

The Switch - Women's Representation on Board Level in Dubai and Mauritius



A comparative analysis of the progress made

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Why Women on Boards Matter

- Gender-diverse boards improve performance, transparency, and innovation.
- Globally, companies are under pressure to reflect society's diversity in governance.
- **Mauritius and Dubai** offer evolving models with distinct progress and lessons.



Current Representations

Mauritius:

- 24% female representation on listed boards (vs 5.6% in 2015).
- 25% quota for listed companies since 2023.

Dubai/UAE:

- 12% of board seats held by women on listed entities.
- “At least one woman” mandated for listed and private joint-stock companies.



Legal Reforms & Policy Frameworks

Mauritius:

- Companies Act amended to mandate female directors.
- Corporate Governance Code includes apply-or-explain rule.
- 2023 law: minimum 25% women directors on listed boards.

Dubai:

- SCA requires at least one woman per board (since 2021).
- From 2025: rule extended to private joint-stock companies.
- DIFC encourages diversity (not mandatory).
- **Progress:** Legislative changes in both regions have opened doors and improved accountability.



Institutional & Civil Society Support

Mauritius:

- **Mauritius Institute of Directors (MloD)** - Women Directors Forum, training.
- **Board of Good** - Civil society initiative connecting women to board seats.
 - Maintains public register of women leaders.
 - Builds pathways into boardrooms and decision-making.
- Government policy includes childcare, flex work laws.

Dubai:

- Gender Balance Council & Aurora50 drive appointments and mentoring.
- Business councils and banks fund women leadership initiatives.



Challenges – What Still Holds Women Back

- **“Old Boys’ Clubs” must be ignored** - closed male networks limit access to board opportunities.
- **Confidence Gaps:** Many women don’t feel “ready” or hesitate to apply despite qualifications.
- **Tokenism Risk:** Single-woman quotas don’t guarantee voice or influence.
- **Lack of Turnover:** Boards often rotate within a small circle of individuals.



Solutions & Proposals

- **Cap on Directorships:** Limit number of board seats per person (especially repeat male appointees) to free space for new talent.
- **Mentorship & Training:** Expand leadership academies and peer mentoring.
- **Mandatory Gender Disclosure:** Require companies to report gender stats in annual filings.
- **Board Talent Databases:** Leverage tools like MloD and Board of Good registers.



Role Models Paving the Way

Mauritius:

- Sheila Ujoodha - CEO, MloD.
- Ferial J Aumeeraully - SBM Board Member
- Karuna Bhoojedhur - MCB board member.

Dubai:

- Hana Al Rostamani - CEO, FAB.
- Dr. Maryam Al Suwaidi - CEO, SCA.
- Raja Al Gurg - Chair of multiple boards.
- These women inspire the next generation to step forward with confidence.

How do the jurisdictions compare?

Comparative lessons

	Mauritius	Dubai
Quotas	25% listed company mandate	1 woman per board, public & private
Support	Strong pipeline via MloD & Board of Good	Strong enforcement, top-level champions
Challenges	Old boys' networks, low turnover	Pipeline depth, male-heavy networks
Lessons	Dubai shows impact of quotas	Mauritius excels at grassroots preparation

Conclusion & Call to Action

- Progress is visible - but more needs to be done.
- Mauritius & Dubai must **push beyond the minimum** and normalize gender balance.
- **Confidence, visibility, and access are key.**
- Legislative reform must be **matched by cultural reform.**
- Empowerment happens when we **broaden the table—not just add a seat.**



Questions?



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Thank you for your attention!



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