

# Good Practice Note

## Non-Discrimination and Equal Opportunity



### “Going Beyond”: Women’s Empowerment Program in Sri Lanka and India

MAS Holdings launched a women's empowerment program in November 2003 entitled Go Beyond, focusing on women both at MAS' apparel manufacturing units and within the rural communities in which they operate.

Over 90% of the employees at MAS' apparel manufacturing plants are women. A large majority of these women are from predominantly rural backgrounds, and while some may have high levels of literacy, many would have had limited access to enhance their education and skillbase.

The program has four main areas of concentration: Training for Career Development; Rewarding Excellence; Initiatives on Work-Life Balance; and Rewarding Excellence of Women in the Communities.

Recognizing the importance of English language skills, MAS subsidiary MAS Intimate Fashions, located in Chennai, India, has introduced English-language instruction to its employees, regardless of whether English was directly applicable to their present positions.

In 2004 an MAS Go Beyond “Empowered Woman of the Year” competition was launched group-wide. The only requirements for applying were that the lady be an MAS employee for at least one year and that she be nominated by a peer/supervisor.

A panel of six judges comprising four members of the MAS Corporate Social Responsibility Advisory Committee, the National Coordinator of the ILO-International Program to Eliminate Child Labor (ILO-IPEC) and the Strategic Director of a Local Advertising Company did the final round of judging.

Fourteen winners representing 14 business units were chosen. As a result, 14 inspiring women have been identified and rewarded as “Empowered Women” who have battled and overcome many challenges, both personal and professional. These women serve as spokespersons for empowered women within their respective work units. Many of them began within the apparel industry at the bottom-most rung as Helpers or Machine Operators, and have over a period of years risen into responsible posts such as Assistant Production Managers and Quality Executives.

Their stories also have the power to inspire women at a macro level. As such, these winners' life stories are being published in a monthly national newsletter (entitled “Women @ Work”).

Source: MAS Holdings, UN Global Compact