only and there is no need to become managers or leaders or promote further, they can limit themselves to work on lower-level positions.*

Zafar (47, engineer technologist):

- *No, they do not need to become managers if they want to work, because if so, they lose their feminine nature, there will be no difference between men and women then.*