

# PROMOTING WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

## IN A MALE-DOMINATED INDUSTRY

### TIRA AUSTENITE

Recognising that building versatile and accomplished teams requires a diverse workforce and diverse leaders, Indonesia Business Coalition for Women Empowerment (IBCWE) member Tira Austenite has made progress towards redressing the gender imbalance in their male-dominated workforce **by almost doubling the number of women in managerial positions within two years, from seven (11 percent of total) in 2017 to 13 (25 percent of total) in 2019.**

By focusing on women's leadership, Tira Austenite has created a system that identifies and supports women to progress in the company, with the aim of attracting and inspiring the next generation of employees.

#### 1 CHALLENGE

The benefits of a diverse workforce are well documented, including boosting creativity and increasing revenues<sup>1</sup>. However, despite adhering to Indonesian labour laws and implementing non-discriminatory policies, in 2017 Tira Austenite had **a predominantly male workforce**, with only 19 percent Supervisors and 11 percent of Manager and Senior Manager positions held by women.



Supervisors



Manager &  
Senior Manager

Attracting new female talent is a challenge for the steel and gas industry in which Tira Austenite operates, because gendered social norms maintain that men are more suited to these sectors.

These societal norms influenced Tira's practice of advertising certain jobs with **a preference for male candidates** while women were recruited for Human Resource (HR) or administrative roles. Further, low staff turnover meant that senior management positions are filled by developing a pipeline of leadership within the company. The **high ratio of male to female employees alongside low staff turnover** led to fewer women in management positions, perpetuating the cycle of gender imbalance.

#### 2 OPPORTUNITY FOR CHANGE

To break this cycle, Tira Austenite focused on addressing their internal systems and the pool of female talent that was already present in the company. A key opportunity arose in 2017 when several male senior members of staff were due to retire.

<sup>1</sup> Boccuzzi, E. and Uniacke, P. (2021) "Accelerating women's advancement in STEM: emerging lessons on network strategies and approaches in Asia", The Asia Foundation

During the process of internal recruitment for their replacements, the HR team identified several female candidates that had potential. The company made the decision to promote some of these female staff members into key leadership positions, including branch managers.

At the same time, Sintesa Group, Tira Austenite's parent company, became a founding member of IBCWE and requested Tira Austenite to complete the EDGE certification process<sup>2</sup>. Tira Austenite became EDGE certified at the Assess level (the first of three levels) and committed to 11 proposed actions, including eight related to human resources management. This process helped to increase awareness within the leadership and HR teams of the importance of Workplace Gender Equality (WGE) and the ways in which Tira Austenite could improve their policies and practices related to this goal.

Reflecting on the EDGE Certification, a member of the HR team stated:

**“Prior to this, we treated male and female employees equally in recruitment and promotion without considering their gender; now, we are more systematic [in using segregated data] to monitor and develop our talents”**

### 3 ACTIONS TO PROMOTE WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP AT TIRA AUSTENITE

Acting on the EDGE commitments, Tira Austenite implemented three key activities to promote women's leadership within the company:

#### 1. Revising existing Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) related to Human Resource Management

With technical assistance from IBCWE, Tira Austenite revised four key policies:

- (a) Recruitment and selection.
- (b) Career management (promotion).
- (c) Equal pay for equivalent work.
- (d) Training and development.

Changes included incorporating explicit statements about the company's commitment to equal opportunities for male and female employees and changes to interviewing procedures to reduce the potential for gender bias.

#### 2. Providing soft skills training for staff

In early 2019, IBCWE offered Tira Austenite the opportunity for staff members to join a Training for Facilitators course run by the International Labour Organization (ILO). Tira Austenite sent three staff members to the training to learn how to facilitate soft skills training for women in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Maths (STEM).

<sup>2</sup>EDGE or Economic Dividends For Gender Equality is a global assessment methodology and business certification standard for gender and intersectional equity. Find out more.

These three staff members have subsequently facilitated sessions on vision setting and professional development, creative thinking, problem solving, teamwork, time management and self-organisation, and leadership to all female employees at Tira Austenite. Many male employees have also joined the training, increasing their awareness of gender issues in the workplace. The HR team also use this training as an opportunity to observe group dynamics and the behaviour of participants with leadership potential.

### 3. Monitoring performance data disaggregated by gender

Once the company began to appoint women to leadership positions, Tira Austenite used gender-disaggregated data to understand patterns in performance. The data highlighted that women in leadership positions performed just as well, if not better, than many of their male counterparts. This is made possible with regular employee assessments such as EDGE, undertaken by Tira Austenite in 2017 or GEARS<sup>3</sup>.

## 4 OUTCOMES

### 01. Doubling Number of Women in Leadership in 2 (two) Years

Tira Austenite has almost doubled the number of women at Senior Manager and Manager levels from seven in 2017 to 13 in 2019. In addition, the Senior HR Manager states that there is greater awareness of the importance of WGE among staff at the manager level.

### 02. Gender-Neutral Recruitment Advertisement

Since implementing the new SOPs the company no longer specifies their preferred gender in the recruitment process and managers are more aware of the benefits of a diverse workforce and accommodating of women's domestic roles, particularly in relation to childcare. Shifting perceptions about gendered roles within the company: The greater awareness of gender issues among Tira Austenite employees is also further supported by gender-disaggregated data.

Two of Tira Austenite's 11 branches for industrial gases and services are led by women and these branches were ranked third and fourth in the 2020 sales recap.

Furthermore, the HR team stated,

“We learned that female employees can work not only in cost-centred (office) division but, when challenged, they can also work in profit-centred divisions.”

<sup>3</sup> GEARS or Gender Equality Assessment, Results, and Strategies is an initial diagnostic tool that allows companies to diagnose performance, set goals, and build a comprehensive gender equality strategy in the workplace. Find out more.

### 03. Culture of Equality Recognised by Women in Leadership

The women leaders themselves feel that the culture at Tira Austenite values employees based on their ability and quality of work, rather than gender.

One female manager stated,

“If we had leaders who think women are incapable, then it would be hard [to grow professionally]. Fortunately, our leadership here does not have such an outlook on women.”

However, maintaining a meritocracy in the pursuit of equality is important for employees and while both male and female employees and women leaders expressed their interest for having better gender balance at top management level, there is a belief that this should be based on merit, rather than affirmative action.

#### 5 MOVING FORWARD

The process of improving WGE at Tira Austenite is still in progress, and the number of women in manager and senior manager roles has not increased since 2019 due to a lack of vacancies at these levels. However, the journey that Tira Austenite has taken demonstrates an increasing awareness of the importance of a diverse workforce and gender equality at the workplace.

To further promote this change process, there are three things that can be improved to strengthen WGE practices at Tira Austenite:

- **Continued communication** (both internally and externally) about women’s contribution and their value in the workplace.
- **Consistent implementation of recruitment and selection policies.**
- **Creating enabling policies**, including flexible working arrangements (a recommendation from the EDGE certification in 2017) and increasing entitlements to parental leave for men, to provide female employees with additional flexibility to manage their domestic responsibilities and also provide male employees with the opportunity to play a more equal role in domestic tasks.

