

WEPS IN ACTION



PRINCIPLE 6

**Promote equality through
community initiatives and advocacy**

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CASE STUDY: PRIVATE SECTOR ORGANISATION OF JAMAICA (PSOJ) ADVOCACY TO ACTION: PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY THROUGH WORKSHOPS

LESSONS LEARNED

- Researching gaps to provide the most pertinent information to members ensures vital business-to-business learning and knowledge sharing.
- When in-person events and workshops are no longer an option, pivoting to virtual learning can increase the number of community members who engage with and learn from your organization.
- Finding new and updated value propositions for members can maintain and even increase membership for organizations operating virtually amid the pandemic.
- Responding to gender-based violence through community-wide action shows a company's ability to recognize and work to eliminate this 'shadow pandemic' and promote women's rights.

CONTEXT

The Private Sector Organisation of Jamaica (PSOJ) joins private sector associations, companies and individuals working together. Founded in 1976, PSOJ represents the interests of a diverse group of private sector entities in Jamaica. PSOJ has 18 employees, of which 83 percent (15) are women and 17 percent (3) are men, and over 300 member companies at the national level. In March 2019, PSOJ signed the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPS) and actively encouraged members to join the WEPS; as of 2021, five members are WEPS signatories.

In November 2019, PSOJ launched a Gender and Disability Affairs Committee with a mandate to implement gender inclusive practices in the workplace. The Committee was formed following a partnership with UN Women and the regional programme entitled, Win-Win: Gender Equality Means Good Business. Members of the Gender and Disability Affairs Committee include private sector professionals, civil society/nongovernmental organizations, and individuals who work in the public sector; together they work to create gender equality, diversity and inclusion policies at the national level.

Leveraging its influence in the community for gender equality initiatives, PSOJ asks members to share updates on an annual basis using sex-disaggregated data. PSOJ serves as a resource for members by providing training and development through workshops for a mix of small, medium and large businesses. Course topics range from advising on pay equity to corporate governance and training women to serve on boards.

In late 2019 to early 2020, PSOJ offered workshops that engaged human resource professionals on how to implement good practices for gender equality in the workplace. PSOJ planned to do more in 2020, but this initiative was disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. With increased digital connection through social media, communication platforms and online streaming services that developed during the pandemic, PSOJ decided to pivot their level of engagement from in-person events to online knowledge sharing through online learning communities. PSOJ developed high quality business-to-business learning and taught leadership on their social media and communication platforms.

ACTIONS

Before the spread of COVID-19, PSOJ planned to run in-person workshops twice a month that targeted small and medium-sized businesses, including women-led enterprises; the focus of these workshops was going to be on resolving the long-standing issue of accessing finances. In March 2020, amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, PSOJ quickly pivoted to offer weekly online workshops called COVID CastJa, which were made available to the wider community via the organization's Facebook account and YouTube channel. The benefit of the switch to an online streaming platform meant that workshops could now reach a larger audience beyond PSOJ's membership, including more women and men in local communities and across the country.

PSOJ's Marketing and Public Relations Manager, Chloleen Daley-Muschett, explained, "We had an initial plan to bring information that was more easily digestible and more directly impactful on

business. We realized people are in crisis [amid the pandemic] and wanted to figure out what could we do to help them now. This thought transitioned into us creating COVID CastJa."

Through 2020 and into 2021, PSOJ has offered 52 sessions on their weekly Facebook broadcast. The topics covered have included, but not been limited to:

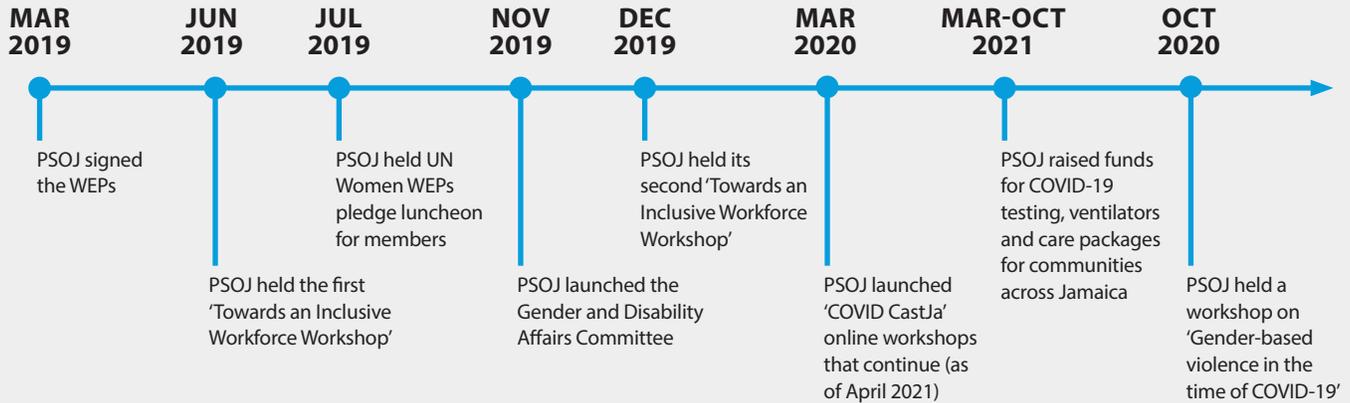
- general business operations (i.e., how to run effective meetings)
- corporate governance
- understanding financial statements
- digitizing your business

During the pandemic, PSOJ has also responded to the emerging needs of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) with sessions focused topics such as: critical resources available to SMEs; how much cash does your business need to survive the pandemic; and lending and borrowing in an uncertain environment.

During the pandemic, PSOJ team members have been disturbed by the increase in gender-based violence, i.e., the so-called 'shadow pandemic' that was emerging in homes across Jamaica, as well as globally. In response, PSOJ took on the key role of addressing members and the community at-large with guidance on how to recognize and eliminate gender-based violence. Through a partnership with UN Women, the Planning Institute of Jamaica and members of academia, PSOJ organized to educate its members on identifying the signs of gender-based violence, particularly in the context of work from home arrangements. Information was shared on how intervention can assist those being impacted by gender-based violence. In October 2020, over 60 attendees participated in PSOJ's workshop entitled, 'Gender-based violence in the time of COVID-19'.

Amid the pandemic, PSOJ has also prioritized the need for relief for many vulnerable Jamaicans. The organization organized a large-scale national drive and partnered with the Council of Voluntary Social Services, American Friends of Jamaica and United Way of Jamaica to establish the PSOJ COVID-19 Jamaica Response Fund as a national response that aims to fill the gaps where government funds could not provide aid.

TIMELINE



CHALLENGES

All events and training, including COVID CastJa online workshops, are sponsored by company members. PSOJ felt significant pressure to deliver value for membership through online training and engagement, particularly given the fact that events which were previously held in person could no longer be organized as such, due to the pandemic. Like other organizations, PSOJ was significantly impacted by the pandemic, but because PSOJ depends upon membership fees to maintain operations, they needed to find a solution to ensure members continued to contribute to the organization.

PSOJ's Marketing and Public Relations Manager explained, "The organization has had to develop new value propositions for companies to maintain membership. We are doing everything [to contribute] at the national level [to move Jamaica forward],

but we still need to bring it back down to the members and the local level." PSOJ continues to engage with its members and the community to research gaps and identify areas where they can fill in as an organization.

PSOJ's Executive Director, Imega Breese-McNab, also recognized that "the private sector has stepped up in terms of their response; we go to them for many initiatives and support, but everything we do is sponsored by our companies. We want to show ourselves as a solutions-oriented association for the private sector."

Pivoting to a fully digital space has allowed PSOJ to amplify companies who have sponsored events and provided much needed resources to women and men leading and working in SMEs around the country, including those that need guidance to navigate the emerging challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

CHALLENGE

Setting a strategic plan with initiatives and workshops that was being offered pre-pandemic to reach members in the organization was no longer possible during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Convincing companies to maintain membership fees with a shift to virtual-based workshops from previously run in-person events.

Pivoting from in-person workshops to an online streaming platform allowed a wider audience to gain access to good practices for gender equality, corporate governance and other necessary tools amid a pandemic.

PSOJ developed new value propositions to ensure companies maintain membership and feel a benefit to being a member of the organization.

HOW IT WAS ADDRESSED

RESULTS

PSOJ found that the overall response for the COVID CastJa sessions was positive among its members and the community. Company members appreciated taking part in sessions and benefited from business-to-business learning. SMEs were pleased to receive practical advice and useful written resources to help them navigate the uncertainties arising from the pandemic. From March 2020 to April 2021, a total of 645,003 unique viewers attended the COVID CastJa weekly Facebook broadcasts. Sex-disaggregated data for viewers of weekly sessions revealed the majority were women (58.6 percent).

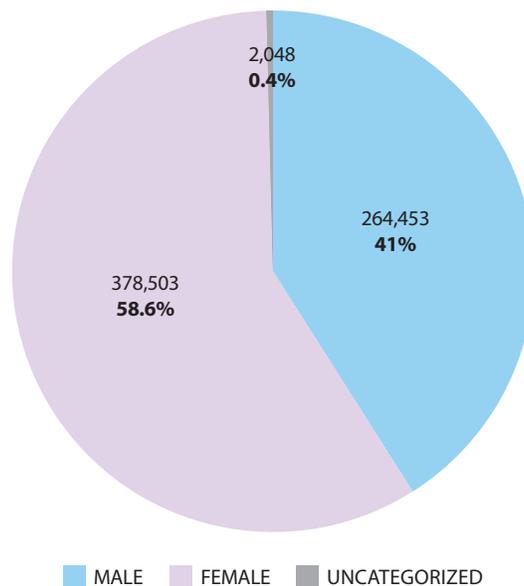
As of October 2020, the PSOJ COVID-19 Jamaica Response Fund supported 83,000 beneficiaries and raised \$200 million Jamaican dollars (JMD), as well as delivered 71,000 food packages in 60 communities and supported 59 nongovernmental organizations. PSOJ has also raised \$72 million JMD to donate tablets to children in vulnerable communities for school work. PSOJ's Marketing and Public Relations Manager explained, "All of our major strategic objectives are to make Jamaica the place to raise families and do business. Every single pillar of our strategic objective contributes to the overarching goal. We had a plan for 2020 and when the pandemic happened, we were able to pivot our initiatives to hit the same strategic goal."

RECOMMENDATIONS

PSOJ recommends companies who are hoping to operate fully in remote workspaces need to utilize better tools to measure productivity and ensure quality outputs are being delivered, rather than tracking traditional working hours. PSOJ's Marketing and Public Relations Manager highlighted the fact that "the pandemic has shown that we can work efficiently and effectively digitally, but the one size fits all work approach for women should be reconsidered to facilitate the role women often play as caregivers at home."

PSOJ's Executive Director added that "SMEs are the backbone of the economy . . . When you talk about financing and grassroots support, some of the things we need to change are in terms of mindset and culture; we have to continue to press forward. There is also a general issue with violence against women, whether it is from a business against women or domestic violence. If we fix that, we can discover other areas that will come along. People are trying to survive and thrive in this current environment. We need to equip them with the tools to succeed."

VIEWERS OF WEEKLY COVID CASTJA FACEBOOK BROADCASTS



ROLE OF WEPs

PSOJ supports the position that gender equality is good for business; therefore, in 2019, the organization became a signatory of the WEPs, and the then President of PSOJ, Howard Mitchell, became an ambassador of the Programme. These factors have helped to advance the establishment of PSOJ's Gender and Disability Affairs Committee which has enabled the organization to develop a structured and targeted means of handling gender issues and actively promote WEPs within the private sector.

1  PRINCIPLE

High-level corporate leadership

2  PRINCIPLE

Treat all women and men fairly at work without discrimination

3  PRINCIPLE

Employee health, well-being and safety

4  PRINCIPLE

Education and training for career advancement

5  PRINCIPLE

Enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practices

6  PRINCIPLE

Community initiatives and advocacy

7  PRINCIPLE

Measurement and reporting

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT PRINCIPLES

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