



BDO is

#eachforequal

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY  
8 March 2020



**BDO**



## FOREWORD



### *Keith Farlinger, Global CEO of BDO*

A true advocate of equality and a firm believer in the pursuit of gender diversity



*The most effective teams are those made up of a diverse mix of people*



### *Why are diversity and equality so important to you?*

I firmly believe that the most effective teams are those made up of a diverse mix of people, each bringing different individual strengths, skills and viewpoints. When you value diversity, you encourage the exchange of different and contrasting ideas and this in turn delivers fresh business perspectives and innovative solutions.

Driving equality to bring men and women together, each with their own different approaches and leadership style, undoubtedly creates a stronger business model. It is in our best interests to find, develop and nurture the very best talent, and as such we must actively support all our people (both men and women) to pursue their dreams. Building a vibrant and diverse workforce signals an attractive working environment for new talent and a thriving organisation where all our colleagues have the same opportunities to grow with us.

### *What evolution have you seen over the years?*

The profile of attendees at our international conferences and meetings has seen a distinct positive shift and there is little evidence of bias and/or exclusion that we might have seen in the past. Our firms now recognise the economic and social benefits of increasing diversity. We are seeing the ongoing development of programmes to help our talented women navigate potential blocking factors to their success, and it's working. There are now more female board chairs and business leaders within BDO and we are actively striving to elevate more women to senior roles in our organisation. Much work is still to be done, but there is no doubt that this trend will continue.

### *How does that tie in with BDO's Dream?*

At BDO, we all share one common purpose, our WHY: **People helping people achieve their dreams.** Embracing diversity and equality will help all our people to maximise their potential, ignite their passion and achieve their goals. This must become an integral part of the BDO culture, because collectively, we can play our part in creating a gender equal world.





# THE GLOBAL THEME





# WHAT IS #EACHFOREQUAL

Equality is not a women's issue, it's a business issue.  
It is essential for economies & communities  
to thrive

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An equal world is an enabled world

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Individually, we are all responsible for our own  
thoughts and actions – all day, every day

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We can actively choose to pursue our **Dreams**

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Collectively, BDO is proud of its purpose **People  
helping People achieve their Dreams**, creating a  
gender equal world





 BDO IS #EACHFOREQUAL





## BDO'S DREAM

We all share one common purpose, our  
**WHY:**

Embracing diversity and equality will help  
all our people



**maximise** their potential



**ignite** their passion and  
achieve their goals

This must become an integral part of the **BDO culture** because, collectively, we can play our part in creating a **gender-equal world**.

*People helping people  
achieve their dreams*





## Testimonial by a leading lady in a predominantly male environment

“ I don't limit myself. Instead, I continually raise the bar so I have something to strive for.



*Belinda Thompson,  
Global Head of IT*

### *What has driven - or drives - your career path?*

I've had what some might consider a slightly unusual career path, starting with a degree in psychology and then finding myself as the Global Head of IT for one of the world's largest professional services firms.

What's underpinned that whole journey though, is a passion for what I am doing at every step. If you don't enjoy what you do, the chances are that you aren't going to want to keep at it for very long! For me, the enjoyment comes from empowering others around me (which explains my psychology background to some extent).

Connecting an organisation's purpose to my personal one is critical. Doing that not only keeps me focused and engaged, it allows me to paint a clear picture of the vision for those around me – whether they be my team, my leaders or my clients.

Combined, all of this allows me to bring passion to the table, something I believe is the cornerstone of good leadership. Maya Angelou, the American poet, suggested that we should focus on how we make people feel, encouraging us to take the open, transparent and empowering path wherever possible. This is particularly true for leaders. How often have you left a meeting remembering how someone made you feel, but not what they said or did?

Something that can't be underestimated in the progression of a leader – regardless of gender - is the support of those around them. For me this comes from a few key areas. First and foremost, my husband. He continually empowers and encourages me, in every aspect of my life. People talk about women 'leaning in' to achieve their goals, but there is also a case for their partners leaning in to help them along the way. This 'joint leaning' – so to speak – has been vital to my career path.

If I had to choose just a handful of things that have driven my career to date, they would likely centre around the common theme of ambition. I carefully decide what I want to 'lean in' to. I know I will give my all for things that energise me, so that's what I seek out. I don't limit myself. Instead, I continually raise the bar so I have something to strive for. I do my best to maintain a growth mindset, reminding myself that with humility can come growth. Finally, I take the view that there are few problems that can't be solved. I am always thinking about different angles or approaches to solving the challenges that lay in front of me or my team. Bringing something extra to the table means the conversation is always open and you can seek out different perspectives.



## *How you have navigated any potential blockers?*

Everyone, regardless of their age, gender, position or experience, comes up against blockers during their career. They are an inevitable part of progression, so it's how you face them that determines your success over the long term. I've learnt to frame such situations as opportunities, because they present a chance to reassess my frame of reference for success. For example, being the only woman sitting at a table could be viewed as a blocker, but what it does is create a huge opportunity and responsibility for me to influence the conversation, not be influenced by it.

Confidence also plays a key role in tackling blockers. Knowing when and how to 'back yourself' can be the difference between success and failure. Quite often, confidence is generated by those around you. For me that has come from some strong and diverse mentors who have coached me along the way. Having a sponsor within the organisation who can provide direct and honest feedback (the latter being particularly important!) has given me the confidence and support to succeed. Some of my best mentors have simply asked me "What would you do in this situation? What do you think?". They are simply questions, but they come with a truly empowering undertone that prepares you for being active in key leadership conversations.

Of course, being confident enough to influence a conversation means nothing if you can't communicate

and engage effectively. Fine tuning these skills is paramount and it can only be done in the context of your operating environment. You need to understand the rules of the game, yet play the game in a unique way that capitalises on your strengths. You also need to dream and bring ambition to the table, while actively communicating the outcomes that come with it.

Of course, there are challenging times and it's not uncommon to find yourself in a situation that you didn't anticipate. Too often I have inadvertently found myself 'cleaning up' someone else's performance because I considered it to be beneficial for the overall outcome. Of course, that results in someone else claiming the success. Now I've realised the need to own successes and assess when it's appropriate for others to be accountable for their performance – regardless of whether it was good or bad.

This has also made me more attuned to what I call 'microaggressions', such as people talking over or interrupting when I'm presenting. As you are sometimes the only woman at the table – and remember that comes with a responsibility – it's easy to let those things pass by. Instead, I've learnt to gently correct the course of the conversation. As with most things I've reflected on, this isn't something solely experienced by women, which is why advocating for anyone else facing microaggressions is so important. Who knows, perhaps one day they will return the favour.

## *Why do you believe gender equality is so important?*

For me it is important to consider diversity of all types, not just gender. Valuing diversity of every kind – such as culture, age, religion and gender – encourages the exchange of diverse ideas and is at the very core of sustainable, culture-grounded innovation. It would be ridiculous to shut out the youth of today when discussing what our plans are for the future, just as it would be fraught with danger to make a global decision without engaging with colleagues from countries and cultures around the world.

In the Global IT team, we have focused on driving a diverse work environment that represents many cultures. We have seen this enhance performance, talent attraction and idea acceleration. In fact, the most recent industry research suggests that valuing diversity is critical to being able to leverage benefits and must be normatively accepted. For example, countries and industries that view gender diversity as important capture benefits from it. Those that don't, do not.

It's so important to keep the diversity conversation going. It cannot be something that's part of the news cycle - it needs to be something that we continue to talk about. The value of diversity, in my opinion, is indisputable. Having a programme or feeling obligated won't create the necessary culture to allow diverse talent to succeed. As leaders we must support this talent and put frameworks in place that allow them to join us at the table.



## MORE ACTIONS ARE NEEDED



 Click at the icon above to start watching a video



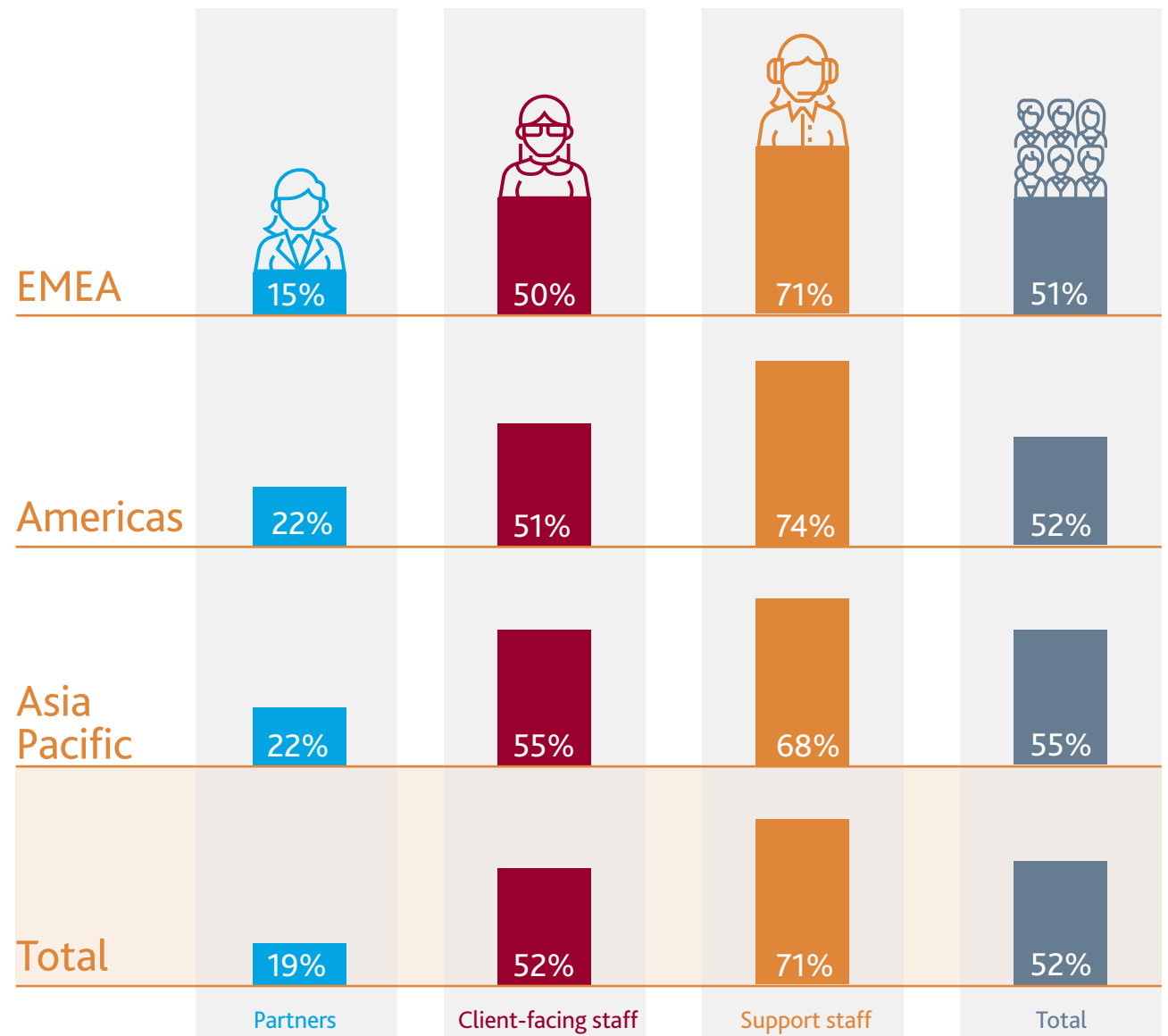
## WOMEN AT BDO

Globally, there is a growing momentum to increase the number of women in senior roles, particularly as evidence suggests that companies in the top quartile for gender diversity on their executive teams are 21% more likely to experience above-average profitability than companies in the fourth quartile [1].

This trend is reflected within BDO, with our own statistics showing that overall, women already occupy more than **50%** of our workforce, and across all regions on average **50%** of our client-facing staff are females.

However, the statistics also show that our female population still finds it hard to climb the career ladder. On average **20%** of our female professionals have achieved Partner status. We can conclude that there is still a lot of work to be done.

% WOMEN AT BDO, BY OCCUPATION AND REGION



[1] Source: McKinsey & Co. Delivering through Diversity (2018).

[https://www.mckinsey.com/-/media/mckinsey/business%20functions/organization/our%20insights/delivering%20through%20diversity/delivering-through-diversity\\_full-report.aspx](https://www.mckinsey.com/-/media/mckinsey/business%20functions/organization/our%20insights/delivering%20through%20diversity/delivering-through-diversity_full-report.aspx)



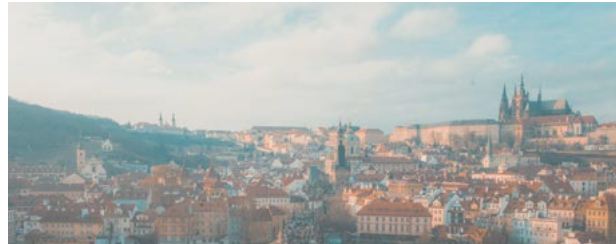


## WOMEN AT BDO

Where are women gaining ground at Partner level?



Notably, the Americas and Asia Pacific regions currently boast the **highest** percentages of women at **Partner level**



BDO in South Africa counts **119 female Partners (32%)**



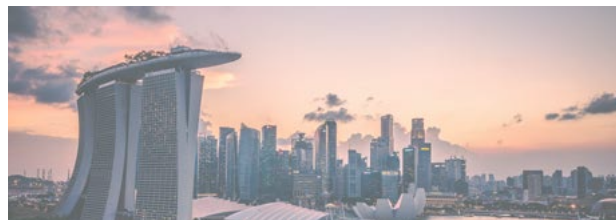
BDO in Kazakhstan reaches a **63% female Partner level**



In the Americas region, Canada boasts **117 female Partners (24%)**



The firm in Dominican Republic can pride themselves on a **55% female Partner** representation



The **BDO firm in Singapore** is proud to have **48% female Partners**



There are currently **62 female Partners** in our firm in China **(28%)**

# GENDER BALANCE BEST PRACTICES

Make a BOLD Leadership commitment



Link leadership gender balance to growth and strategy i.e. business issues



Identify the specific root cause / obstacles



Deliver unconscious bias training



Review processes: provide opportunities, visibility, inclusiveness and belonging, flexibility, appreciation & recognition, celebration etc. - equally to all



Provide mentoring / reverse coaching and sponsorship



Encourage good female (and male) leaders role models





# EXAMPLES OF ONGOING INITIATIVES

## UK



Wendy Walton, Global Head of Private Client and wannabe runner

“**Gender diversity** – in fact all diversity – creates a stronger, sustainable and valuable business, so we need to keep working to create an environment desirable to all our people.

Like any valued corporate citizen, that’s the challenge we’ve been looking at within our ‘Be Yourself’ strategy: how do we attract more females into the profession, and how do we **keep them here at BDO?**”

## Netherlands



**BDO in the Netherlands** recently signed the charter ‘*Talent to the Top*’, making their ambitions in the area of (gender) diversity tangible.

## Australia



BDO has been listed as an ‘Inclusive Employer’ by Diversity Council Australia

BDO in Australia is proud to be named an **Inclusive Employer for 2019-2020** by Diversity Council Australia (DCA).

To achieve this recognition, organisations must do better than the **DCA National Index Benchmark** on at least five out of six measures: Awareness, Engagement, Inclusive Organisational Climate, Inclusive Leadership, Inclusive Team, and Exclusion, as measured by the DCA Inclusion@YourWork survey which we asked our people to complete late last year.

This recognition is only made possible by the commitment of our leaders to an inclusive workplace, as well as the dedication of our Inclusion & Diversity committees and ambassadors who deliver a number of events and initiatives in support of our national I&D strategy.

Being inclusive is fundamental to our culture and our BDO Australia values - One, Bold, Human, Strive and Heart.

## USA



IN 2018, THERE WERE **200+** LOCAL OFFICE INCLUSION EVENTS

In 2018, more than **1,810** BDO employees and partners have attended training courses on the topic of unconscious bias.\*

\*At BDO, the goal of raising awareness of unconscious bias is to help BDO leaders, managers and teams capitalize on our differences to ensure we attract, retain and develop a diverse group of top talent so that we can conduct business with our clients in meaningful ways.

**2,000** original Yammer posts as part of the #BusySeasonBreaks contest

**182** BDO professionals participated in our new parental leave coaching webinars



# MORE ACTIONS FROM BDO UK



## BE INSPIRED BDO UK GENDER BALANCE 2020

### BE YOURSELF: GENDER BALANCE

<b>B</b>	<b>Belief</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be Yourself strategy promotion and action planning</li> <li>• Be Yourself programme delivered by D&amp;I Manager</li> <li>• Storytelling through role models</li> </ul>
<b>E</b>	<b>Educate</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing storytelling through central channels</li> <li>• Key dates: March (Intl Women's Day), June (partner promotions), Oct (Culture Report, Gender Pay Gap data, WiF Charter report)</li> </ul>
<b>I</b>	<b>Inclusive leadership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LT and SBU Leaders: gender balance continues to be discussed on regular agendas</li> <li>• Inclusive Leadership training to be rolled out to all partners in 2020 (mandatory)</li> <li>• Visibility programme for WW and PE on this agenda to be created eg partner comms, firmwide comms (podcast #2), consider specific senior manager/AD engagement</li> </ul>
<b>N</b>	<b>Networks &amp; communities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal networks: continue to meet regularly with BDO Inspire (our gender balance network); support NW Inclusion, Transaction Services' Women's Forum, TRA female group and Corporate IT Forum</li> <li>• External memberships: continue to support Women in Finance Charter, SWIFT, 30% Club, Women Working In International Development Group, 1 Loud Voice</li> </ul>
<b>S</b>	<b>Support &amp; sponsorship</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support through mentoring: partners, firm-wide, 30% club - continue to promote this</li> <li>• Support through counselling managers - link into CM communications via HR</li> <li>• Sponsorship programme for future partners - formalise this in 2020, including guidelines</li> </ul>
<b>P</b>	<b>Policies &amp; programmes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revision of our 'Life Event' policies - check-in with HR team at mid-year point</li> <li>• Regular promotion of success stories - ongoing</li> </ul>
<b>I</b>	<b>Investigate, innovate &amp; insight</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Horizon-scanning session to check on other external initiatives, trends or awards may be helpful</li> </ul>
<b>R</b>	<b>Recruitment &amp; Retention</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active briefings to recruiters on inclusive recruitment actions and stories</li> <li>• Root cause analysis of female manager/snr manager departures</li> </ul>
<b>E</b>	<b>Excite</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce 'Allies' to work with and help represent females (partners)</li> <li>• Inspiring stories with a link to our 'Be Yourself' priority - ongoing</li> <li>• Leverage network of champions and U Leaders</li> </ul>
<b>D</b>	<b>Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A clear development plan linked to our 'Achieving My Potential' framework - ongoing</li> </ul>





## BDO IN THE NETHERLANDS

### TALENT TO THE TOP



The foundation activates and supports organisations, leaders and teams to make use of the power of diversity and to turn this into success for their business. In addition, *Talent to the Top* stimulates the social and political debate and translates relevant research results into the policies of organisations. Charter signatories are obliged to report their progress annually to the *Talent to the Top* Monitoring Committee. This committee monitors the annual progress of signatories, makes the collective results public and makes recommendations to the government, the *Talent to the Top* Foundation and signatories to achieve the objectives of the charter.

### COMMITMENT



Clear management agreements are made to achieve this and progress is reported on clear key performances. *Talent to the Top* guides and supports the signatories with the inflow, transfer and retention of women within the organisation, through mentoring programmes, inspiration meetings, customised advice and training.



During the first meeting of the BDO Ladies Circle Netherlands it was announced that BDO wants to make concrete commitment to gender diversity by signing the Talent to the Top Charter. By signing the Charter, we make our ambitions in the field of (gender) diversity tangible. The objective is to achieve more than **20%** women in top positions within 3 to 5 years.

The signing took place on 17 January 2020



# GENDER BALANCE ARTICLES & TOOLS

## THE WHY

- [HBR- research-when-gender-diversity-makes-firms-more-productive](#)
- [The-commercial-case-for-gender-diversity-in-professional-services](#)
- [Gender-diversity-and-inclusion-why-your-business-case-for-gender-diversity](#)
- [Business-case-gender-diversity-workplace](#)
- [Australian government/workplace-gender-equality/the-business-case](#)
- [These-three-women-demonstrate-how-gender-diversity-works](#)
- ['Delivering through diversity' 2018](#)

## THE HOW

- [Harvard Business Review: how-to-get-more-men-to-take-gender-balance-seriously](#)
- [Bloomberg: multinational-companies-reveal-gender-bias-in-job-ads](#)
- [Harvard Business Review: if-women-dont-apply-to-your-company-this-is-probably-why](#)
- [HBR: how-to-recruit-more-women-to-your-company](#)
- [HBR: how-the-best-bosses-interrupt-bias-on-their-teams](#)
- [Accenture-When-She-Rises-We-All-Rise](#)
- [Overcoming Unseen Obstacles how to get more women into leadership positions](#)
- [Engaging men in gender initiatives – what change agents need to know](#)

## TOOLS

[Harvard Implicit Test](#) (choose gender or as you wish)

[Bloomberg Gender Equality index](#)

# BDO'S GENDER EQUALITY MINDSET

## Our leaders take the floor



Albert Lopez  
*CEO Americas*

“Gender diversity  
must be a strategic  
priority in all of our  
firms”



Trond-Morten  
Lindberg  
*CEO EMEA*

“Know the power of  
women in leadership.  
She makes a  
difference”



Stephen Darley  
*CEO Asia Pacific*

“Gender equality  
must become a lived  
reality”





**Albert Lopez**  
*CEO Americas*

### *Why are diversity and equality so important to you?*

Gender diversity is a precondition for sustainable development and good governance. It accurately reflects the world we live in today and it is essential to the development of our people. A gender diverse workforce also brings real added value. Men and women have different frames of reference, viewpoints, ideas and market insights which, when brought together, enables better problem solving and the creation of more innovative ideas.

Creating a diverse workforce may mean that organizations must be open to some degree of transformational change to ease the pathway – perhaps by allowing flexible working schedules and setting up mentoring programs. We need to be mindful of a population that represents more than 50% of our Global firm's workforce. There is a need to motivate and retain talented women and nurture their ambitions to grow.

### *What evolution have you seen over the years?*

In the larger economies, there has been a mindset shift and a greater focus on creating the right environment to encourage women to pursue senior roles and leadership positions. Social norms are changing, but so are expectations and education. These days all young people, both male and female, are encouraged to fulfill their potential, in whatever profession they choose.

Initiatives such as flextime, mentoring programmes, where female Partners actively coach a young, talented and ambitious colleague; workshops, where women in business help each other to overcome possible blockers, are now commonplace in some of our firms.

Nevertheless, a lot of work still needs to be done. We cannot deny the impact of culture. Though North America may have advanced more quickly in this area, other areas in the Americas have significant cultural challenges to overcome. That said, I have witnessed a distinct change in attitudes in Latin America and in the Caribbean. More and more women are now finding their way into leadership roles. This is an essential step towards improving gender equality.

### *How best can we move forward?*

We need to stay at the forefront of diversity initiatives, and make sure that the topic remains high on the agenda. It's essential that we invest in the necessary people development programmes too.

Above all, we need to keep in mind that a diverse working population of men and women together can do so much more – for our clients, for our firms and for our future.

When I talk about the future with some of our female professionals, I always offer them one crucial piece of advice: "Be you! Above all, be true to yourself. Going the extra mile does not mean you have to change who you are as a person." As a business, we gain more by developing and embracing the inherent strengths of each person's own unique and individual characteristics.

***"Gender diversity must be a strategic priority in all of our firms."***





**Trond-Morten Lindberg**  
*CEO EMEA*

### *Why are diversity and equality so important to you?*

The Fearless Girl statue was raised as a symbol of female empowerment in 2017. With her hands on her hips, the bronze sculpture was originally installed facing a much larger statue of a snorting bull, on Wall Street, in the Financial District of Manhattan, New York City. At that time, the plaque on the statue stated "Know the power of women in leadership. SHE makes a difference," and this was subsequently debated and quoted all around the world. The phrase really struck a chord with me and I discussed it at length with my twin daughters (then aged 11). Their naïve and unbiased questions in response such as "Why is it more difficult for women to get a top job?", "Is this happening in the firm that you work for?" and "What are you doing to promote female leadership" created much food for thought? And I consider my level of awareness of gender equality issues as high, I recognise that I and others could (and should) do so much more.

### *What evolution have you seen over the years?*

Awareness around the gender equality agenda has increased significantly over recent decades. Gender equality is one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals

defined by the UN. It encompasses so much more than having equal representation around a board table or within a leadership team. In the wider context it means that we need to reach a level where our culture is such that women and girls are naturally empowered, with policies and procedures to ensure that these goals can be reached.

The war for talent is a business challenge in most countries and in most companies, particularly at decision-making levels. Even though awareness has increased, there is still a need to push forward with efforts to bring about gender equality, as this will no doubt help us to attract the best people (both men and women) to our organisation.

One question I am often asked is how business leaders can improve gender equality in their firm. Unfortunately, there is no single solution. Gender equality might be moving towards the norm in some companies in a few countries in Northern Europe and is seen as a means of competitive advantage in parts of Western Europe. It is considered truly innovative in some countries and it is close to impossible to create anything more than awareness in a few others. Despite different cultures and levels of

organisational maturity, we can all do something. And we should all do something - first and foremost because it will contribute to a more diversified and more competitive working environment, as well as supporting our broader sustainability agenda. The business benefits are easy to identify.

### *How best can we move forward?*

I would start by understanding the facts and asking questions. Allow others to ask questions. Use that as a foundation to define your goals and, most importantly, measure progress and communicate it. It's important to remember that this is not a topic to be fought only by women. To progress from the status quo, we all need to understand how we can contribute - men and women together.

To reach complete gender equality will take some time, but we will progress faster if we all embrace the fact that our efforts on a personal level and in business can bring about positive change. The opportunity is there for the taking – we must seize it, because SHE really will make a difference.

***"Know the power of women in leadership. She makes a difference."***





**Stephen Darley**  
*CEO Asia Pacific*

### *Why are diversity and equality so important to you?*

Having the right mix of people in the workplace has positive effects across the entire organisation. Diversity means that teams will benefit from different points of view and approaches that come from different life experiences. It is that multiplicity of perspectives that will in turn spark creativity and innovation, and will help an organisation to spot new opportunities. Gender diversity is vital because any organisation should reflect the reality of the world around it.

I firmly believe we should all strive for an inclusive culture in the workplace, boosting morale and opportunity. By doing so, you do not only become 'richer' as a company, but you can tap into a wider talent pool, improve staff retention and even enhance your client relationships. Our customers all have different backgrounds. The more your organisation reflects your clients, the more likely they are to communicate with you.

### *What evolution have you seen over the years?*

Just as Asia is diverse, so is the experience of gender equality in the region.

Female participation in the workforce in Japan and Korea is hampered by cultural norms as well as the lack of affordable childcare. There is also low female representation in politics in both countries, even though South Korea has had one female president. However, it's a different story in South East Asia and South Asia where a number of countries have been led by women. Women, particularly from the upper classes, are also well represented in the board room and c-suite in South East Asian countries where child care is very affordable and readily available. The issue in these countries is to ensure access for women of all backgrounds.

One country that has been shifting the needle on gender diversity is Taiwan. As far back as 1997, Acer Inc. had a

childcare facility at its headquarters out of Taipei and women were well represented in its senior management ranks. Today companies with 100 or more workers in Taiwan have to provide childcare and nursing facilities and face government fines if they don't. The gender pay gap is also narrowing from 33% 30 years ago to 14% today.

Diversity and equality do become topics much higher on the agenda, but there is still quite a bit of work to be done.

### *How best can we move forward?*

Identify possible gender-related road blocks and stimulate an open debate on how we, together, can remove them to promote greater inclusion. The change in mindset needs to happen at the most senior levels of the organisation. Cultivate gender diversity in the workplace. Allow your teams to guide your efforts, as they can provide valuable insights into what is going well, and where there might be improvement points.

***"Gender equality must become a lived reality."***





## OUR FEMALE LEADERS SHOW THE WAY

Introducing

*She believed  
She could  
So she did*

Our young females  
taking the floor



Orlina Soriano

### HR Director BDO in Dominican Republic

#### *What has driven - or drives - your career path?*

My career path is driven by my father's legacy. He continues to be my inspiration and has guided me both as a father and as a mentor and leader. I enjoy the feeling of carrying out my work every day whilst upholding a high standard of professional ethics and treating others with respect. I realise the importance of humility in recognising my own failures and learning from them. I aim to create relationships that allow me to lead by example and guide those who work with me.

#### *How have you navigated potential blockers?*

As a young woman, people often assume that I don't have the expertise or wisdom to complete a high-level project. In this scenario, I always seek to deliver over-and-above what is required. This sits well with my professional values and gives me a steady flow of new challenges. I believe it's important to aim high and surpass all expectations where possible.

#### *Did you (or do you) have a positive female role model within BDO?*

I do not have a particular role model, but 56% of our workforce is female and 53% of our partners are female. In two of our main services lines, 89% are female. I am proud of these statistics and of every single female in BDO for their accomplishments, whether great or small.



It's important to aim high and surpass all expectations where possible.





Patricia Gonsalves

**Partner, Chief Inclusion & Diversity Officer  
BDO in Canada**

*What has driven - or drives - your career path?*

What drives me is mentoring and coaching others. In my role as a Quality Assurance Partner, I have the opportunity to coach others on how to apply new accounting and auditing standards in complex situations. I enjoy discussing technical issues with staff, partners and clients and working with them to make decisions, solve problems and develop new skills.

My role also provides me with the opportunity to informally mentor some of our managers. Being an objective sounding board when someone finds themselves faced with a difficult personal or work challenge is very rewarding.

*How have you navigated potential blockers?*

Blockers come in many forms – for example, colleagues who are resistant to change or those who are too cautious, domineering or confrontational. Everyone has a story about how they got to where they are in their career. This story influences how they react to everyday situations, so it's important to understand a person's story and what drives them. Understanding 'what's in it for them' instead of focusing on 'what's in it for me' is key. If you can learn to work with your blockers it will really help you to achieve your goals.

*Did you (or do you) have a positive female role model within BDO?*

My role model within BDO is Janet Stockton, the National Professional Standards Partner.

Over the years, Janet has taught me so much. Her technical knowledge, thanks to her considerable experience, is so vast and is something that I continue to aspire to. In her role, she handles many contentious issues. I have witnessed first-hand her ability to empathize with the other party and turn a negative situation into a win-win for both sides. She is optimistic and hardworking, and always makes me feel like my opinion matters and is valued. In addition, Janet loves to have fun! We have had so many well-needed laughs over the years!



Identifying a strategy to influence your blockers is key





## Karen Keuleers

### Partner, Head of Legal BDO in Belgium

#### *What has driven - or drives - your career path?*

I have always had a professional passion for law and specific primary goals – to carry out meaningful work, to create real added value and to deliver with passion. I have been employed by BDO for many years and have benefited from ongoing opportunities to further develop whilst being challenged intellectually, and whilst also developing interpersonal, organisational and managerial skills. As a woman, I feel it's very important to be independent and to be able to stand 'on your own two feet.' This is something that I have actively pursued during my career. That said, what I do, is definitely the most important.

#### *How have you navigated potential blockers?*

By having the courage to talk about them. By making it possible to open a debate - with colleagues within the organisation and also with people from within my own private network. Often women in leadership positions, with similar experiences, who understand. Having these honest and open discussions is reassuring – as they

confirm that you are not facing these challenges alone. Being open and honest about blockers is important. Discussing them is not a sign of weakness – quite the contrary in fact.

#### *Did you (or do you) have a positive female role model within BDO?*

I have been fortunate to work with many impressive colleagues, both male and female. I have particular respect for those within our organisation who have managed to stay true to themselves, who remain authentic and dare to show vulnerability. I aim to always uphold my own values and standards. It's important that employees feel represented in and aligned with the values of the organisation. For me personally, my values and standards need to match with those of my organisation. If they didn't, I could not be happy.



**It's important that employees feel represented in and aligned with the values of the organisation**



Nicola Lally

## Director of Communication BDO in UK

### *What has driven - or drives - your career path?*

I do! No-one else is 'you' and that is your superpower – it means that you are in control of how you respond to opportunities or challenges in your path; personally and professionally.

I chose to specialise in communications because of how impactful communication and storytelling is; in building confidence in individuals, consistency for business and clarity for all. I started my career at one of the best PR agencies in London because they offered fantastic training and the opportunity to experience how every communication discipline is used by many high-profile brands. This included behaviour change campaigns for the UK Government, such as how to reduce alcohol intake among UK adults and how to encourage people to quit smoking (I promise I'm still fun at parties!). These are skills that I still deploy today, for example to drive usage of the global client portal or support for APT NextGen.

I then chose to move to BDO to get closer to the business problems that communications were trying to fix. My years of experience in journalism, reputation management, creativity and behaviour change campaigns gave me a unique 'outside in' perspective which is of real use to BDO leaders. Communications is a power tool for the best leaders – and we always need to work at it.

Working for a progressive leadership team in the UK means that I'm now not just telling stories, but creating them too. Creating impactful stories that help others to succeed is so satisfying.

### *How have you navigated potential blockers?*

I really believe in the concept that our greatest ability as humans is the power to choose one thought over another. Two different people will respond to the same situation in very different ways. I'm always the annoyingly positive person in the room who wants to see it as a constructive moment and make it all better. That means that I tend not to see 'blockers' but instead 'moments of decision making.' Otherwise – as a mother of two young children with a demanding full-time job – I think my whole life would be a series of blockers!

My personal challenge is 'imposter syndrome' and how that can occasionally affect my self-confidence. Since my PR trainee days, I've always been promoted

far earlier than I thought possible, and it's taken me quite a few years to see what other people see in me. I have something called Circular Ambition, whereby I get really energised by doing a great job in the moment on something I'm really passionate about, rather than directing my energy into climbing every rung of the career ladder to get to a certain point. Consequently, moving up a rung has always been a welcome surprise – and has happily, therefore, almost completely removed the idea of 'blockers' in my path.

### *Did you (or do you) have a positive female role model within BDO?*

Both Wendy Walton and Zoe Bailey have incredible career stories – Wendy, from school leaver to BDO's Global Head of Private Clients, and Zoe, from PA to BDO UK's Chief Strategy Officer. But what makes them inspirational for me is how they behaved as they were getting there: full of humility, humour, curiosity for lifelong learning, kindness and a strong belief in BDO's core purpose. My female role models lifted other women up as they themselves have climbed - and continue to do so.



My female role models lifted other women up as they themselves have climbed - and continue to do so





## Helen Argiris

### Chairman BDO in Australia

#### *What has driven - or drives - your career path?*

After more than 20 years of work experience, I can honestly say that the one thing that sustains my passion is working with clients and seeing them satisfied with our work. It's essential to realise that everyone, whether client or colleague, whether male or female, is different in terms of needs and expectations. The key is in building strong relationships, identifying those needs and doing your utmost to meet or ideally surpass them.

It's also important to me to build the confidence of others and to share the benefits of my experience and insight. I want all my team members to be happy and to enjoy carrying out rewarding and interesting challenges. Success for me is helping both clients and colleagues achieve their goals.

#### *How have you navigated any possible blockers?*

I am fortunate to work with many people who score highly in EQ and IQ terms. Nevertheless, the importance of effective communication to navigate difficult situations cannot be underestimated. Having

personal confidants and mentors, both within and outside the organisation, has been imperative to my own personal progression. In addition, the unwavering support of my family and my team has also given me the strength and courage to press on during challenging periods.

#### *Did you (or do you) have a positive female role model within BDO?*

For many years, I was the only female Partner in our firm, but I am pleased to report that women now enjoy far better representation at Director and Partner level. As a Partner, National Lead of Global Outsourcing in Australia, Chairman of BDO Australia and a member of the Asia Pacific Board I am uniquely placed to further drive equality and diversity within our organisation. There is no doubt in my mind that this topic is key to the continued success of our business.



Success for me is helping both clients and colleagues achieve their goals





## Fayaz Mohamed

### Audit Partner BDO in South Africa

#### *What has driven - or drives - your career path?*

Neither of my parents had the opportunity to finish primary school. Together, they made it their goal to make sure that all their children were given the gift of education.

Whilst my father made sure that my siblings and I were taken regularly to the library to do research and complete homework (life before Google!), my mother was motivated by a dream for one of her children to become a chartered accountant. It may have been her dream, but I truly love what I do!

There have been many moments during my studies and life to date when I have struggled and felt like giving up. During these moments, my mother would always remind me to be grateful – to appreciate that I had more than a person without sight, or someone without limbs. She always reminded me to push my boundaries and not give up until success knocked on the door. Failure naturally became a word that does not exist in my vocabulary.

#### *How have you navigated any possible blockers?*

Being solution-driven is written in the DNA of a chartered accountant. When you face a block, you simply 'get creative' and devise another path. The journey changes, but the end goal remains the mission.

Over the years, I've learnt the power of positive thinking and in being grateful for my blessings. These are my tips for overcoming any possible blockers in your life - whether personal or professional.

Mentors play a valuable role. Other than my mother, I am privileged to have many mentors and an amazing husband and family, who continue to inspire and push me to accept every challenge that comes my way.

As George Herman 'Babe' Ruth Jr. (the famous American professional baseball player) said, "It's hard to beat a person who never gives up and has the grit and determination to be bigger than the challenges ahead."

#### *Did you (or do you) have a positive female role model within BDO?*

There are many ladies at BDO that inspire me (and some are younger than me).

I believe in surrounding yourself with people that bring out the best in you. At BDO, we are blessed to have an abundance of people who fit the bill.

My last word...

Live your dream but remember to have fun whilst you are en route to achieving it. If it's not fun, create the fun and inspire others along the way. Only then will you feel truly fulfilled.



Live your dream but remember to have fun whilst you are en route to achieving it





Jocelyn Goh

### Audit Partner BDO in Singapore

#### *What has driven - or drives - your career path?*

From a young age I have always aspired to achieve success and enjoy a comfortable life.

When I first joined BDO in Singapore, there were only around 150 employees. Now there are more than 500, and this ongoing growth provided the perfect platform for me to develop with, most importantly, the support of an exceptional senior team. My mentors provided the space to explore my own ideas and provided guidance so I could learn from my mistakes.

I am a person who likes to challenge the norm and was able to reach Partner level at BDO in a short space of time (8 years), building on 5 years of previous commercial experience in accounting. I soon realised that when you treat a business like your own and 'go the extra mile,' positive results follow naturally.

At BDO in Singapore we don't focus specifically on gender - we simply consider which person is best

suited to undertake the specific task. Thus far, BDO has provided me with a challenging yet exciting, fulfilling and rewarding journey, exposure to different types of industries and continually evolving roles; from Audit Partner to HR & Training Partner to Quality Partner and finally to become part of the leadership team. After 18 years with BDO, I continue to experience new challenges every day. It's been a colourful journey that I wouldn't hesitate to choose again.

#### *How have you navigated potential blockers?*

Having a visionary mentor or mentors is a key asset, as is effective networking. Surround yourself with successful people, they will show you how to navigate through blockers. I strongly believe in the 80/20 rule (the Pareto Principle); that 20 percent of your activities account for 80 percent of your results. It's important, therefore, to work SMART. Listen, be receptive. Collaborate for efficiency. Finally, particularly in an ever-changing environment, be prepared to adapt, or risk being replaced. A time lost is lost forever.

#### *Did you (or do you) have a positive female role-model within BDO?*

For me it doesn't matter whether your role-model is male or female. My (male) role model in BDO has always been Managing Partner Frankie Chia. He is a man of many ideas and is always willing to challenge how things are done. He is magnanimous, a very kind soul and extremely pragmatic. When he misses an opportunity, he always believes that it could be a blessing in disguise. This has taught me the power of positive thinking.



Surround yourself with successful people. They will show you how to navigate through blockers



"I believe that **BDO has actually managed to give me the tools to help build my career.** My opinion as a professional is respected, my need (as a parent) for flexible working is granted and I truly feel appreciated by staff, colleagues and management.

That said, **there is still a lack of role models or female mentors in my profession.** Yes, there are many very competent and admirable (male) professionals, but I do sometimes feel isolated and discouraged, because we, as women, know that it is not always easy to blend in or fit within the patriarchal culture of senior leadership that still exists. **It is for our generation of professionals to really make that change."**

"One of the biggest barriers to my personal growth was that **I could not really see what role I could play amongst the other managers and partners.** It did not help that it was a real male stronghold, with very strong personalities. Fortunately, I realised that a mindset shift would resolve the problem. **I decided to have an open and transparent discussion about it,** and discovered that my peers and partners did see added value in me, and were already considering a new role for me that I had never imagined possible. Female leadership does bring added value to the floor and we should all be more vocal about that.

This was an important lesson, for me, and for BDO: **Talking helps!** An open debate with your manager or mentor about the 'struggles' we face, such as combining career with family life, is the best route to identifying the solutions.

**Personally, I would love to have more support, training and coaching as I am sure this would benefit my career and the organisation too.** At the moment, we learn mainly from experience without a clear plan for the future. This is one of the reasons why talented people do leave, because they simply don't know what growth trajectory is possible and what support they can count on."

"It can be **challenging as a mother to juggle between work and family,** and still pursue a career. I do sometimes feel 'judged' by male peers when I cannot work overtime. **I would definitely value more flexible working arrangements."**

We asked a selection of our young, female BDO talent to discuss the challenges that they face in pursuing their career, and what suggestions they might have for our leadership. These are some of their honest & open replies:

"I tend to put too much pressure on myself, when it comes to meeting expectations. **I sometimes feel unable to voice my thoughts** and opinions on our working culture, e.g. on working overtime."

"At BDO, I do not see any gender bias and no hindrance from my superiors (who are mostly male) to pursue a further career, quite the contrary. They are supportive and push me to become better in every aspect."

"BDO is an amazing place to grow, but as in other companies, the higher one goes, the more difficult it becomes for a woman to progress. I don't blame BDO. **Often, we, as women, have our own mental blockage when it comes to leadership positions.** Maybe it is due to the pressures that society puts on us? Or our own worries that we might be taking too much on our shoulders? What I do know, is that I need to start thinking differently and believe that anything is possible. **How BDO can help? By considering more women for top leadership positions.** That would be a strong signal for the rest of us. We have some amazing examples, but not enough. We want to be appointed on merit, not as a favour, but we need the support of the organisation to make that '(r)evolution happen', so it becomes the norm rather than the exception."

"Being told that you need to build your career 'fast' because it will be more difficult after you start a family does significantly add pressure. However, **my biggest barrier is self-confidence.** As women, we worry too much about making the wrong decisions and we question whether we are good enough for the role. **It's a constant internal battle.** Having more coaching and support from female role models could certainly help, or panel sessions by successful and inspiring women from the industry."



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