Company Overview

Established in 2013, Portea is a leading health care provider in India. Portea serves more than one million patients through a home-based care model. Most of Portea’s services, which span elder care, physiotherapy, post natal mother and child care and more, are delivered by low-income male and female nursing attendants (NAs) and nurses. Portea has almost 4,000 employees with women representing about 52% of the workforce, especially at lower levels.

Gender Equality Mainstreaming Initiative in Environment, Social, Governance Standards

With support from USAID, Mennonite Economic Development Associates awarded Portea USD $40,000 in technical assistance support to mainstream gender across all dimensions of the Environment, Social and Governance (ESG) standard. With the goal to improve staff retention and customer satisfaction, Portea launched a series of trainings for women and youth NAs and nurses to boost their self-confidence and skills:

1. In-classroom training on a newly developed Happiness Module. Topics included self-esteem, self-care, and self-confidence along with practical tips on grooming and good posture.
2. Emotional intelligence and financial management training delivered through Interactive Voice Response (IVR) technology.
3. On-the-job training (OJT) focused on work-life balance and infection control.

Results Achieved

In a span of four weeks, Portea delivered trainings to 2252 nursing aides and nurses (1440 women and 812 men). NAs – including new recruits from disadvantaged communities in Odissa and Assam – spoke very highly of the Happiness training, with many left feeling like they have “more inside them than they knew.” Some expressed...
that they viewed themselves differently after the training, felt more confident speaking out in front of others, and realized the value of the work that they offered their patients. On average, participants’ self-reported confidence levels jumped from 2.8 before the workshop to 4.1 after on a 5-point scale. NAs said this increased self-confidence will help them be more pro-active when they are uncomfortable with a situation or need to protect themselves. Through IVR and OJT, satisfactions scores were very positive, averaging around 4.3 on a 5-point scale. Participants appreciated how the OJT emphasized that their own holistic health is paramount to providing quality patient care.

Expected Gendered ESG and Financial Impacts

Portea will continue delivering trainings to support the empowerment of NAs and nurses, even after grant support is completed. Ultimately, Portea expects the initiative to improve retention for male and female staff, increase female and male customer satisfaction and referrals, and contribute to revenue growth. Incidentally, this important service will contribute to women’s empowerment by allowing them to remain in or enter the workforce when they would otherwise have had to stay home to care for the sick and elderly.

Lessons Learned

Portea is led by a female CEO and one third of board positions are held by women. The female leadership supported the positive outcomes achieved for NAs and nurses. Despite these achievements, gender equality can still be improved at Portea. For example, leadership believed that gender equality is “in reverse” at Portea; however, data indicates otherwise since most women work at lower levels of the company. Moreover, it is unclear to NAs and nurses how to advance within the company, an area that should be improved upon in future gender mainstreaming initiatives, and Portea is eager to do so given company growth objectives and the need to advance patient care staff to supervisory roles.