

Bank of Etihad's Holistic Approach to Increase Women's Representation in Jordan

Market Illustration

The Challenge

Jordan had a low female labor force participation rate of just 14% nationally, which affected both staffing at financial institutions and depressed demand for financial services themselves.

The Approach

Bank al Etihad, a leading retail bank in Jordan and CliQ (Jordan's IPS) participant, launched the Shorouq banking proposition in direct response to this low labor force participation in 2014.

Focused on workforce development, Shorouq sought to unlock the economic potential of women by narrowing gender gaps through a dual approach: externally, by offering customized financial products and advisory services for women-led startups and SMEs; and internally, by building a more inclusive workplace. The bank supported women's career growth through structured reboarding programs, setting gender diversity targets, and implementing flexible work arrangements and parental leave policies—collectively fostering an environment where women could thrive professionally.

Bank al Etihad implemented a multifaceted strategy:

- Led by the CEO, the bank set internal and external targets at 50% women clients, women employees and women in leadership roles
- The Bank has a rigorous, gender-disaggregated measurement strategy and tracking system with a dashboard focused on metrics that informs iterative decision making
- The CEO holds monthly meetings with staff to discuss the progress of the initiative and see where adjustments are needed
- The Bank has initiated several measures to increase the number of women in leadership and the workforce, including:
- The Shorouq Comeback Program – a 6-week return-to-office training program for women that had left the bank to have a family. It includes mentorship, training, and hands-on-experience.
- Revision of anti-bullying and non-discrimination policies
- Improvement of HR policies and practices to reduce bias

Results

The bank's initiatives yielded significant outcomes since its launch in 2014.

- **Board Representation:** Women's presence on the board of directors rose from 9% to 30%
- **Workforce Composition:** Women now constitute 45% of the bank's workforce, up from less than 17%
- **Client Representation:** The proportion of female clients increased from 26% to 36%
- **Borrowers and Depositors:**
 - Female borrowers grew 16 times, compared to a 6-fold increase for male borrowers
 - Female depositors expanded 14 times, versus a 9-fold growth for male depositors

These impressive returns, a result of intentional efforts to promote representative leadership and staffing, may serve as inspiration to other CliQ participants.

For more, see: [Bank al Etihad Shares Insights on New Women's Market Program](#), Financial Alliance for Women.

Women now constitute
45% of the bank's
workforce, up from less
than 17%

Female depositors
expanded 14 times,
compared to a 9-fold
growth for male
depositors