

Review and Analysis of Women's Economic Empowerment Policies and Programmes in India

UN Women Office for India



About the Author

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Sunitha believes women's empowerment is key to all processes of positive change and transformation. She sees herself as a catalyst that promotes innovation and thinking to help poor women and girls claim what their due is.

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FOREWORD



UN Women was created in 2010 as part of the UN reform agenda, bringing together the mandate for an intentional and integrated approach to address gender in equality. In doing so, UN Member States took a historic step in accelerating the efforts to meet the needs of women and girls worldwide. This was set to be realized by establishing global standards for achieving gender equality as well as designing laws, policies, programmes and services towards addressing structural barriers to equality. This also entailed coordinating and promoting the UN system's work in advancing gender equality. In its decade long existence, UN Women has made

great strides towards prominently placing and successfully institutionalizing the agenda in critical global development frameworks including 2012 the UN Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio, Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development, Global Compact for Migration and Sustainable Development Goals.

The past few decades have led to hard won advances to empower women and girls in social, economic and political spheres. Despite this progress, gender gaps remain. In India, women's labour force participation is declining over time and stands at around 24% today, one of the lowest in the world. Men are still paid 15% more than women in critical professions such as politics, law, technology and medicine, despite comparable education qualifications. As primary caregivers in their household, women on average spend 4.1 hours per day on unpaid and domestic work compared to 1.7 hours for men, ensuring that change and progress remains uneven.

Given pre-existing inequalities, every war, calamity and pandemic, is likely to further the gap. The Ebola pandemic and ongoing Covid-19 crisis are glaring examples of differential, adverse impact on women, in the form of violence, lack of access to health care and economic opportunities. If we were to learn from history, we know that after Ebola, while men's economic activity returned to pre-crisis levels shortly after travel and prevention measures subsided, the effect on women's economic security lasted much longer. Despite evidence, we are failing women and girls time and again, in creating ecosystems that value their opinions and perspectives, when countries led by women are doing far better in Covid-19 pandemic situation than others.

What can drive this change? The private sector has emerged as an unquestionable stakeholder in development, the engine for employment, growth and markets. Gender responsive workplace policies and practices can create a significant spur in decent jobs and leadership prospects for women. Its marketplace interventions, if inclusive and diverse, can lift millions out of poverty. If non stereotypical, its marketing and branding practices have capability to change adverse norms and behaviors and its community interventions can transform the lives of millions of girls and women, if designed to address structural barriers. This, while at the same time, creating business value for its own expansion by promoting economic growth, enhancing productivity and driving innovation. That is why all the major global frameworks including Sustainable Development Goals recognize the private sector as a major player in influencing inclusive and sustainable development.

UN Women partners with the European Union to leverage the potential of the private sector under its WeEmpowerAsia Programme by helping companies tailor existing policies and practices – or establish new ones – to realize women's empowerment in the workplace, marketplace and communities. This report is an attempt to showcase public and private efforts in promoting women's economic empowerment in India to foster a culture of change, promote peer to peer learning and contribute to the building of a fraternity that strives towards transforming the lives of girls and women.

Nishtha Satyam
Deputy Country Representative, UN Women

FOREWORD



In July 2020, at the 15th EU-India Summit, leaders from the European Union and India reiterated their commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment in all spheres of life and highlighted the important cooperation already existing in this regard.

The need for women's economic empowerment, including in the private sector, cannot be emphasised enough. Women and girls represent more than half of the world's population. Investing in women's economic empowerment is not only the right thing to do, as a matter of justice and fairness; it is also the smart thing to do, as economic gains from empowering women are substantial.

When women are educated and economically empowered, when they can take decisions and lead change in their communities, countries and the world, the positive effects benefit everyone!

This report was drafted by independent experts in the context of a regional programme on women's economic empowerment. It presents achievements but also remaining gaps when it comes to the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs) – a set of Principles that offer guidance to businesses on how to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in the workplace, marketplace and community. We hope it will offer a useful contribution to the ongoing work.

Ugo Astuto
Ambassador of the European Union to India and Bhutan

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ABBREVIATIONS

BRLPS	Bihar Rural Livelihoods Programme Society
BSE	Bombay Stock Exchange
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
D&I	Diversity and inclusion
FIWE	Federation of Indian Women Entrepreneurs
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HEN	Her Entrepreneurial Network
IT	Information Technology
MCA	Ministry of Corporate Affairs
MSDE	Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship
MSE-CDP	Micro and Small Enterprise Cluster Development Programme
MSME	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
MWCD	Ministry of Women and Child Development
NAP	National Action Plan
NGO	Non-Government Organization
NGRBC	National Guidelines on Responsible Business Conduct
NPOHSE	National Policy on Occupational Health Safety and Environment
NSDC	National Skill Development Council
NSE	National Stock Exchange
NVG	National Voluntary Guidelines on Social, Economic and Environmental Responsibilities of Business
PMKY	Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Yojana
POSH	Prevention of Sexual Harassment
SEBI	Securities and Exchange Board of India
SIDBI	Small Industries Development Bank of India

STEM	Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics
TLI	Transformation Livelihood Intervention
TNEPR	Tamil Nadu Empowerment and Poverty Reduction Programme
UNGC	United Nations Global Compact
WEE	Women's Economic Empowerment
WEPS	Women's Empowerment Principles
W-GDP	Women Global Development and Prosperity Initiative

1.0 INTRODUCTION

UN Women, with funding support of the European Union, launched the 'Promoting Economic Empowerment of Women at Work in Asia – WeEmpowerAsia' regional programme. The programme aims to increase the number of women who lead, participate and access to business opportunities and leadership within the private sector to advance sustainable and inclusive growth in Asia whilst fostering more gender-equal trade opportunities with Europe.

The programme is guided by the seven Women's Empowerment Principles¹ (WEPs). Developed by the UN Global Compact and UN Women in 2010, WEPs are forged through an international multi-stakeholder consultative process. WEPs provide a "gender lens" through which businesses can analyse current initiatives, benchmarks and reporting practices. Informed by real-life business practices, the Principles help companies tailor existing policies and practices – or establish needed new ones – to realize women's empowerment in the workplace, marketplace and communities.

1.1 Description of this study

The study identifies the policies and programmatic initiatives by the Government of India and the private sector to promote women's entrepreneurship and formal employment; analyse these against the seven WEPs; and identifies gaps and opportunities to aid the implementation of WeEmpowerAsia Programme. The study:

1. Analyses policy and programmatic initiatives – including training services provided by the Government of India, private companies, industry associations and civil society organizations (CSO) to promote women's entrepreneurship and formal employment
2. Evaluates the effectiveness of these initiatives vis-à-vis the seven WEPs and identifies gaps in strengthening women's entrepreneurship and formal employment
3. Recommends improvements in the design and implementation of existing policies and programmes that support women entrepreneurs and formal employment

1.2 Description of the approach

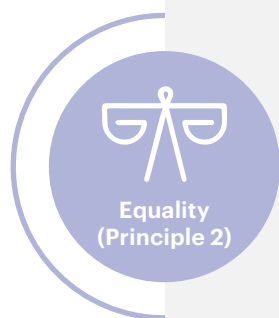
The seven WEPs pertain to the different aspects of women's economic empowerment. This paper uses the WEPs to analyse the policies and programmes that aim to promote women's entrepreneurship and formal employment in India.

The first four principles address internal organizational processes and procedures relating to women employees. The next two principles, outward-facing and external to the organization, intend to create a supportive environment and commitment to gender equality at the marketplace and throughout the supply chain and engage communities in this undertaking

¹ <https://www.weps.org/>



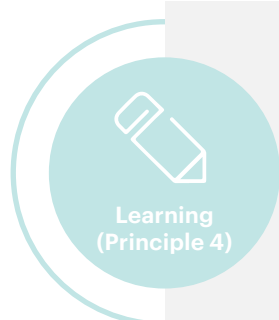
Principle 1 relates to *high-level corporate leadership* and commitment to promote gender equality. This principle addresses high-level support and policies focused on gender equality and company-wide goals and targets aimed at driving and tracking progress. The principle endorses partnerships with external stakeholders to assist in developing gender-sensitive policies, programmes and implementation plans. The emphasis is on ensuring that all company policies acknowledge gender-differential needs and impacts and promote a culture of equality and inclusion.



Principle 2 deals with the *fair and equal treatment of women without discrimination* in companies. That includes ensuring that pay and benefits for women are on par with men; policies and practices do not discriminate against women; and recruitment and retention practices proactively appoint women to senior management roles. To facilitate women's re-entry into the workforce, the principle recommends that companies offer flexible work options and childcare.



Principle 3 addresses the *employee health, well-being and safety* in companies and, specifically, the need for companies to provide safe working conditions and protection for women, including of their reproductive health. Companies should institute and implement policies and procedures that ensure the safety and security of women at the workplace, and during travel to and from work, by taking a zero-tolerance approach to violence and by training staff and personnel to understand the nature of violence against women and to take steps to prevent it. Other features include access to adequate health insurance and medical leave policies.



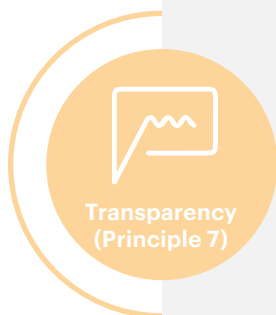
Principle 4 tackles the measures companies can take to support the *education and training for career advancement* of women employees. Companies can invest in workplace policies and programmes to promote women employees in all areas, departments and functions and encourage them to take up non-traditional roles, such as engineering and mechanical work. This principle asks companies to provide women employees equal access to training and education programmes and equal opportunity for networking and mentoring



Principle 5 relates to *enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practices*. The principle acknowledges that women entrepreneurs lack access to finance and credit, and it proposes that companies influence partners and affiliates to promote women-owned enterprises in their supply chains by advocating for gender-sensitive credit and lending policies, business practices and communications, including marketing and advertising material.



Principle 6 refers to the promotion of gender equality through community initiatives and advocacy. This relates to companies showcasing achievements and good practices on gender equality and using their influence to advocate with business partners, suppliers and community leaders. This principle expects companies to lead in promoting women's empowerment by engaging with communities, government officials and other stakeholders to promote opportunities for women and girls and eliminate discrimination and exploitation. Companies are expected to recognize the leadership of women, include them in community consultation and use company grants and philanthropy to promote inclusion, equality and human rights.



Principle 7 relates to measurement and reporting progress on gender-equality achievements. The expectation is for companies to make public their gender equality policies and implementation plans; establish benchmarks to track progress; and quantify the inclusion of women at all levels. This principle encourages companies to incorporate gender equality and use gender-disaggregated data in measuring and reporting progress both externally and internally in ongoing reporting obligations.

1.3 Methodology

The paper was developed through desk research and a review of the secondary literature in the public domain. The study included government and corporate policies and initiatives that focus explicitly on promoting women's entrepreneurship and/or formal employment. The criteria used to shortlist policies and programmes included:

- i. Total or partial focus on women entrepreneurs
- ii. Initiatives to promote women's jobs and enterprises by the central and state governments
- iii. Private sector policies and programmes that promote gender equality, women's leadership, employment and/or entrepreneurship
- iv. Initiatives promoting the start-up of women-led enterprises or the scaling-up of existing women-led enterprises
- v. Range of services offered (vocational skills; business advisory support; access to finance, marketing, legal advice and mentoring; exposure visits; financial literacy; diversity and inclusion policies)
- vi. Initiatives to promote women's leadership in boards and decision-making in private sector companies

Approach and Criteria of Analysis

This study uses the WEPs to assess whether select policies and programmes adequately address the gender inequalities, barriers and constraints in women's access to employment and entrepreneurship.

The analysis focuses on government and private sector including donor driven initiatives that aim to provide women entrepreneurs and women-led enterprises access to finance, training and marketing support. The analysis gathers information on women's formal employment and entrepreneurship in government and corporate policies and programmes largely from write-ups and information in the public domain. The main criteria of analysis is outlined under each WEPs Principle (Table 1).

Table 1: Criteria of analysis for each WEPs Principle

WEPs Principle	Criteria of Analysis
Principle 1 Establish high-level corporate leadership for gender equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent of leadership commitment and staff capability in promoting a gender-equitable workplace • Extent of gender-sensitivity in corporate culture
Principle 2 Treat all women and men fairly at work – respect and support human rights and non-discrimination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adherence to fair remuneration policy • Gender equality in corporate pay policies and practices • Non-discrimination and equal opportunity in recruitment, retention and promotion • Provision for flexible work arrangements • Alignment of childcare and dependent care policies with national provisions gaps and opportunities to support women's child care responsibilities • Existence and implementation of paid parental leave policies to support both men and women in care giving • Extent of gender balance in non-executive boards and in executive and senior management positions • Analysis of the gender balance in the workforce • Any other work-life balance initiatives
Principle 3 Ensure the health, safety and well-being of all women and men workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent to which safe working conditions include sensitivity to women's vulnerability to violence and address these? • Adherence to prevention of sexual harassment (POSH) guidelines? • Existence and implementation of appropriate redressal mechanisms in the interest of women's safety and protection from violence and harassment at work • Extent to which corporate policies and culture reflect zero tolerance for labour and sexual exploitation? • Existence of employee policy that addresses domestic violence? • Existence of support programme for domestic violence survivors • Extent of gender-sensitivity in health-care provisions for workers • Measures that companies adopt to promote the health, safety and hygiene needs of women workers
Principle 4 Promote education, training and professional development for women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender-responsiveness of the training and skills development programmes and continual education initiatives • Efforts to train women to facilitate their jobs in male-dominated departments or sectors • Existence of government and/or corporate-sector initiatives to promote networking, mentoring and sponsorship for women • Existence of opportunities to strengthen women's capabilities and entry into the workforce and gaps thereof.

Continued

Continued

WEPs Principle	Criteria of Analysis
Principle 5 Implement enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practices that empower women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender-responsiveness of government and corporate procurement policies and practices • Existence of a supplier diversity programme, including with women SMEs • Existence of gender-sensitive solutions to credit and lending barriers • Existence of policy regarding unethical practices and respect of the dignity of women in all marketing and other company outreach material • Existence of zero tolerance to human trafficking and labour and sexual exploitation in the supply chain and its incorporation in corporate policies
Principle 6 Promote equality through community initiatives and advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent of community representation in consultations • Extent of promotion and engagement of corporate programmes with women's leadership and organizations in communities • Extent of gender equality in corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities (philanthropy, partnership, grants) • Emphasis on products and services to serve and not discriminate against women and girls in local communities
Principle 7 Measure and publicly report on progress to achieve gender equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent of sex-disaggregated data and targets in corporate-sector reporting processes • Extent to which monitoring and evaluation mechanism are in place for measuring companies' contribution to promoting gender equality • Extent of incorporation of gender equality and metrics in corporate-sector public reports • Existence and implementation of government incentives and accountability mechanisms to engage the corporate sector in adopting gender equality in their organizational policies, programmes and processes

Sample: A total of 62 private companies that have information about their policies and initiatives in public domain were reviewed. Out of these 46 companies are WEPs signatories. A total of 39 private sector policies and 45 programmes promoting women's entrepreneurship and employment were reviewed. This study covers 7 national laws that focus on promoting gender equality and fair treatment at the workplace and 2 state-sponsored policies that focus on promoting women's business and entrepreneurship. The study analyses 64 government programmes, and major initiatives sponsored by the central and state governments, that promote women's entrepreneurship and business.

Table 2: Description of sample

S. No.	Company	Relevant WEPs
1	Private companies	62
2	Private sector policies	39
3	Programmes by private companies, foundations, industry associations and donors	46
4	National Policies/Laws	7
5	State Policies	2
6	National and State Government Programmes	63

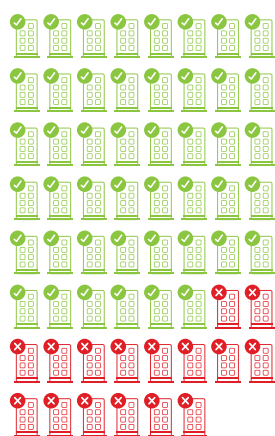
Description of Private Sector Companies Reviewed

The sample includes 62 private sector companies; 46 are Indian companies that are signatories to the WEPs and 16 are randomly selected based on their women's economic empowerment initiatives for which data is available in public domain. The selection of WEPs signatories is deliberate; to examine the extent to which companies committed to gender equality practice it in their policies and programmes.

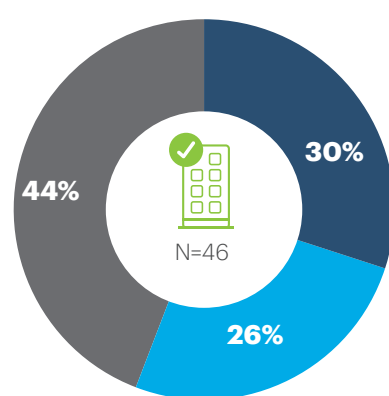
Figure 1: Landscape of the companies

Landscape of the companies

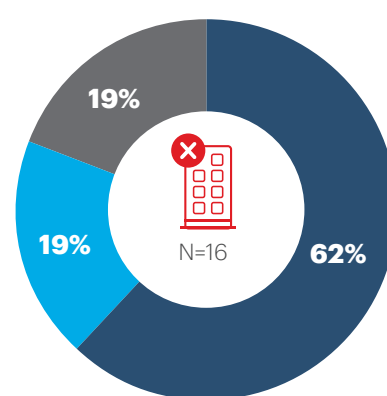
46 out of 62 companies are WEPs signatories



Scale of operations



- Multi-national (14 WEPs, 10 non-WEPs)
- Large-sized (12 WEPs, 3 non-WEPs)
- Small-sized (20 WEPs, 3 non-WEPs)



Sector analysis

Construction (1)

Education (1)

Financial services (5)

Food and beverages (6)

Garments (4)

Health (6)

IT (16)

Manufacturing (9)

Media (2)

Retail (3)

Services (8)

Tobacco (1)

WEPs signatories WEPs non-signatories

The 62 private sector companies cover a broad spectrum of sectors: construction, education, financial services, food and beverage (F&B), garments, health, information technology (IT), manufacturing, media, services, retail and tobacco. There are 24 multinational companies (MNC), 15 large companies and 23 small companies.² This review covers 39 policies and 45 programmes. The

² The MCA Amendment of Section 2(85) of the Companies Act, 2013 defines a large company as one that has a paid-up share capital of more than ₹5 crores and a small company as one where the paid-up share capital is not more than ₹10 crore. CompaniesAct.in, Commencement of the Provision of the Companies (Amendment) Act, 2017, posted on 13 February, 2018, [http://www.companiesact.in/Companies-Act-2013/News-Details/20767/Commencement%20of%20provisions%20of%20the%20Companies%20\(Amendment\)%20Act,%202017](http://www.companiesact.in/Companies-Act-2013/News-Details/20767/Commencement%20of%20provisions%20of%20the%20Companies%20(Amendment)%20Act,%202017)

policies, selected based on their relevance to the WEPs, relate to corporate commitments, code of conduct, diversity and inclusion, governance, supply chain, prevention of sexual harassment (POSH), equality, human rights, sustainability and corporate social responsibility (CSR). Human resource (HR) policies and annual reports, and the relevant reports on business responsibility and sustainability were reviewed, to understand how corporate policies and programmes promote women's economic empowerment and workforce participation.

Table 3 gives a quick overview of the 39 corporate policies that are in public domain along with the name of the company and the linkage to the appropriate WEPs.

Table 3: Private sector policies

Private Sector Policies				
S. No.	Policy	Company	Relevant WEPs Principle	
1.	JSL Code of Conduct	Jindal Stainless (JSL)	1	
2.	JSL Corporate Governance Reporting & Remuneration Policy	Jindal Stainless (JSL)	1	
3.	Biocon Diversity Policy	Biocon	2	
4.	Infosys Gender Pay Gap Report	Infosys	2	
5.	Paharpur COP 2017-2018	Paharpur Business Centre	2	
6.	Schneider Global Family Leave Policy	Schneider India Pvt Ltd	2	
7.	Schneider HeForShe Impact	Schneider India Pvt Ltd	2	
8.	Personal Advancement and Career Enhancement	Gap Inc.	3	
9.	Schneider Anti-Harassment Policy	Schneider India Pvt Ltd	3	
10.	Coca Cola Supplier Policy	Coca Cola	5	
11.	Infosys Supplier Code	Infosys	5	
12.	Corporate Social Responsibility Policy	Computer Age Management Services Pvt. Ltd. (CAMS)	6	
13.	Corporate Social Responsibility Policy	KCP Ltd	6	
14.	Zensar CSR Policy	Zensar	6	
15.	HCL Gender Strategy	HCL	7	
16.	Sodexo Equality Index	Sodexo (in adherence with French Government law)	7	
17.	Schneider Human Rights Policy	Schneider India Pvt Ltd	1	2
18.	Sodexo Human Resource Processes	Sodexo	1	2
19.	Sodexo Human Rights Statement	Sodexo	1	2
20.	Code of Conduct and Human Rights Policy	Bandhan Bank	2	3
21.	Biocon Human Resources Policy	Biocon	2	3
22.	Coca Cola Human Rights Policy	Coca Cola	2	3

Continued

Continued

Private Sector Policies					
S. No.	Policy	Company	Relevant WEPs Principle		
23.	Coca Cola Inclusion and Diversity Policy	Coca Cola	2	3	
24.	HCL Code of Conduct	HCL	2	3	
25.	Human Resources Policy and Code of Conduct	Tata Motors	2	3	
26.	Citigroups Diversity Policy	Citigroup	2	4	
27.	Infosys Human Resources Policy	Infosys	2	4	
28.	Jindal Stainless (JSL) Gender Equality Approach	Jindal Stainless (JSL)	3	4	
29.	Allsec Technologies Pvt Ltd Corporate Commitments	Allsec Technologies Ltd.	3	6	
30.	Jindal Stainless (JSL) Sexual Harassment Policy	Jindal Stainless (JSL)	3	6	
31.	Saksoft Ltd annual Corporate Commitments	Saksoft	3	6	
32.	Infosys Code of Conduct	Infosys	1	2	3
33.	Biocon Diversity Policy and Maternity Policy	Biocon	1	2	4
34.	HCL Gender Strategy	HCL	1	2	4
35.	HCL Gender Diversity Strategy	HCL	1	2	4
36.	Diversity & Inclusion Policy	Wipro	1	2	6
37.	Coca Cola Women's Empowerment Policy	Coca Cola	2	6	7
38.	Biocon Corporate Commitments	Biocon	1	2	3 4 6
39.	Zensar Corporate Commitments	Zensar	1	2	3 4 6

Table 4 gives an overview of the 46 programmes initiated by companies, foundations, industry associations and donors that focus on promoting gender equality at the workplace and, in a very few cases, women's entrepreneurship.

Table 4: Private sector programmes

Private Sector, Foundation and Donor Programmes				
S. No.	Programme	Company	Relevant WEPs Principle	
1.	Fairness in Workplace	Biocon	2	
2.	Special Hospital Executives	Infosys	2	
3.	Childcare Facility	Jindal Stainless (JSL)	2	
4.	Drawing the Line	Jindal Stainless (JSL)	2	
5.	Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)	Schneider India Pvt Ltd	2	

Continued

Continued

Private Sector, Foundation and Donor Programmes			
S. No.	Programme	Company	Relevant WEPs Principle
6.	Enhancing Livelihoods	Schneider India Pvt Ltd	2
7.	Code of Business Conduct	Britannia India	3
8.	Life Skills Programme	Debenhams	3
9.	Base Code 2 (ETI)	Ethical Trade Initiative	3
10.	Nalam	Ethical Trade Initiative	3
11.	Workplace Education Programme	Fair Wear Foundation	3
12.	Women Security	Microsoft	3
13.	e-Mamta Initiative	Vodafone	3
14.	Women in Factories Program	Walmart Foundation	3
15.	Innovative STEM education	Agastya International Foundation	4
16.	Bandhan Konnagar	Bandhan	4
17.	Self-Shakti	Citigroup	4
18.	Pragati Financial Awareness	CRISIL Foundation	4
19.	Tamil Nadu Garment & Textile programme in Southern India	Ethical Trade Initiative	4
20.	Personal Advancement & Career Enhancement program (PACE)	Gap Inc.	4
21.	Building Careers for Tomorrow Upskilling Women	UpGrad Education Pvt Ltd	4
22.	Tata Lead	Tata Motors, Starbucks, Tata Power and TCS	4
23.	All India Road Show on WEE through Entrepreneurship (Airswee 2.0)	TiE- Global Entrepreneurship Organization	4
24.	Nari Shakti	Volkswagen	4
25.	Catalyst for Women Entrepreneurs	The National Association of Software and Service Companies (NASSCOM)	4
26.	Inclusion of Women in Supply Chain Management	ANZ Operations & Technology Pvt Ltd.	5
27.	Empowering Women Entrepreneurs in Mumbai	Blackstone Charitable Foundation	5
28.	Women Exemplar Program	Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) Foundation	5
29.	5 by20	Coca Cola	5
30.	Supporting Entrepreneurial Women	Excel Industries	5
31.	Empowering Women through Entrepreneurship Development to Improve their Economic Condition	Federation of Indian Women Entrepreneurs	5
32.	Women Entrepreneurs India	Founder: Mahalakshmi Saravanan	5

Continued

Continued

Private Sector, Foundation and Donor Programmes							
S. No.	Programme	Company	Relevant WEPs Principle				
33.	Access to Finance for Women Entrepreneurs in Bihar	Goldman Sachs	5				
34.	Her Entrepreneurial Network (HEN) India Programs	Her Entrepreneurial Network India	5				
35.	Empowering Women Entrepreneurs in Bangalore	Intuit	5				
36.	Entrepreneurship Development	Jaipur Rugs Foundation	5				
37.	Women Skilling and Entrepreneurship Development Initiative	Oil and Natural Gas Commission (ONGC)	5				
38.	Behind the Brands Campaign	Oxfam International	5				
39.	Fair & Lovely Scholarships	Unilever	5				
40.	Project Shakti	Unilever	5				
41.	Advancing Women's Leadership in key Agribusinesses	Visa	5				
42.	Women's Entrepreneurship Development Programme	Walmart	5				
43.	Retail Opportunity Training	Walmart Foundation	5				
44.	Women Empowerment	ITC Limited	6				
45.	Tata STRIVE Youth Development Module	Tata Community Initiative Trust	6				
46.	Women of Wipro (WOW)	Wipro	1	2	3	4	7

Government Policies Reviewed

This study covers seven national laws that focus on promoting gender equality and fair treatment at the workplace and two state-sponsored policies that focus on promoting women's business and entrepreneurship (Table 5). The analysis of each policy under the relevant WEPs Principle includes the extent to which private sector companies adhere to the mandate of the policy, and it also includes the gaps and opportunities in implementation.

Table 5: Government policies

Government Policies			
S. No.	Name of Policy	Ministry	Relevant WEPs Principle
1.	Chapter XI, Companies Act 2013	Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Govt. of India	1
2.	Companies Act 2013, Section 135 & Schedule VII	Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Govt. of India	1
3.	Code of Wages Act, 2019	Ministry of Labour and Employment, Govt. of India	2

Continued

Continued

Government Policies			
S. No.	Name of Policy	Ministry	Relevant WEPs Principle
4.	The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act 2013	Ministry of Women and Child Development, Govt. of India	3
5.	Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act 2017	Ministry of Labour and Employment, Govt. of India	3
6.	Occupational Safety and Health Hazard in Workplace	Ministry of Labour and Employment, Govt. of India	3
7.	Advantage Assam - Assam Start Up Policy 2017	Department of Industries and Commerce, Govt. of Assam	4
8.	Rajasthan State Industrial Policy	Department of Industries, . of Rajasthan	5
9.	The National Guidelines on Responsible Business Conduct, 2018	Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Govt. of India	7

Government Programmes Reviewed

The study reviews 63 government programmes, and major initiatives sponsored by the central and state governments, that promote women's entrepreneurship and business. These programmes and initiatives were identified through a thorough review of the websites of 18 central government ministries and departments and 26 state governments and chosen based on their relevance to the study. In addition, the annual reports and published plans of the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI), National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) and other relevant organizations are reviewed.

Table 6 lists the government programmes, the ministry leading the initiative and the relevant WEPs Principle.

Table 6: Government programmes

Government Programmes			
S. No.	Name of Programme	Department / Ministry	Relevant WEPs Principle
1.	Women Entrepreneurship Hub	Assam Small Industries Development Corporation, Govt. of Assam	4
2.	Women Biotech Park	Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council, Govt. of India	4
3.	Women in Entrepreneurial Research (WinER)	Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council, Govt. of India	4
4.	Investment Promotion Subsidy on Fixed Capital	Commerce and Industries Department, Govt. of Karnataka	4
5.	Biotechnology-based Programme for Societal Development	State Department of Biotechnology, Govt of India	4

Continued

Continued

Government Programmes			
S. No.	Name of Programme	Department / Ministry	Relevant WEPs Principle
6.	HP Centre for Entrepreneurship Development	Department of Industries and Commerce, Govt. of Himachal Pradesh	4
7.	START UP Manipur	Department of Planning, Govt. of Manipur	4
8.	Scheme for minority women for establishing income-generation units	Department of Social Welfare, Govt. of India	4
9.	Manipur State Women Development Corporation Programme	Department of Social Welfare, Govt. of Manipur	4
10.	Stree Shakti programme	Department of Women and Child Development, Govt. of Karnataka.	4
11.	Training Centre for Self-Employment for Women	Department of Women and Child, Govt. of Meghalaya	4
12.	Vishesh Mahila Uthan Yojana	Department of Women and Child Development, Govt. of Himachal Pradesh	4
13.	Centre for Women's Entrepreneurship Development and Gender Studies	Govt. of Gujarat	4
14.	Skill Upgradation and Quality Improvement and Mahila Coir Yojana	Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, Govt. of India	4
15.	Long Term Skill Development Training	Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Govt. of India	4
16.	National Skills Strengthening for Industrial Enhancement (STRIVE)	Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Govt. of India	4
17.	Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana	Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Govt. of India	4
18.	Pradhan Mantri Yuva Udyamita Vikas Abhiyan (PM-YUVA)	Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Govt. of India	4
19.	Ease of Doing Business	Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, Govt. of India	4
20.	TREAD: Trade Related Entrepreneurship Development	Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, Govt. of India	4
21.	Udyami Mitra for Excellence in Entrepreneurship Development (UMEED)	Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, Govt. of India	4
22.	Udayam Sakhi	Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, Govt. of India	4
23.	Udyog Aadhar	Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, Govt. of India	4
24.	Kishori Shakti Yojana replaced by "Sabla" in a few districts	Ministry of Women and Child Development, Govt. of India	4

Continued

Continued

Government Programmes			
S. No.	Name of Programme	Department / Ministry	Relevant WEPs Principle
25.	STEP: Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women	Ministry of Women and, Child Development, Govt. of India	4
26.	Atal Innovation Mission	NITI Aayog	4
27.	Prime Minister's Rural Development Fellow	Ministry of Rural Development, Govt. of India	4
28.	Science and Technology Entrepreneurs Park	Department of Science and Technology, Govt. of India	4
29.	Women Entrepreneurship Platform	NITI Aayog	5
30.	Dairy Entrepreneurship Development	National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development, Ministry of Agriculture, Govt of India	5
31.	Women Economic Empowerment	Department of Community and Rural Development, Govt. of Meghalaya	5
32.	Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Bounntiknaured Yojana	Department of Finance, Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh	5
33.	Technology Upgradation Fund Scheme for Women	Department of Handloom and Textile, Govt. of Andhra Pradesh	5
34.	Swavlamban	Department of Industries and Commerce, Govt. of Tripura	5
35.	Development of Exportable Products and their Marketing Scheme Financial Assistance	Department of Industries and Commerce, Govt. of Andhra Pradesh	5
36.	Scheme of Assistance for Reimbursement of CGTMSE fees for Micro and Small Enterprises	Department of Industry and Mines, Govt. of Gujarat	5
37.	i-Start	Department of IT and Communication; Govt. of Rajasthan	5
38.	Promotion of Women in Innovative Enterprises (PWIEP)	Department of Women Resource Development, Govt. of Nagaland	5
39.	Women Entrepreneurial Development Initiative	Department of Women Resource Development, Govt. of Nagaland	5
40.	Micro Enterprise Development Scheme	Department of Women Resource Development, Govt. of Nagaland	5
41.	Transformative Livelihood Intervention Project (TLI)	Department of Women Resource Development, Govt. of Nagaland	5
42.	Self-Employment Assistance for Women to set up Business	Directorate of Women and Child Development, Govt. of Himachal Pradesh	5
43.	Deena Shakti Scheme	Education, housing and retail trading, Dena Bank	5
44.	Development/Upgradation of Water Mills and Micro Hydel Projects	Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, Govt of India	5

Continued

Continued

Government Programmes			
S. No.	Name of Programme	Department / Ministry	Relevant WEPs Principle
45.	WE-Hub	Information Technology, Communications Department, Govt. of Telangana	5
46.	T-Fund	Department of Information Technology, Govt. of Telangana	5
47.	Entrepreneurship Development Cell for Financial Assistance	Department of Science and Technology, Govt. of India	5
48.	Mahila E-Haat	Ministry of Women and Child Development, Govt. of India	5
49.	Stree Shakti	Ministry of Finance, Govt. of India	5
50.	Mudra Yojana	Department of Financial Services, Ministry of Finance, Govt. of India	5
51.	Udyogini Scheme	Karnataka State Women's Development Corporation, Govt. of Karnataka	5
52.	Annapurna	Small Industries Development Bank of India, Department of Financial Services, Ministry of Finance, Govt. of India	5
53.	Financial Support to MSMEs in ZED Certification Scheme	Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, Govt. of India	5
54.	Micro and Small Enterprises - Cluster Development Programme (MSE-CDP)	Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, Govt. of India	5
55.	Cent Kalyani Scheme	Department of Financial Services, Ministry of Finance, Govt. of India	5
56.	Women Enterprise Development Scheme	North East Development Finance Corporation Ltd, Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region, Govt. of India	5
57.	Stand-Up India	Ministry of Commerce and industry, Govt. of India	5
58.	Prime Minister Employment Generation Programme	Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, Govt. of India	5
59.	United Mahila Udhyaami Yojana	Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium enterprises, Govt. of India I	
60.	Technology Development and Utilization Programme for Women (TDUP)	Department of Science and Industrial Research, Ministry of Science and Technology, Govt. of India	5
61.	Technology Incubation and Development of Entrepreneurs Scheme	Department of Communication and Information Technology, Ministry of Science and Technology, Govt. of India	5
62.	Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana	National Rural Livelihoods Mission, Ministry of Rural Development, Govt. of India	5
63.	Mahila Adhikarita Yojana	Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Govt. of India	5

1.4 Limitations

Every attempt has been made to mine the information available in the public domain on policies and programmes related to women's entrepreneurship and formal employment and to review the studies, articles and reports. However, given that there is no central repository of information on women-targeted entrepreneurship and employment programmes, and given also the constraint of time, some programmes and policies may have been overlooked. The omission, if any, is regretted.

The information and evidence towards implementation of WEPs is uneven; some are better represented than others. Little information is available on the benchmarks and indicators adopted by the private sector pertaining to WEPs Principle 7, for example, or on company initiatives directed at ensuring gender- sensitivity in marketing and advertising. The efforts that private sector companies make to track progress and achievements on gender equality are often ad hoc; if these exist, they may be restricted to internal use only.

1.5 Structure of the paper

This paper is structured as follows:

- Section 1 commences with an introduction to the background, purpose and methodology of the study
- Section 2 provides an overview of women entrepreneurs and formal employment in India, and of government, private sector and civil society policies and programmatic initiatives
- Section 3 analyses how effective government and corporate policies and programmes have been in promoting women's empowerment and entrepreneurship at the workplace, marketplace and community in the context of the WEPs. It also includes good practices to inform the implementation of the WeEmpowerAsia programme strategy in India.
- Section 4 provides the stakeholders wise recommendations to promote gender equality and women's empowerment at the workplace, marketplace and communities.

2.0 OVERVIEW

This section provides a brief overview of women's employment and entrepreneurship in India; the gender-specific challenges they face in taking up employment; and the factors that limit women's entrepreneurship. This forms a useful background against which to assess the effectiveness of government and private sector initiatives in tackling these barriers and challenges to women's employment and entrepreneurship.

2.1 Women and employment in India

The country's gross domestic product (GDP) per capita increased from \$375 in 1990 to \$1,572 in 2015,³ but women make up a poor 20 per cent⁴ of the Indian workforce, compared to the global average of 48 per cent,⁵ and women's participation in the labour force has not matched this increase in economic growth. Women's contribution to the economy is a mere 17 per cent, compared to the global average of 37 per cent;⁶ 90 per cent of the women in the workforce in India work in the informal or unorganized sector and a very small proportion, approximately 8 per cent, work in the formal sector.

The quality of work available to women is three times worse than to men and wages are 34 per cent lower.⁷ Women end up doing the least desirable jobs with few prospects of growth and career development e.g. in manufacturing sector garment workers in factories are women, while supervisors and managers are men with better pay, power and authority. Similarly, in the health sector, nursing and cleaning is done by women often at poorer pay and conditions, men dominate spheres such as lab technician, radiologists etc. Type of job, terms and conditions of work and prospect of growth are worse for women compared to men.

The services sector employs 18.3 per cent women in the labour force in activities related to trade, education, social and personal services, health and domestic work, which again is in line with women's perceived care-taking roles and responsibilities. The construction sector employs 6 per cent. Only 15 per cent are employed in industries with higher wages and prospects such as information, communication and financial services.⁸ Regardless of the nature of employment – agriculture, construction or services – 88.3 per cent of women wage workers⁹ are in informal work arrangements; there are no contracts, job or social security, severance pay or any of the benefits of regular paid work.

Women's leadership and representation in corporate boards is very low at 13 per cent in the top 500 companies listed on the National Stock Exchange of India (NSE) in 2017¹⁰. The Amendment to the Companies Act, 2014 requires every listed company and public company with a paid-up share capital of over 1 billion or a turnover of at least 3 billion shall appoint at least one woman director. This legislation takes cognizance of the absence of women representatives in corporate boards.

³ Terri Chapman et al., *Rewriting the Rules: Women and Work in India*, (New Delhi: ORF, 2019) 2.

⁴ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.FE.ZS>

⁵ Deloitte, *Opportunity or Challenge: Empowering Women and Girls in India for the Fourth Industrial Revolution*, (India: 2019), 4.

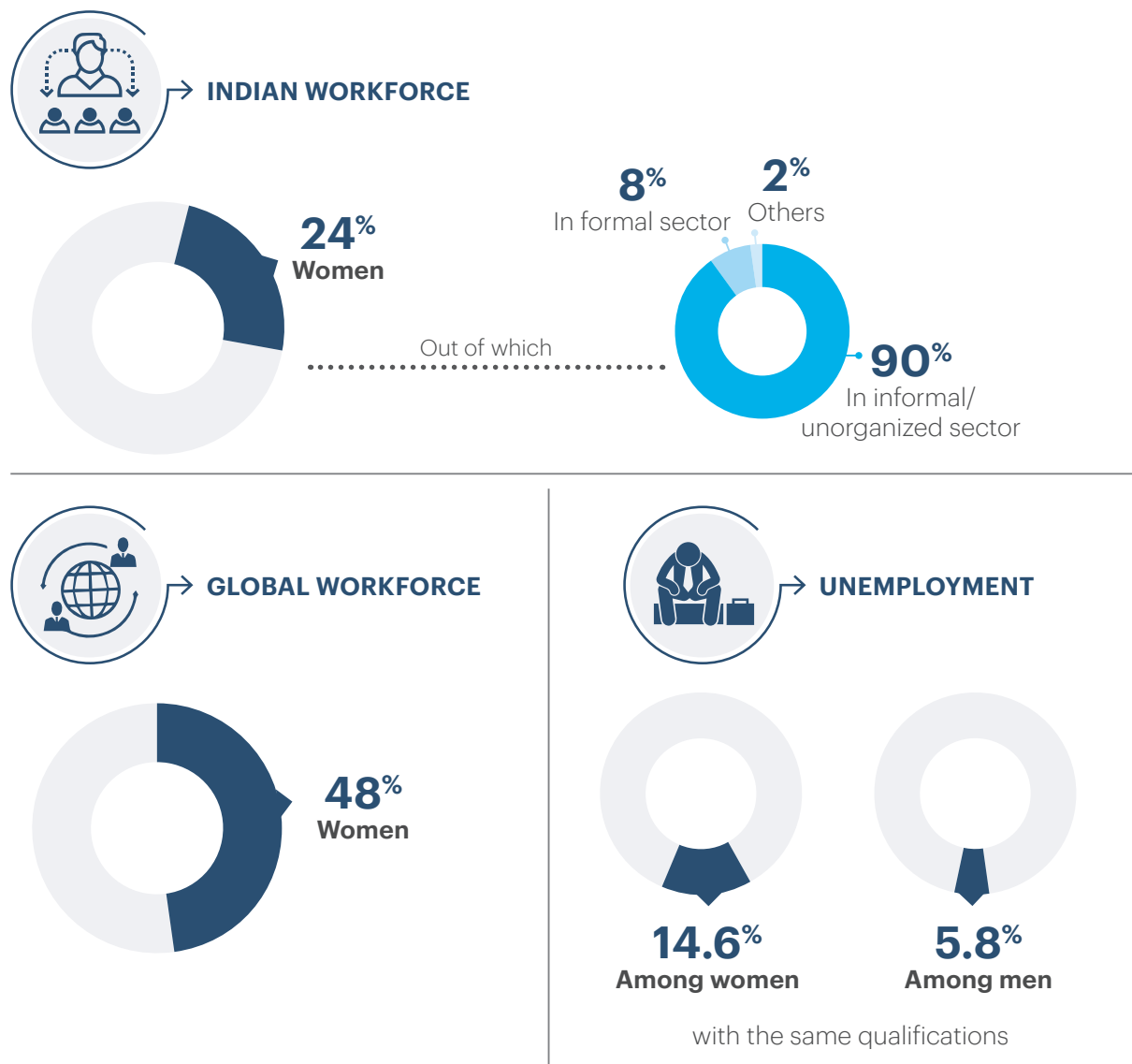
⁶ Jonathan Woetzel, *The Power of Parity: Advancing Women's Equality in India*, (McKinsey Global Institute, 2015) 9.

⁷ Chapman, *Rewriting the Rules*, 6.

⁸ Chapman, *Rewriting the Rules*, 5.

⁹ Raveendran, *The India Labour Market*, 41.

¹⁰ IIAS, *Corporate India: Women in Boards*, (Mumbai: Prime Database Group, 2017) 7.



2.2 Factors that influence women's participation in the labour force

Social attitudes and cultural norms view men as household heads and primary breadwinners and constrain women from engaging in productive work and earning an income by limiting their mobility, decision-making and access to productive assets such as land and finance. Also, women are vulnerable to violence and harassment at the workplace. According to a 2010 study, 88 per cent of the 600 female employees in the IT sector surveyed have faced sexual harassment at work.¹¹

More than 66 per cent of the work done by Indian women is unpaid household work¹² – women do nearly 10 times more unpaid housework than male members of the family.¹³ Rigid labour-market conditions do not support women's need for flexibility, given their dual responsibilities of running the household and caring for the family, and 80 per cent of women outside the labour force are burdened with domestic work and care responsibilities. Occupational segregation limits women's employment opportunities in line with prevailing gender norms, resulting in women being in occupations and roles in companies with few prospects for professional growth.¹⁴

¹¹ ICRW & BSR, Building Effective Economic Empowerment Strategies, (Washington, January 2016) 38.

¹² Chapman, Rewriting the Rules,

¹³ Woetzel, The Power of Parity, 3.

¹⁴ Steven Kapsos et al., Why is Female Labour Force Participation Declining so sharply in India, (Geneva: ILO, August 2014), 23.

On the whole, women in India have fewer skills and less education than men.¹⁵ Women with low levels of education tend to be in unpaid or casual work, whereas 75 per cent of women with qualifications (graduate or higher) are engaged in wage employment. Job security and quality of work improve with education. Each year of education for women adds 0.6 per cent to their participation rate in the labour market.¹⁶ However, increased education of the male spouse has a negative effect on female participation; that is, for every extra year of education of the husband, female participation drops by one percentage point.¹⁷

Age, marital status and the presence of children influence women's ability to participate in paid work. Women in households with children younger than 3 years have the lowest participation in the workforce. Clearly, child-rearing has a negative effect on women's involvement in the labour force and needs to be addressed.¹⁸ As households become wealthier, women tend to withdraw from low-productivity and subsistence work.¹⁹ have the highest participation in the labour force given the greater autonomy and the economic necessity to support themselves.

The subsequent sections examine the degree to which private sector and government policies and programmes address these challenges and barriers to women's employment. The analysis covers policies such as maternity benefits, flexible work arrangements, access to crèche facilities, POSH.

2.3 Women and entrepreneurship in India

Women-led enterprises make up 13.76 per cent of the 58.5 million enterprises in India and employ 13.4 million. These enterprises range from corner shops (*kirana* stores) to venture-funded start-ups. The number of employees averages 1.67 per establishment.²⁰ Despite the giant strides in economic growth, the gender imbalance in entrepreneurship remains a major challenge;²¹ women entrepreneurship tends to be necessity-driven, engaging in non-knowledge, low-risk segments of the market, and tapping into the local environment that allows them to bypass financial, regulatory and technical constraints.²²

The reasons for gender inequality in enterprise ownership are varied. Barriers faced by women-owned enterprises include limited financial awareness, lack of adequate collateral and the lack of confidence or hesitation to approach formal financial institutions. Women entrepreneurs lack knowledge of financial management and, as a result, do not maintain their financial documents in the required formats. Banks also view women-owned enterprises as higher-risk in the absence of collateral to secure loans.

The unregistered nature of women-owned enterprises and the lack of information on these is a challenge. Women-led enterprises tend to be in the services sector, which lacks tailor-made financial products.²³ The services sector lacks financial benchmarks, and banks consider financing the services sector more challenging than financing the manufacturing sector. Women-owned businesses are small in size, and their finance requirements lower than average; therefore, their

¹⁵ Raveendran, The Indian Labour Market, 16.

¹⁶ Bhalla et al., Labour Force Participation of Women in India, (New Delhi: LSE undated) 22.

¹⁷ Sonali Das et al., Women Workers in India: Why So Few Among So Many, (IMF Working Paper, 2015) 8.

¹⁸ Raveendran, The Indian Labour Market, 12.

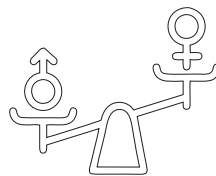
¹⁹ Bhalla et al., Labour Force Participation, 18.

²⁰ GN Bureau, "Fact Sheet: Women Entrepreneurs in India," <https://www.governancenow.com/news/regular-story/fact-sheet-womenentrepreneurs-in-india>, (April 5, 2016)

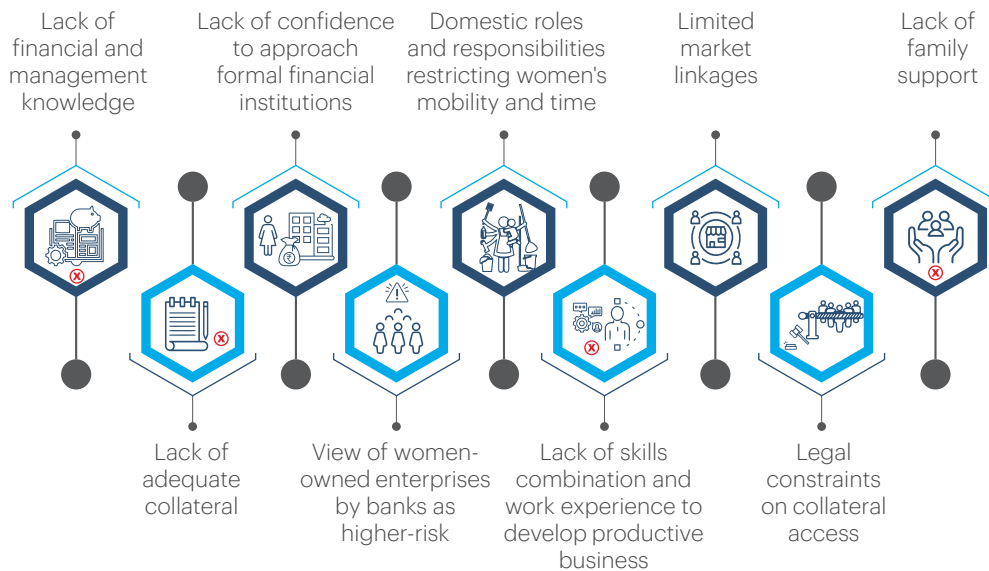
²¹ Ejaz Ghani, Local Industrial Structures & Female Entrepreneurship in India, (Washington: World Bank, 2011) 7.

²² Mastercard, Mastercard, 8.

²³ IFC, Summary Note: Workshop on MSME Finance – Banking on Women, (Mumbai: IFC) 2013, 1.



Reasons for gender inequality in enterprise ownership



transaction costs are higher, and formal financial institutions perceive them as unattractive.^{24,25} That is why women often find bank branches unwelcoming.

Non-financial barriers include domestic roles and responsibilities that limit women's mobility and time. Despite their progress in education, women often lack the combination of educational, vocational and technical skills and prior work experience to develop a highly productive business. Women entrepreneurs possess limited knowledge of business planning, financial management, working capital management, input/raw material purchase and market linkages. Legal constraints hinder women's access to land and property, which serve as the collateral necessary to leverage a loan. The lack of family support impedes Indian women in devoting the time, money and resources required to develop an effective enterprise.

There are only a few women role models to help women entrepreneurs to support them in the process of starting or scaling a venture. Business associations, ministries, and chambers of commerce are largely dominated by men and do not cater specifically to women.^{26,27} The gender biases from a combination of socioeconomic factors and discriminatory inheritance laws in India constrain women entrepreneurs²⁸ and women seeking formal employment from securing economic opportunities and professional growth.

As per the Mastercard Index on Women Entrepreneurs, there is a direct correlation between environments that support women's professional leadership and active engagement in technical work roles and the talent pool of women entrepreneurs with the requisite enterprise skills.²⁹

This study acknowledges these gender barriers and analyses how existing government and private sector policies and initiatives address these challenges and help promote women's economic empowerment.

²⁴ IFC, Summary Note, 2013, 1.

²⁵ IFC, Improving Access to Finance to Women-Owned Businesses in India: A Research report on opportunities, challenges and way forward, 2014

²⁶ IFNaila Kabeer, Women's Economic Empowerment and Inclusive Growth, (UK: IDRC & DFID, 2012), 51.

²⁷ Mahajan, S., Women Entrepreneurship in India, Global Journal of Management and Business Studies, 2013

²⁸ Arnaud Daynard, Determinants of Female Entrepreneurship in India, (Paris: OECD, 2015), 3.

²⁹ Mastercard, Mastercard Women Entrepreneurs Index 2017, www.newsroom.mastercard.com, 11.

3.0 ANALYSIS WITHIN WEPs FRAMEWORK

Ways in Which Gender Equality Can Create Value for Companies

Women's economic empowerment is seen as a 'critical driver to economic growth, a precondition for alleviating poverty and the foundation for ensuring every child has a sustainable future'.³⁰ As per a McKinsey study, if India bridged the gender gap in women's workforce participation, it could add \$2.9 trillion GDP annually by 2025.³¹

Women's economic empowerment is gaining traction. Larger private foundations and global corporations are showing an interest for various reasons. From a human development perspective, women invest 90 per cent of their income in the education, nutrition and health of their families. From a business perspective, companies that prioritize gender equality have higher returns on investment, a more diverse talent pool, better decision-making and offer opportunities for future market growth with increase in women's income.³² Studies have established that companies with a more diverse team are seen to perform better; they reflect a capacity for greater innovation given the varied perspectives in addressing organizational issues and lean towards consensus-building, contributing to better decision-making.³³ Women entrepreneurs who take loans are a profitable market segments as they pay back loans better than their male counterparts, and are likely to stay loyal.³⁴

Despite these compelling reasons to promote women's workforce participation, the ground reality is far from satisfactory.



3.1 Principle 1: Establish high-level corporate leadership for gender equality

Overview: Status and Challenges

Corporate-sector involvement in gender equality is a fairly recent development, but it has picked up momentum over the past decade. As per the recent UNDP report, "Contributions of Corporate Sector towards Women's Economic Empowerment in India", 72 per cent of the Bombay Stock Exchange's 100 companies reported programmes on women's economic empowerment in 2018.³⁵ Commitment at the CEO level is key to driving the process. This signals political commitment and gives it the weight and heft to drill it down through various organizational processes. There is a growing recognition of the need and necessity of promoting a corporate ethos and culture that reflects diversity and inclusion. Business leaders are experimenting with different approaches, including tasking senior management, with the responsibility to take the lead and including this in the review of their performance.³⁶

³⁰ ICRW, Building Effective, 9.

³¹ Woetzel, The Power of Parity, 6.

³² ICRW, Building Effective, 17.

³³ FLO, Gender Parity Index : A Toolkit to Evaluate Gender Diversity & Empowerment of Women in the Formal Sector in India, (New Delhi: FicciFlo, 2016) 11.

³⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Private Sector Development and Equal Rights for Women: Time to Scale-up, Blog written 11-12-2017, <https://www.government.nl/topics/business-for-development/weblogs/2017/private-sector-development-and-equal-rights-for-women-time-to-scale-up/private-sector-development-and-equal-rights-for-women-time-to-scale-up>

³⁵ Samhita, Contributions of Corporate Sector towards Women's Economic Empowerment in India (New Delhi: Samhita, Sept 2019, 2.

³⁶ McKinsey, 2019, (McKinsey: New York, 2019), 10.

The Companies Act 2013 mandates every listed company and public company with a paid-up share capital of over 1 Billion or a turnover of at least 3 Billion to appoint at least one-woman director. 98 of the top BSE 100 companies have at least one-woman member on their board³⁷. However, global studies have established that for women to have an impact and influence board dynamics, requires a minimum of at least three women to have their voice and agendas heard but only 15 per cent of company boards have more than three women, Companies with three or more women board members, have women's economic empowerment interventions in all three stages of a woman's economic lifecycle – preparation, entry into the workforce and growth³⁸. Moreover, the Indian minimum mandatory quota of one female director also does not match up to global standards. (For instance, Norway, Finland, France and Spain require 40% whereas Belgium, Kenya and Italy require 33% women on boards.)

There is a more detailed discussion on women on boards and private sector engagement later in the report.

The level of commitment and investment in promoting gender equality and economic empowerment of women varies by industry. There is no guaranteed one-size-fits-all approach and it tends to vary from sector, geography, corporate and business strategy. The complex nature of decision-making in companies continues to be an impediment to mainstreaming gender within corporate policies and programmes. Also, translating political will and commitment into day-to-day practice and adopting a holistic and integrated approach remains a challenge for many.

Private Sector Efforts to Establish Corporate Leadership for Gender Equality

Only 22 of the 62 private company initiatives reviewed for this study have the explicit commitment of the senior leadership to promoting gender equality within their organization. These initiatives were without exception of foreign and Indian Multi-National Corporations (MNCs) and two large firms. The companies are from the IT, garments, retail, health and financial services sectors. They are all WEPs signatories, showing a predisposition to commit to diversity and inclusion, and a strong presence of women in their workforce. None of the small companies included in this study demonstrate the same zeal or senior leadership commitment.

Information technology companies lead the way with explicit workplace policies and senior management commitment to promote gender equality and diversity within the organization. Companies like Wipro, an IT solutions provider, have a clear diversity and inclusion policy sponsored by the chief executive officer (CEO).³⁹ The diversity and inclusion charter and agenda is supported by cross-functional project teams and it is seen as an organizational endeavour imbued in the company values, policies and processes. The Corporate Diversity Council – comprising CEOs of different businesses and senior executives – meet two times a year to guide and track progress on diversity and inclusion.⁴⁰

The characteristics that these companies have in common is their large size and international footprint. The CEOs drive the process and ensure that gender equality becomes a key metric in senior management workplans and priorities. In the process, gender equality moves from being an

³⁷ UNDP, Corporate Engagement in Women's Economic Empowerment.

³⁸ Ibid

³⁹ WIPRO, Diversity and Inclusion, (Bangalore: WIPRO, 2008), 1.

⁴⁰ Raman Deep Saini, WIPRO Limited Applying Thought, (undated).

issue that is 'nice to have' to an essential accomplishment. The change in perception and optics is important in the achievement of gender equality. The involvement of cross-functional teams and senior managers makes it everybody's business instead of there being only a few, isolated champions in human resources (HR) and corporate social responsibility (CSR) departments.

There is a clear acknowledgement of having to invest resources, time and build staff capabilities to promote equality between men and women in the workplace. The involvement of both men and women is seen as being key to this process of change in charting gender-equitable corporate policies and programmes. Also, these companies demonstrate a willingness to be held to account by reporting their business responsibility achievements and practices publicly.

The subsequent sections delve into the extent to which corporate leaders have been effective in taking this mandate forward.



3.2 Principle 2: Treat all women and men fairly at work without discrimination

Government Equal Pay Policies

The Government of India ratified the International Labour Organization (ILO) Equal Remuneration Convention in 1958 and enacted the Code of Wages Act 2019. The Code of Wages Act lays down that there can be no discrimination in any establishment or unit on the basis of sex in matters related to wages for the same work or work of a similar nature. Under the provisions of this Act, women can demand equal treatment in pay, recruitment, retention, access to training, promotion and transfers; and companies and individual employers can be made to account for any deviations from these norms. The 'equal pay for equal work' principle for both men and women is also included in the Article 39 of the Constitution of India under the Directive Principles of State Policy. Articles 14, 15 and 16 of the Constitution also 'guarantee equality before the law, protection against discrimination and equal opportunity in matters of public employment'.^{41,42}

Current Status of the Gender Pay Gap in India

Despite legislation mandating equal wages for similar work, highly skilled women workers in the formal sector experience a gender wage gap of 30 per cent on an average, and skilled women workers earn 20 per cent less than men; only semi-skilled workers do not experience much of a gap.⁴³ The gender pay gap is low at the entry level; it increases with years of service and experience. A contributing factor is the absence of supportive childcare policies and affordable and reliable crèche facilities. Under the circumstances, and in keeping with the prevailing gender division of labour, women are compelled to take a break in their career to fulfil this role. On re-entry into the workforce, they are sometimes met with the perception of having diminished appetite for risk and less able to take on challenging roles and responsibilities. This influences the allocation of roles and responsibilities, with men cornering higher-profile roles, and it paves the way for gender disparity in pay and rewards. Some studies establish that the gender disparity in pay widens

⁴¹ Wikipedia, Gender Pay Gap in India, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gender_pay_gap_in_India, 1.

⁴² Paycheck, Gender Pay Gap in India, <https://paycheck.in/world-map-gender-pay-gap/gender-pay-gap-in-india-1>, 1.

⁴³ Wageindicator Foundation, Wageindex Report India: India Gender Pay Gap 2018, (Amsterdam: Wageindicator Foundation, Feb 2019) 9.

Table 7: Sectoral variations in gender pay gap

SECTOR	GENDER PAY GAP (%)
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	22
Education and research	16
Construction	11
Banking, financial services and insurance	2
Health care and social work	21
Information and communications technology (ICT)	26
Manufacturing	24
Transport and logistics	35
Legal and market consultancy	20

Source: WageIndicator Foundation 2018

concomitantly with men's education levels – higher the education of a man, greater the gender pay gap (Table 7). The gender pay gap persists even in sectors where women predominate, such as education and health care; the only exception is banking and financial services, where the pay is nearly equal.

A key reason for the gender pay gap is a deep-seated gender bias and the allocation of lower value to women's work. Social and cultural norms tend to promote the perception that men are the breadwinners of the family and see women as 'supplementary' earners. This contributes to differential valuation of women's work even if their roles and responsibilities are identical to that of their male colleagues. Often, women face occupational segregation – fewer women than men are appointed to supervisory roles – especially in factories, where women are pushed into repetitive, low-skilled, low-paying roles while men are recruited to better-paying supervisory positions with more powers. In the rare instances when women occupy supervisory roles, they are often paid less than their male colleagues. As a result, families are often reluctant to invest in their education and support their participation in the workforce. Bridging the gender pay gap would help enhance the value assigned to women's work and improve their economic independence, voice and agency.

Clearly, the existence of laws that prescribe equal pay and treatment at the workplace does not by itself guarantee gender parity in pay or treatment.

The subsequent section analyses good practices adopted by governments and companies to address the gender pay gap and promote equality in pay and benefits through the adoption of specific measures.

Gender Parity in Pay Policies and Practice

The UK Gender Pay Gap Regulations 2017 under the Equality Act 2010 require companies operating in Great Britain that employ more than 250 workers to report on the gender pay gap – i.e. the mean and median earnings of men and women; details of the bonus payout by gender; and the ratio of

male and female employees.⁴⁴ These regulations apply to international companies (such as Next and Shop Direct) and to Indian companies that operate in Great Britain (like Wipro and Infosys). In September 2018, the French government introduced a law that requires companies with more than 50 employees to measure variations in gender pay and take corrective action.⁴⁵

The Gender Pay Gap report of Next reiterates its commitment to an open and transparent rewards and salary structure. The report includes gender-disaggregated data on staff at the different levels of the company; women comprise 50 per cent of executive directors, 47 per cent of senior leadership and 44 per cent of the board. Women make up 70 per cent of their staff, employed mostly at its shops. In 2018,⁴⁶ the median gender pay gap was 2.3 per cent, and there was no report of inconsistency in pay between women and men performing the same role. Also, more women received a bonus compared to men.

Next's exceptional performance can be attributed to its concerted effort to promote gender equality through its HR policies. Next makes a clear commitment to adopt open and transparent pay structures based on competency and merit. Differences in pay have to be justified on the basis of performance. These are complemented by robust policies to promote flexible work arrangements that support employee work-life balance and gender roles and responsibilities. Next goes further to identify gender imbalance in specific departments, such as fewer women in IT, and introduces part-time work arrangements to encourage women. The approach to achieving gender parity is holistic and incorporated into all the aspects of organizational processes and systems.

Clearly, legislation on the gender pay gap in the UK appears to provide companies the requisite push to examine prevailing gender inequalities in employee ratio, earnings and bonus. At present, there appears to be no such legislation in India requiring companies to do so, and companies do not feel obliged to collect, analyse or report on gender variations in employee earnings and bonuses. None of the 62 private sector companies in India reviewed for this study reported the gender pay gap. Even international and Indian companies that report gender pay in Great Britain and France as required by law have not adopted this practice in India.

Steps to Address the Gender Pay Gap in India

Complex social norms and gender biases and inequalities at home manifest in gender differentials in roles and responsibilities at the workplace and in gender-differential valuation of women's work. Measures to tackle gender parity in pay need to consider this complex reality and adopt a holistic approach, such as the one adopted by Next, to be effective and long-standing, and such measures will require political will and commitment from the Government of India and private sector companies. Achieving gender parity in pay has to be viewed as a step-by-step process that requires companies to analyse the problem and innovate a solution; otherwise, there is the risk that gender-pay reporting will be viewed as a 'tick box'.

Paid Parental Leave, Childcare and Flexible Work Arrangements

One of the key challenges women in the workforce face is balancing dual responsibilities of productive work with the demands of childcare. In this section, we examine the extent to which private sector companies support employee childcare roles and responsibilities. The discussion

⁴⁴ WIPRO, WIPRO Announces Gender Pay Gap Details in Greath Britain, <https://www.wipro.com/content/dam/nexus/en/investor/corporate-governance/policies-and-guidelines/ethical-guidelines/wipro-uk-gender-pay-reporting.pdf>.

⁴⁵ Sodexo, Equality Index 2018, (Paris: Sodexo, 2018), 1.

⁴⁶ Next, Gender Pay Gap Report 2018,

includes government policies, followed by an assessment of how these have been incorporated in the HR policies of private sector companies, including other provisions such as flexible work arrangements, to support male and female staff meeting their domestic care responsibilities.

Government Childcare Policies

As per the revisions to the Maternity Benefit Act (2008) in 2017, all establishments with more than 10 employees are required to provide 26 weeks of paid maternity leave and 6 weeks of paid leave in the case of miscarriage or termination of pregnancy.⁴⁷ This applies to women workers in both the unorganized sector and in the formal sector (employed in offices, factories, public employment and plantations etc. as contractors and consultants). Work-from-home options after the 26-week period may be considered based on the profile of the role and employer endorsement.

At present, there is no provision under the labour law for paternity leave for private sector workers. However, public servants with fewer than 2 children are entitled to 15 days' paternity leave before or up to 6 months after the birth of a child.⁴⁸ Along the lines of the existing government policy, the draft Paternity Benefit Bill 2017 – which seeks to extend parental leave privileges to men working in the private sector and to self-employed men or men working in the unorganized sector with fewer than 10 employees – has been introduced in the Lok Sabha and it is pending approval. The demand is for the central government to set up a parental benefit scheme with a parental benefit fund to which the government, employers and employee jointly contribute.⁴⁹

The Factories Act, 1948 requires establishments with more than 30 employees to make provisions for childcare for children under 6; similarly, the Maternity Benefit Amendment mandates the provision of a crèche for companies with more than 30 employees. However, there are no clear guidelines for access to crèches, infrastructure design, quality or competence of the staff in charge.

The application of these national policies in company policies and practices is examined in the following sections.

Private sector childcare policies and practices

As per one estimate by Mercer India, there was a steady rise in parental policies among companies in India from 60 per cent in 2014 to 75 per cent in 2016.⁵⁰ Only a very small proportion of the companies reviewed for this study, 9 of 62, made specific mention of maternity leave provisions. Of these nine companies, 5 are from the IT sector and 1 each from pharma, sports and garments and retail. All of these are large firms with an international presence and a highly skilled workforce.

The companies that commit explicitly to maternity benefits make genuine efforts to support women in their childbearing role and enable their re-entry into the workforce. Hindustan Unilever Limited (HUL), a big retail giant and part of the Unilever family, promotes parental leave and focuses on back-to-work programmes to assist women's re-entry into the workforce.⁵¹ Infosys, Computer Science Corporation, Biocon⁵² and Wipro also provide maternity benefits and actively support women to rejoin the workforce through flexible work practices. This is consistent with the amended

⁴⁷ H.L.Meena, The Maternity Benefit Act 2017, (New Delhi: GOI, April 2017) 1.

⁴⁸ Jaspreet Kaul Kohli, Paternity Leave in India, <https://legodesk.com/legopedia/paternity-leave-in-india/> 1.

⁴⁹ Kohli, Paternity Leave in India, 2.

⁵⁰ PTI, Paternity Leave Gaining Prevalence in India, (UK: Mercer, 2016) as reported by Press Trust of India dated Sept 21st, 2016.

⁵¹ PTI, Paternity Leave Gaining Prevalence in India, (UK: Mercer, 2016) as reported by Press Trust of India dated Sept 21st, 2016.

⁵² HUL, Enhancing Livelihoods: Fairness at the Workplace, <https://www.hul.co.in/sustainable-living/india-sustainability-initiatives/enhancing-livelihoods.html>, undated.

Maternity Benefits Act, which requires companies to award 26 weeks of paid leave to female employees in formal employment.⁵³ At Wipro, 93 per cent of female employees return to work after parental leave.⁵⁴ The reason for Wipro's exceptional success is their adoption of a holistic 'life cycle' approach for its female employees.

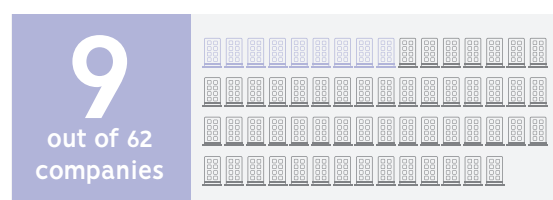
These nine companies adopt a holistic approach to women's economic empowerment and address all stages of a women's economic journey – preparation, entry and growth. Women's role in childbearing and childcare is acknowledged as a critical aspect of their life and not just a disruption in their work life. The maternity and childcare benefits are perceived as entitlements, rather than handouts, and every effort is made in both company policy and culture to support women in balancing their twin roles of motherhood and as working professionals. In doing so, these companies step away from the male-normative culture in attempting to force women to fit the male norm, and they endeavour to address women's gender-specific needs and priorities.

Company policies and practices are tailored to suit women's childcare roles and responsibilities, as reflected in flexible policies and practices. Vodafone, a leading telecom provider, provides flexible work, including shorter hours, along with maternity leave to prevent women leaving the workforce after childbirth. An increase has been reported as a result of these initiatives⁵⁵ in the diversity of employees from 14 per cent to 21 per cent in a two-year period. As for the remaining 55 companies reviewed, there is no mention of any maternity leave benefits whatsoever, notably in the smaller Indian firms. The financial costs of replacing the employee and the administrative records and facilities may act as a deterrent for smaller firms, along with disruptions to business continuity on losing a team member.

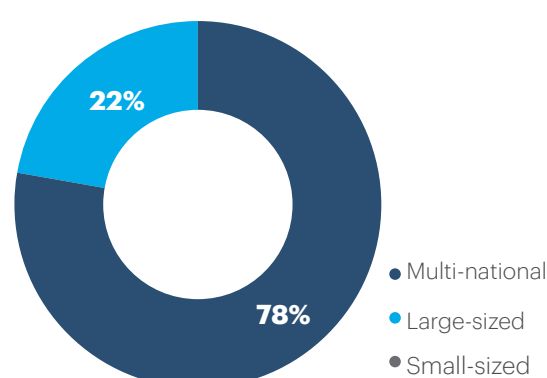
Figure 2: WEPs Principle 2 - Maternity leave

WEPs Principle 2: Treat all women and men fairly at work

Maternity leave



Scale of operations



Sector analysis



⁵³ Biocon, Wonder Women of Biocon, <https://bioconblog.com/2018/03/08/wonder-women-of-biocon/>, March 8 2018.

⁵⁴ Chapman, Rewriting the Rules, 3.

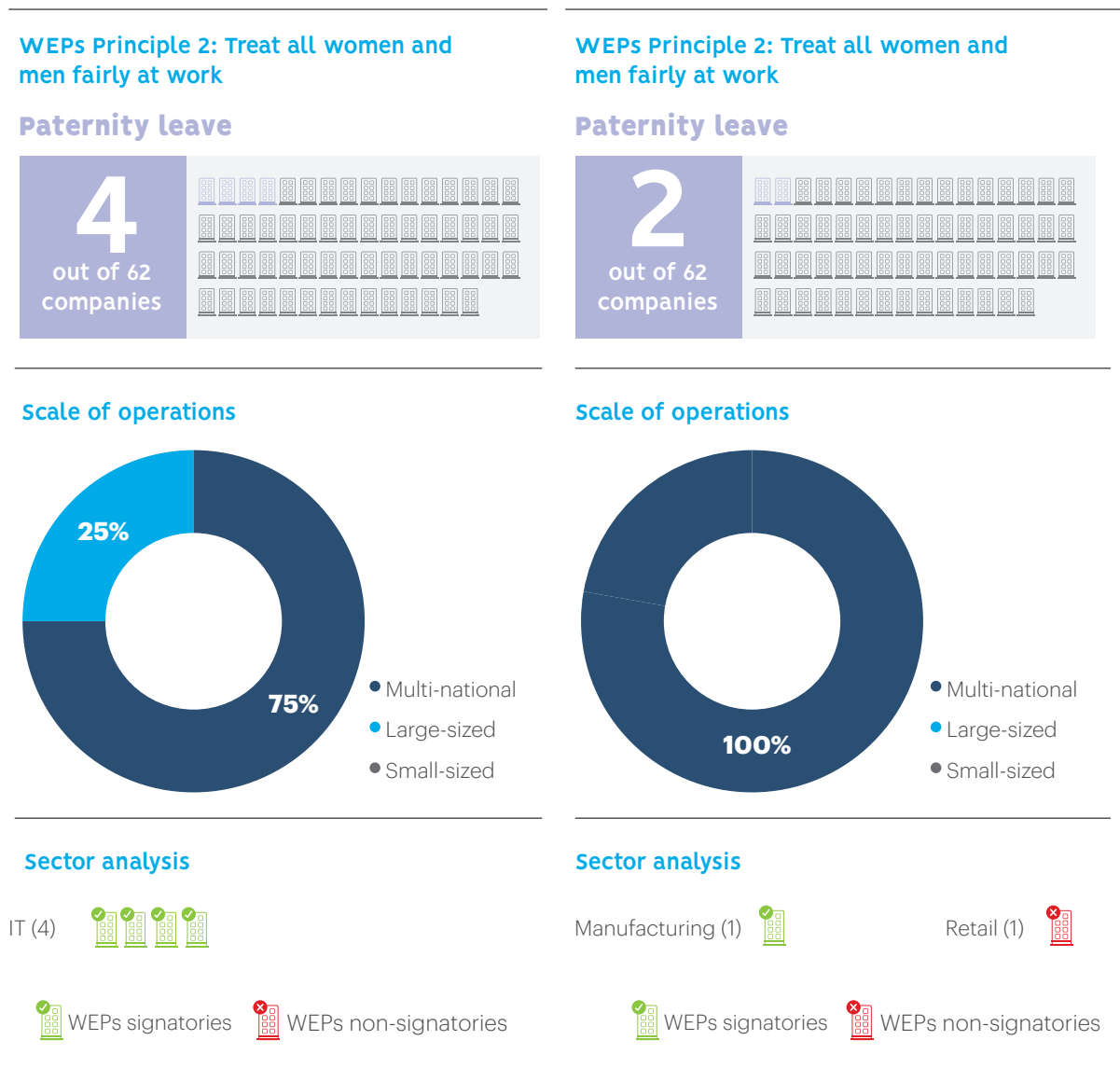
⁵⁵ WIPRO, Women of WIPRO, 3.

Paternity Leave

There is no mandatory requirement for private sector companies to provide paternity leave, but the trend is catching on at a few of the more established Indian and international companies, including start-ups. Five of the companies reviewed for this study offered paternity leave ranging from a few days to two weeks, but these measures are tokenistic at best and do not in any way alleviate women's primary childcare responsibilities.

The chief drawback in a majority of the current childcare leave policies is the emphasis on women as the primary caregiver. While this is necessary to support women's childbearing and pregnancy, it puts the onus of childcare squarely on women and reinforces gender stereotypes. Hindustan Lever and Schneider are the rare exceptions that have parental leave provisions. Schneider's parental leave policy is remarkable in providing 12 weeks for the primary caregiver and 2 weeks for the secondary caregiver.⁵⁶ In framing caregiving in gender-neutral terms, Schneider's parental leave

Figure 3: WEPs Principle 2 - Paternity leave and parental leave



⁵⁶ Jean-Pascal Tricoire, Life is On for our employees with our new Global Family leave Policy, (France: Schneider, Sept 26, 2017) 1.

policy makes a departure from presuming that women are the de facto caregiver; it makes a clear distinction between childbearing and child-rearing, and it gives male and female employees equal opportunity to take on the responsibility of childcare – thus challenging gender stereotypes.

Crèche and Childcare Facilities

Another consideration for young working parents – men and women – that facilitates their re-entry into the workforce after childbirth is access to safe, affordable and reliable childcare. This is especially relevant for women in India, given the prevailing sociocultural norms that assign the role of primary caregiver to women. In the absence of genuine alternatives, women find it hard to resume work after delivery. Five of the companies with progressive maternity leave policies have dedicated access to crèche and childcare facilities.

In a few cases, such as Biocon and HCL, female employees with infants have access to crèche facilities. Timberland partnered with its supplier Celebrity Fashions Limited in Chennai to open a high-quality childcare facility with the support of local non-government organizations (NGO) ASK

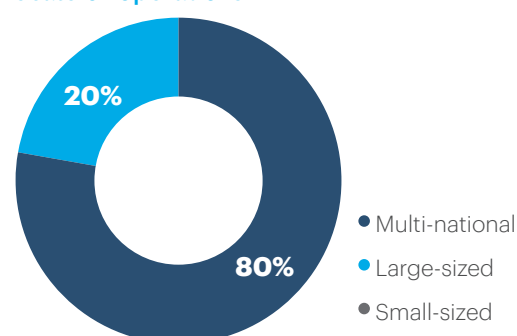
Figure 4: WEPs Principle 2 - Creche and child care facilities

WEPs Principle 2: Treat all women and men fairly at work

Creche and child care facilities



Scale of operations



Sector analysis



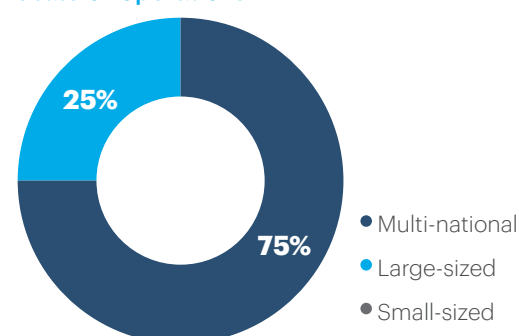
Figure 5: WEPs Principle 2 - Flexible work arrangements

WEPs Principle 2: Treat all women and men fairly at work

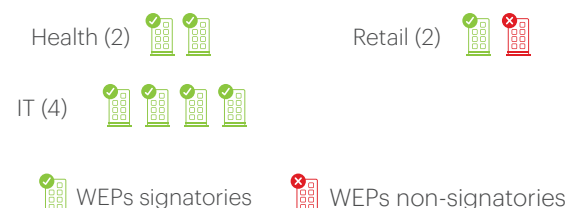
Flexible work arrangements



Scale of operations



Sector analysis



and Samvada.⁵⁷ Employees are provided safe and reliable childcare services at a subsidized rate, and the facility is open to other members as a paid service.

If crèches exist, their design and implementation is ad hoc and non-standardized and leave much to be desired. The models of these facilities vary; some are run in-house by company staff or outsourced administration, while others are off-site crèches.

Flexible Work Arrangements

The care of the elderly and the sick is the third important aspect of the gender division of labour. It is an impediment to women's time, agency and access to engaging in paid work. None of the companies reviewed provide for the care of the elderly or dependents at present. Only 8 of the 62 companies reviewed have flexible work arrangements to support employees in balancing work along with their care (unpaid work) responsibilities.

There is a strong business case to make the shift from maternity and paternity to parental leave policies. Involving both mothers and fathers and giving them equal opportunity to participate in child-rearing would facilitate the redistribution of care between men and women; encourage men to play a more active role in child-rearing; challenge the existing gender stereotypes and division of labour; enhance equality in decision-making and mutual respect; improve women's mobility and agency; and maximize women's potential to engage in paid work. Admittedly, this would have to be accompanied by a shift in individual and collective mindsets to overcome gender stereotypes and change the rigid gender division of labour.

A second crucial factor is translating the letter of the law into good practice and making access to good-quality, affordable and reliable crèche and childcare a reality. Along with flexible work arrangements to support male and female employees in fulfilling their domestic care roles and responsibilities, this would go a long way in supporting women and male employees in balancing the twin demands of home and work and facilitate women's retention and re-entry.

Non-Discrimination and Equal Opportunity in Recruitment, Retention and Promotion

This section focuses on the principle of non-discrimination and equal opportunity in recruitment, retention and promotion. The analysis includes government provisions to promote equality and non-discrimination and an assessment of the gaps in private sector policies and practices.

Gender Challenges to Women's Entry into the Workforce and Retention

Women's workforce participation in India, 20 per cent⁵⁸, is one of the lowest in the world; women in formal employment constitute an even smaller proportion, 8 per cent of all women in the workforce. There are several factors of the low participation of women in the workforce.

Gender disparities in access to education, including vocational skill training, place women at a disadvantage in terms of skills and capabilities suited to the market. Even when women have the requisite skills and capabilities, sociocultural norms and gender biases place restrictions on women's mobility and economic decision-making. Women are burdened with unpaid

⁵⁷ ICRW, Building Effective, 56.

⁵⁸ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.FE.ZS>

work and household care responsibilities, leaving them less time to pursue full-time formal employment. Women and girls are not at liberty to make decisions on their time and labour due to intrahousehold gender inequalities in decision-making. Concerns over women's safety and security in the public domain, at the workplace or getting to work, are additional challenges. Even when women manage to overcome these barriers and enter the workforce, retention and continuity becomes a problem in the absence of adequate support to fulfil care roles and responsibilities.

Private sector companies need to take cognizance of these gender challenges if they are to recruit and retain women effectively. The promise of financial rewards, enhanced household income, job satisfaction and opportunities for career progression no doubt attract women's entry. In addition, companies need to pay due regard to the gender challenges and incorporate solutions to these challenges in their organizational policies and processes to facilitate women's entry and retention.

The following section examines the extent of gender-sensitivity and -responsiveness in the hiring, recruitment and retention practices of private sector companies.

Private Sector Policies and Practices on Recruitment, Retention and Promotion

Of the 62 companies covered by this study, 17 companies make an outright commitment in their code of conduct and HR policies not to discriminate on the basis of sex in hiring and recruitment. Notably, 14 of the companies are WEPs signatories

Many of these are MNCs and large companies. Small companies, which make up less than 6 per cent of the companies reviewed, do not reflect the principle of non-discrimination in their corporate policies. In terms of sectors, IT and manufacturing take the lead, followed closely by health, financial services and F&B.

By emphasizing non-discrimination in hiring, these companies signal a commitment to diversity and inclusion in work practices and make themselves more attractive to women and other marginalized groups.

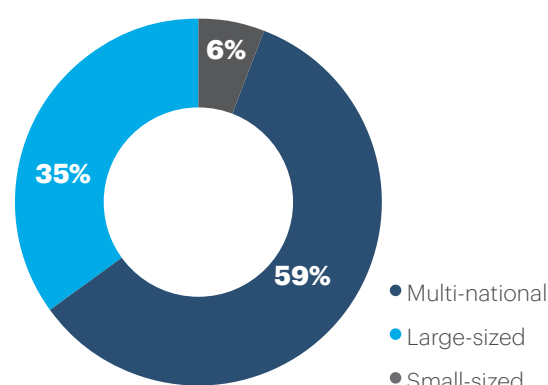
Figure 6: WEPs Principle 2 - Equal opportunity in Hiring

WEPs Principle 2: Treat all women and men fairly at work

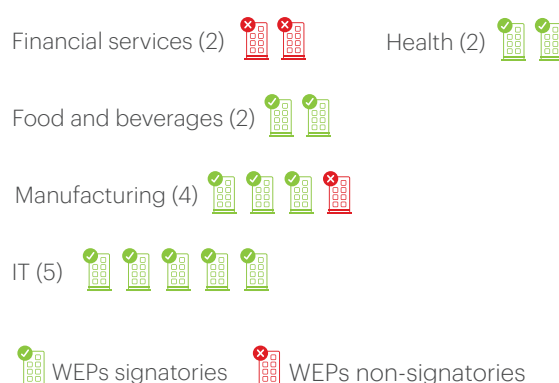
Equal opportunity in hiring



Scale of operations



Sector analysis



These companies distinguish themselves by adopting gender-sensitive HR practices such as prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sex; making hiring decisions purely on the basis of merit; ensuring that advertisements include a clear commitment to diversity and encourage women to apply; and adopting gender diversity in interview boards by doing away with all-male interview panels. Some companies such as Sodexo go a step further and adopt blind screening of applicants to rule out the possibility of gender bias during the shortlisting process. Sodexo also insists that 25 per cent of the candidates are women and puts the onus on managers to justify a non-woman hire.⁵⁹ By adopting transparent hiring and recruitment processes, and reporting on gender balance in employees in their annual reports, these companies open themselves up for scrutiny on their commitment to gender equality in recruitment and retention.

An example of good practice worth emulating is the all-women 'Special Hospital Executives' sales force of Reddy Labs.⁶⁰ The company acknowledged the gender imbalance in its male-dominated workforce, especially in sales and manufacturing, and decided to rectify the problem. Reddy Labs identified the untapped potential of skilled women who had withdrawn from the workforce because of the demands of care responsibilities. The company realized these women would need flexibility in work arrangements, in terms of hours of both work and mobility; men work fixed hours and cover a wide geography, but that model does not suit these women. Reddy Labs identified a business opportunity that would be mutually beneficial. The women staff were trained, and assigned a single client, like a woman's university or hospital, which typically required dedicated focus to build and foster a relationship. As a result of this programme, the company's recall and visibility improved; Reddy Labs reached an additional 25 medical institutions, especially all-women colleges, that was beyond the reach of its male employees, and expanded its overall customer base from 110,000 to 117,000. This is an example of the catalytical role private sector companies can play in promoting and increasing women's participation in the workforce. An important take-away from this example is that Reddy Labs established a strong link between business growth and promoting equal opportunity in the workplace, making it easier to get organizational buy-in. Second, specific efforts were made to challenge existing gender-neutral workplace practices and not straitjacket women. A third important element was the flexibility in approach and consequent work arrangements.

Unfortunately, not all companies follow this commitment and dedication to promoting gender balance and equality in the workforce. The other 49 companies reviewed do not mention non-discrimination in their code of conduct or annual reports. They adopt a gender-neutral stand and tend to treat women and men alike, completely overlooking the gender barriers to women's entry and continuity in the workforce. Although the Equal Opportunity Act mandates no discrimination on the basis of sex, implementation remains largely voluntary and poor.

Women's participation in the workforce is in danger of stagnating and trailing behind that of men in the absence of a big push. By not stepping up, private sector companies inadvertently reiterate age-old gender biases and stereotypes and lose the opportunity to benefit from the contributions of a diverse workforce such as 'improved access to talent, enhanced decision-making and depth of consumer insight, and strengthening employee engagement'.⁶¹ To improve women's participation, companies need to first address gender-specific challenges in hiring and retention practices and make it core to business.

⁵⁹ Sodexo, Driving Gender balance on ground – the HR processes, (France: Sodexo, March 2019) <https://in.sodexo.com/inspired-thinking/inspired-thinking/workplace-trends-2018-link-13.html>

⁶⁰ Drishti Pant, Strengthening Gender Diversity and Inclusion: Dr Reddy's story, <https://www.peoplesmatters.in/article/womenofchange/strengthening-gender-diversity-and-inclusion-dr-reddys-story-17651>, March 2018, 1.

⁶¹ Vivian Hunt et al., *Delivering Through Diversity*, (New York: McKinsey, Jan 2018) 5.

Gender Balance in Leadership and Workforce

This section focuses on the issue of gender balance in company boards and senior management. It includes government legislation to promote gender balance in private sector boards, and it identifies gaps and challenges in private sector policies and programmes in promoting gender balance in leadership and the workforce.

Legal Provisions and the Business Case for Gender Balance

Chapter XI of the Companies Act 2013 mandates that listed companies must appoint at least one woman director on their board within a year of incorporation of the amendment 149 (2) to Act and companies with a turnover of 1 billion or above to appoint at least one woman director to their board within 3 years.

Studies show that an improvement in the gender balance at all levels of a company is associated with higher stock value and greater profitability.⁶² Women's representation on boards is seen to bring a different perspective and a more collaborative style of leadership, leading to superior performance. Mixed-gender boards are also seen to outperform all-male boards, making a strong business case for companies to take action.

Companies in the top quartile of gender diversity on their executive teams are 15–21 per cent more likely to experience above-average profitability than companies in the fourth quartile.⁶³ The converse is also true; companies that are not diverse are likely to underperform on profitability. Companies with a higher gender balance – the men-to-women staff is almost equal – perform more consistently. As per a study of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), firms with a larger number of women in senior positions are observed to have a higher return on assets.⁶⁴ Therefore, having a critical mass of women in senior positions is in effect beneficial to organizational processes and company performance, not just a social good.

Status of Gender Balance on Boards in India and Challenges

Women continue to be woefully under-represented in the boards of Indian companies. According to one study, approximately 5.3 per cent of directors in the top 100 companies listed in the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) are women.⁶⁵ Another National Stock Exchange Fifty (NIFTY) top 500 survey notes an increase in women's representation on boards from 5 per cent in March 2012 to 13 per cent in March 2017. The incremental increase leaves much to be desired. Of the 1,723 companies listed on the NSE, 425 do not have an independent woman director, according to Prime Database. In terms of sectoral variations, the telecom, health care, utilities and industrial sectors have a higher percentage of women directors on their boards, as per the report published by the Indian Institute of Advanced Studies (IIAS) in 2017.⁶⁶

The reasons for the low representation of women on company boards are myriad. The regulatory requirement that women should be represented on company boards is recent, and private sector companies may not be aware of the requirement. The regulation does not provide for sanctions

⁶² Marcus Noland et al., *Is Gender Diversity Profitable? Evidence of a Global Survey*, (Washington: February 2016) 2.

⁶³ Vivian Hunt et al., *Delivering through Diversity*, 8.

⁶⁴ IIAS, *Corporate India: Women on Boards*, 4.

⁶⁵ CARE, *She Means Business: A Primer on the Status of women's empowerment in business in India*, (New Delhi: CARE, 2014) 24.

⁶⁶ IIAS, *Corporate India Women on Boards*, 8.

if companies do not adhere to the letter of the law; therefore, companies regard this regulation a lower-order priority and purely voluntary. A major constraint is the traditional corporate mindset and entrenched male control in not wanting to change the status quo. Boards are largely male-dominated and these tend to promote their own networks, making it challenging for women to break into the system.

Gender disparities deepen as one goes up a company hierarchy. Women and men are nearly at par at the entry level, but women tend to drop behind later, and there are fewer women than men at senior positions. The corporate culture of 'anytime and anywhere' becomes especially difficult for women to juggle their dual responsibilities of home and work, and an impediment to career advancement, forcing women to drop out along the way.

In addition, women have to deal with unconscious biases such as performance bias. Women are often given less credit than men; women lack confidence and are less likely to put themselves forward for promotion. On attaining motherhood, women are perceived to be less committed to their career and given fewer opportunities for leadership.⁶⁷

The next section examines ongoing efforts of Indian private sector companies to address these challenges and advance the gender balance in non-executive boards and executive and senior management teams.

Private Sector Efforts to Promote Gender Balance on Boards, Executives and Senior Management Team

Of the 62 organizations reviewed, 14 had a policy on diversity in boards, and they had at least 1 woman member, usually an independent woman director. Of these companies, 72 per cent were MNCs and 21 per cent were large companies; women are represented on the board of approximately 7 per cent of small companies. All but 1 of these companies are WEPs signatories. In terms of sectors, IT and manufacturing lead with 5 each, followed by 2 from F&B, and 1 each from health, financial services and retail.

At present, companies tend to perceive the inclusion of women in boards as a compliance requirement. The immediate challenge is to get more companies to recognize the benefits of a diverse workforce, at all levels of the organization, including women on boards. This would require commitment from the top: CEOs and board members must commit to creating a more inclusive culture; set clear goals and targets to increase the gender balance in executive positions; help women advance to senior levels; and track and review these goals regularly supported by a 360-degree view of all aspects of organizational processes to assess how these hinder or contribute to the advancement of women in the organization. But, first, private sector companies need to see the Amendment to the Companies Act as giving them the legitimacy to undertake an overhaul of their organizational structure and break the monopoly of men in senior positions. Unless companies are willing to alter their mindset and address the underlying causes, the inclusion of women will remain tokenistic and unsustainable in the long term.

⁶⁷ McKinsey, Women Matter Time to Accelerate, (New York: McKinsey, October 2017) 27.



3.3 Principle 3: Ensure the health, safety and well-being of all women and men workers

This section analyses gender-sensitivity in promoting the health, safety and well-being of women and men workers related to WEPs Principle 3. The section outlines the gender-specific challenges in women's access to health and safety, followed by government policies to address these, and it analyses the effectiveness of private sector policies and programmes in tackling these challenges.

Women's Health and Safety: Status and Challenges

Overall, the health status of women in India is poor. Women face health challenges specific to their reproductive role and responsibilities: 51.4 per cent of Indian women in the reproductive age group (15–49 years) have anaemia.⁶⁸ The maternal mortality rate, 178 per 100,000 live births in India, is far in excess of the global goal of 70 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births. Combined with the inequitable distribution of work within the household, this places an additional burden on women's health, labour and time. Women are primarily responsible for the care of children, the sick and elderly, and they spend 5 hours a day on these tasks.⁶⁹

In the case of lower socioeconomic groups such as women factory workers, the unequal distribution in access to food and lower prioritization of women's health needs make them more vulnerable to ill-health. Women have to deal with the poor provision of infrastructure facilities such as access to hygiene and sanitation facilities at workplaces and markets. An analysis of Indian women's entrepreneurship and economic participation has established a clear relationship between good-quality infrastructure and female entry into industry or enterprise.⁷⁰

Women cannot use toilets at workplaces or markets because their design and quality is poor; water supply, lighting, cleanliness and maintenance inadequate; and there are no locks on toilet doors. That constitutes a major barrier to women's health and well-being.⁷¹ Women's menstrual hygiene needs are often ignored at the workplace. In a few extreme cases, there have been reports of supervisors monitoring the duration and frequency of comfort breaks taken by women, and threats of docking their pay. Migrant women workers in factories are forced to live in overcrowded accommodation with few amenities and services, placing an additional burden on their health and safety.

Women's ability to engage in economic activity and their productivity are directly influenced by the availability of basic amenities and their health status. Under the circumstances, therefore, adequate focus on access to affordable and reliable health care, including access to basic amenities such as sanitation and toilets, become vital for women's productivity and well-being. From the companies' standpoint, the benefits of investing in workers' health and well-being is acknowledged to increase productivity and reduce absenteeism.

The following section assesses the extent to which government regulation and private sector company policies address these gender challenges.

⁶⁸ UNICEF, Global Nutrition Report 2019, (New York: UNICEF, 2019) <https://globalnutritionreport.org/resources/nutrition-profiles/asia/southern-asia/india/>.

⁶⁹ Chapman et al., *Rewriting the Rules*, 3.

⁷⁰ Ejaz Ghani et al., *What Explains the Gender Disparities in Economic Participation in India*, posted on 21 August 2012, 3.

⁷¹ O'Reilly, <http://www.indiawaterportal.org/articles/safe-sanitation-women>

Government Policy on Workplace Safety and Security

The National Policy on Occupational Safety, Health and Environment (NPSHEW) aims to promote a preventive work culture. The policy requires all companies, regardless of the nature of economic activity, to take adequate precautions to eliminate the incidence of injury, diseases and fatalities at the workplace and enhance the well-being of employees. The Factories Act, 1948 requires all factories to adopt adequate precautions to prevent injuries and fatalities of its workers. The governments of state and union territories implement the Act and monitor compliance through the Chief Inspector of Factories/Directorate of Industrial Safety and Health.⁷²

Private Sector Efforts to Promote Health and Safety in the workplace

Of the 62 private sector companies reviewed, 32 have a dedicated policy for workplace health and safety (Figure 7). These are applied to both men and women and are in compliance with national labour standards. They take adequate precautions and preventive measures to secure the safety and security of employees at work.

Health and Safety in Companies: Formal Employment

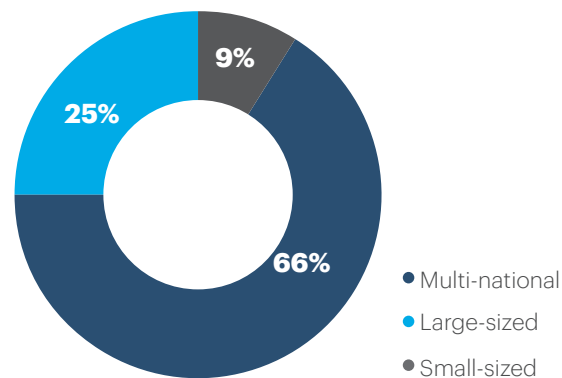
All the MNCs had clear health and safety policies and guidelines to disseminate these widely in their own companies and among their vendors and suppliers. These policies are gender-neutral and apply to all workers, women and men, in the workplace. Medium-sized companies and a few large companies follow suit on well-defined health and safety policies. In emphasizing and ensuring that workers are trained and that they adopt adequate safety precautions to prevent accidents and reduce exposure to hazards, the manufacturing sector leads

Figure 7: WEPs Principle 3 - Health and safety policy

WEPs Principle 3: Ensure health, safety and well-being Health and safety policy



Scale of operations



Sector analysis



⁷² Ministry of Labour & Employment, Occupational Safety and Health Hazards in Workplace, (New Delhi: GOI, July 2019) 1.

the way, along with the automobile, steel and construction industries; IT companies follow close behind with health and safety policies that cover staff health care needs.

With regard to health-care provisions and support for employees, the larger MNCs and medium-sized companies have health cover for both male and female employees and their dependents (spouse and children). Parents of employees are rarely, if ever, included, although women are often responsible for looking after the sick and elderly in their families. Women's specific health needs are limited to their reproductive function, as reflected in the maternity leave policy; in exceptional instances, the policy extends to cases of miscarriage.

The remaining 50 per cent of the companies – smaller Indian companies in IT, health, food processing and services – do not have a dedicated health and safety policy. Even companies working on the delivery of holistic health and well-being have no provision for employee health and safety. These are either absent or not published widely.

If companies have an occupational health and safety policy, these ignore the specific health-care needs of women. Even the government legislation limits itself to averting hazards and injury and makes no mention of women's gender-specific health needs other than maternity. Private sector companies focus on compliance and averting the incidence of injury and hazards at work; the only reference to women's health is to women's childbearing and maternity requirements.

Health and Safety of Women Factory Workers

Garment and textile companies are foremost in promoting and investing in workplace health-care programmes for women factory workers. These efforts are concentrated in the industry hubs of Tirupur, Dindigal and Coimbatore (in Tamil Nadu) and Bengaluru and Hosur (in Karnataka). These programmes impart training on critical life skills, hygiene, reproductive health and occupational health and safety. They are aided by the presence of strong textile trade unions in these states, typically require buy-in from managers of these undertakings and are implemented in partnerships with local CSOs. The Nalam (well-being) initiative, led by the Ethical Trade Initiative, covers 16,000 female employees of factories at 31 workplaces⁷³ and engages some of the leading garment and apparel brands in the UK and Europe.

These initiatives to build and improve the knowledge and awareness of women employees on workplace health and safety are laudable, but these are often reliant on external funds and investments. For long-term sustainability, garment and apparel manufacturers need to be encouraged to take ownership of such initiatives, invest in these and incorporate these in their business. There is scant data and evidence at present on how the garment and textile sector promotes other aspects of women's health needs like insurance and time off for medical care

Safety and Security of Women at the Workplace

This section focuses on concerns related to violence against women and harassment at the workplace and in public areas. The discussion outlines the gender-specific challenges vis-à-vis violence against women, followed by government legislation on the issue, and an analysis of private sector policies and programmes to prevent violence against women.

⁷³ ETI, Tamil Nadu apparel and textile sector (ETI Blog: ETI, December 2016) <https://www.ethicaltrade.org/programmes/women-millworkers-tamil-nadu>, 2.

Violence Against Women: Issues and Challenges

Violence against women is a serious obstacle to women's advancement and growth, and it is often ignored. About 33 per cent of women in the 15–49 age group report having experienced physical violence in their lifetime.⁷⁴ According to the National Crime Bureau, India, a crime against women is committed every 3 minutes, 1 woman is raped every 20 minutes and 70 per cent of women are victims of domestic violence.⁷⁵

Vulnerability to violence often defines and determines the opportunities available to women and girls and the choices that they make. This vulnerability affects the ability of women and girls to access education, skill development and employment and, consequently, economic productivity and employment. Vulnerability to violence impacts the health of women and girls; by disrupting their livelihoods or their ability to engage in productive work, even if temporarily, it costs them wages. Women are vulnerable to violence in all spheres of their life – home, work and between. Sexual harassment at the workplace pertains to all women, whether in formal employment or factories.

Migration has increasingly become feminized in India, with women accounting for 49 per cent⁷⁶ of all migrant workers seeking jobs in the unorganized sector and in factories. Women and girl migrants face specific risks such as trafficking, sexual violence and exploitation, especially if undocumented or dependent on family members or employers. This may result in sexual exploitation and/or poor work conditions. The absence of basic workplace amenities like health, hygiene and sanitation enhances the vulnerability of women and girls to harassment and exploitative practices. This is especially relevant for women factory workers who have less agency, given their lack of education and knowledge of rights.

An estimated 163 million women have reported violence from intimate partners,⁷⁷ and 337,922 crimes against women were reported nationally in 2014 alone. Domestic violence constitutes the highest share of all crimes against women (43.6 per cent), followed by assault (18.6 per cent), kidnapping (15.7 per cent) and rape (10.2 per cent).⁷⁸ Domestic violence takes a heavy toll on women physically and psychologically, affecting their health and impacting their ability to be productive. Women survivors of violence are compelled to take leave of absence, which affects their growth and advancement at the workplace. Domestic violence influences women's access and control over household resources such as land, property and income – necessary for women to engage in business and run their own enterprise.

Women's participation in the workforce is constrained by safety and security concerns, threats of harassment and vulnerability to violence in the household, workplace and outside. Vulnerability to violence prevents women from realizing their full potential, exercising their rights freely and contributing to growth and development. The prevention of violence against women and girls is vital for them to engage in the economy and reap the benefits of new and emerging opportunities at par with men. The realization of the need to engage with this issue has been growing in both the government and private sector companies.

The subsequent section examines government and private sector efforts to tackle the issue; it identifies the gaps in women's safety and protection from violence and harassment and the opportunities to promote their safety.

⁷⁴ UN Women, United to End Violence Against Women, (New Delhi: UN Women, undated) 7.

⁷⁵ Wikipedia, Violence Against Women in India, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Violence_against_women_in_India.

⁷⁶ UNDESA, Population Division, 2016

⁷⁷ Woetzel, The Power of Parity, 10.

⁷⁸ NCRB, Crimes Against Women, <http://ncrb.nic.in/StatePublications/CII/CII2014/chapters/Chapter%205.pdf>

Government Policy on Violence Against Women

The Sexual Harassment of Women at the Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013⁷⁹ mandates companies with 10 employees or more to have mechanisms in place to address instances of sexual harassment at the workplace. The law requires companies to take concrete steps to make the workplace free of harassment and report to the government on the complaints made and actions taken to redress them. The recent global 'Me Too'⁸⁰ campaign has highlighted the sexual harassment of women at the workplace in the IT, media and entertainment industries in India as a challenge faced by women and a serious issue of concern.

Private Sector Efforts to Tackle Violence and Harassment at Work

Of the 62 companies reviewed, 30 companies have a POSH policy, as required by law, along with an internal complaints committee to handle complaints. A majority of these belong to the IT sector, followed by manufacturing and garments. These companies are established foreign and Indian MNCs, predominantly from the IT and garments industries; a few are in the manufacturing and health-care industries. None of the small Indian companies reviewed appear to have a specific policy on harassment at the workplace; if they do, the information is not available in the public domain. None of the 62 companies mention a domestic violence policy.

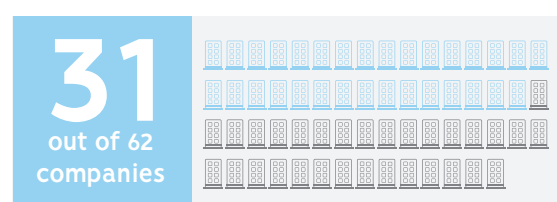
Prevention of Sexual Harassment of Women in Formal Work

Large Indian firms and MNCs acknowledge that harassment at the workplace and women's vulnerability to violence are a major challenge to women's participation in the workforce. They make an explicit commitment to zero

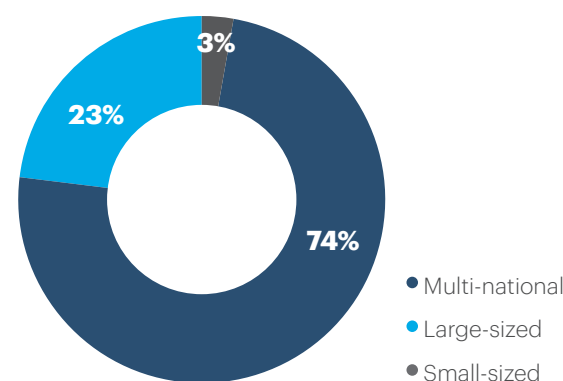
Figure 8: WEPs Principle 3 - Health and safety policy

WEPs Principle 3: Ensure health, safety and well-being

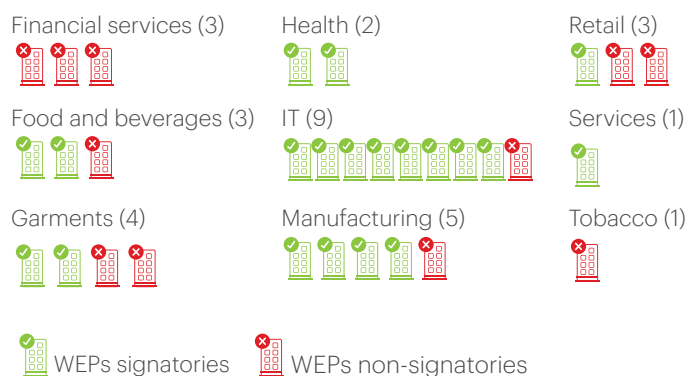
Prevention of sexual harassment (POSH) policy



Scale of operations



Sector analysis



⁷⁹ Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India, The Act and Rules of Sexual Harassment at the Workplace, (New Delhi: Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India, Nov 2016) <https://www.poshatwork.com/sexual-harassment-act-rules/>, 1.

⁸⁰ Wikipedia, Me Too Movement, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Me_Too_movement, 1.

tolerance to all forms of harassment; their senior management is committed, too. There is a POSH policy, in adherence to national legislation, supported by an internal complaints committee and redressal mechanisms to address complaints. In the interest of accountability, these companies include the information on the number of cases reported and status (resolved or pending) in their annual reports.

Resources are earmarked to train and orient both male and female employees on the definition of sexual harassment and on company policies and redressal mechanisms. The initiatives include training of women workers on workplace security, including sexual harassment; creating awareness among employees, both male and female, on sexual harassment and redressal; and establishing grievance redressal mechanisms to address complaints. A few of the large organizations such as Wipro, Biocon⁸¹ and Unilever have specific provisions for the safe transport of female employees. Microsoft focuses on developing a cybersecurity ecosystem conducive to women in partnership with government and other private sector players; it promotes diversity in cybersecurity by recruiting women and training them in cybersecurity.

Prevention of Sexual Harassment of Women Factory Workers

Foreign brands in the garment sector are at the forefront of efforts to prevent and address workplace harassment. They make an explicit commitment in all their communications to zero tolerance of labour and sexual exploitation at their workplace and commit resources to support their suppliers and vendors in adopting a zero-tolerance culture to harassment in their employee practices. Foreign garment brands train suppliers and vendors on the issue and help them set up appropriate redressal mechanisms as prescribed by the law. These companies include the assessment of harassment in their audits of suppliers to track progress and identify potential areas for improvement or redressal.

As per the law in India, Gap Inc works with its suppliers and their 118,000 workers to define their POSH policy and set up a complaints committee. Gap has also conducted training programmes for all its suppliers on the issue and obtained time-bound commitments from vendors to train all their employees. Gap has helped identify local partners to assist them in these trainings for employees to understand the issue, identify the problems and their roles and responsibilities in ensuring zero tolerance towards violence in the workplace. Regular trainings are also conducted for the internal complaints committee to handle complaints. Gap has included POSH components in its review and assessment of vendors and suppliers and includes suggestions for improvement in the remediation plan.⁸²

Foreign companies working with factories in the garment and textile belts of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka collaborate with factory owners to train women factory workers to help them claim their rights. The focus is on promoting health, hygiene and freedom from harassment. In partnership with CSOs such as Ethical Trade Initiative, these companies improve awareness in communities from which young adolescent women are recruited to prevent their exploitation. The drivers for this are twofold – the fear of repercussions if a case of workplace harassment becomes public and the realization that workplace safety and security is crucial in enhancing productivity.

⁸¹ Prithi Reddy, Bioconversations, (Biocon: undated) <https://bioconblog.com/2018/03/08/wonder-women-of-biocon/>, 1.

⁸² Gap Inc, 2018 Gap Global Sustainability Report, (Gap, US: August 2019) 35.

Among all the WEPs, workplace safety and security has the most traction and engagement among private sector companies, and there is an urgent need to bring on board the 50 per cent of companies that are outside the purview of the Act at present. Having a policy and complaints mechanism is only one, albeit a very important, step in making a workplace safe and secure for women. Companies need to build on this and deepen the engagement to tackle the social attitudes and biases that underpin the discrimination against, and harassment of, women. This would help shift the focus to the underlying cause, and move away from adopting a reactive culture to a more proactive culture of change, and demand individual and collective ownership and accountability in making workplaces safe and secure.



3.4.Principle 4: Promote education, training and professional development for women

This section focuses on WEPs Principle 4, which relates to gender inequalities in access to education, training and professional development, and on private-sector efforts to bridge the gap.

Issues and Challenges Faced by Women Employees and Women Entrepreneurs

Women in India face persistent gender inequalities in access to education and skill development. According to the census 2011, the female literacy rate (62 per cent) is lower than the male literacy rate (85 per cent); fewer women go on to higher education.⁸³ Women in full-time employment have to deal with gender biases in the allocation of roles and responsibilities; even when women work in the same industry as men they are assigned to support functions with fewer opportunities for career progression.⁸⁴ This stems from gender stereotypes of women's capabilities and the perception that women are less committed to their careers, given their dual responsibilities of home and career. Women who attain motherhood pay the implicit 'mommy penalty': they are perceived as being less committed to their careers and career advancement.

Most companies are male-dominated, and few women work in senior management. There are few or no role models and champions to mentor women employees at the entry level and middle management seeking career support. Very often women hold back diffidently from demanding training and skill development programmes for fear of being seen as too wanting or demanding. Organizations also reinforce unconscious biases in the way they view male and female employees differently. Male employees are often assessed on the basis of their potential future growth and fit, whereas women are assessed in the light of their current performance and contributions.

Company talent management processes and training and career sponsorship programmes reflect these unconscious gender biases and give men more opportunities to grow. This becomes the first obstacle to women becoming managers – the 'broken rung'⁸⁵ – and sets the stage for men outpacing women as they go up the organizational hierarchy.

The next section focuses on government and private sector efforts to address these challenges and build women's capabilities towards their professional growth and advancement; it includes programmes for women employees and entrepreneurs.

⁸³ McKinsey, Women Matter in Asia, (McKinsey: New York, June 2012) 3.

⁸⁴ ICRW, Women's Economic Empowerment: The Unintended Consequences, (ICRW: Washington, June 2019) 2.

⁸⁵ McKinsey & Co, Women in the Workplace 2019, (McKinsey: New York, 2019) 3.

Government Initiatives to Promote Education, Training and Professional Development of Women

Twenty-one of the 64 government programmes promote education and training of women. These are typically focused on women's entry into the workforce or helping women start-up their business. A large proportion of the programmes focus on women micro and small entrepreneurs. The older initiatives tend to focus on promoting women's capacities in conventional sectors such as tailoring, embroidery, beauty and wellness etc.

The more recent government initiatives launched in the last decade such as NITI Aayog's Women Entrepreneurship Platform have enlarged the scope and remit of training programmes to include digital and financial literacy necessary to women's professional growth. Also training related to upgradation of technology and bio-technology focus on promoting professional development of women in these fields. In terms of approach the emphasis is on women's lack of capacity, with little or no attention paid to tackling systemic gender biases that is a major impediment to women's professional growth. There is very little in terms of evaluation on outcomes and impact of these education and training programmes available in the public domain beyond number of participants.

Private-Sector Initiatives for the Professional Development of Women

Of the 62 private sector companies, 26 have focused programmes on building the capacity of women employees to take up leadership and career advancement. Again, MNCs lead the way in building women's capabilities and talent. A very few large and small companies follow suit; these include companies that have signed the UN Global Compact and those that are yet to commit to the WEPs. A large proportion of companies are from IT and manufacturing. Garments, financial services and retail are on par with each other in promoting training for women employees and staff.

Companies like HCL, Wipro, Infosys and Biocon have gender and diversity initiatives that create a safe space for women employees to discuss problems and seek and provide peer support. By providing opportunities for coaching, mentoring and networking, these initiatives instil the confidence in women to pursue their career ambitions and promote their leadership and capability. These initiatives create a gender-responsive work culture to counter an otherwise male-dominated work culture and help them advance professionally. They aid companies in promoting a pipeline of women for training in leadership and growth and tailor the training to address specific needs (delegation, negotiation skills and emotional intelligence). However, these initiatives place the onus on women to change gender inequalities and rise up the ranks; these fail to address unconscious bias or to engage male employees in promoting gender equality at the workplace.

A second category of training initiatives is undertaken by big garment brands to promote the rights of women factory workers in their supply chain. These initiatives cover life skills such as communication, problem solving, decision-making, leadership, financial literacy and gender sensitization training. These training initiatives aim to improve the awareness of women factory workers and enhance their abilities to take control of their lives, and these are critical in reducing the vulnerability of women workers to exploitation and promoting their capacity and well-being. Again, there is little or no focus on challenging and changing gender stereotypes or in engaging men in the dialogue for greater equality.

A few companies reviewed adopt a more unconventional approach to changing gender inequalities. They use training and capacity-building as a means to challenge and change gender stereotypes in the organization. These companies recognize the limitations and challenges to women's entry into and stay in the workforce, and they go on to identify a niche for them and design the training and interventions to help them fit these roles, such as the Reddy Labs all-women sales force. They also train women employees in non-traditional roles – such as process engineering, warehousing and research and development (R&D) – in the pursuit of diversity and enhanced opportunities for women.

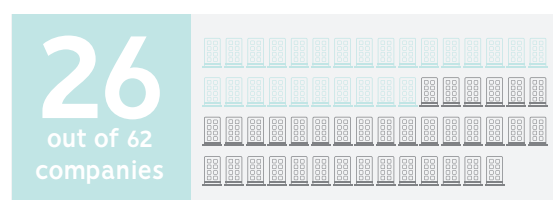
The Nari Shakti initiative of Volkswagen aims to increase the percentage of women in its supply chain (currently 12 per cent) to 30 per cent by 2025. Through Kompas, a nine-month training programme for high-potential female employees, Volkswagen builds their capacity and train them to take on leadership roles.⁸⁶ In a largely male-dominated sector, Volkswagen has made a conscious commitment to promote women's entry into non-conventional roles through appropriate training and capacity-building.

These companies demonstrate the willingness to adapt business operations and systems to align with gender needs and interests and challenge stereotypes, and they make a clear departure from imposing a gender-neutral or male-normative culture onto women staff and employees.

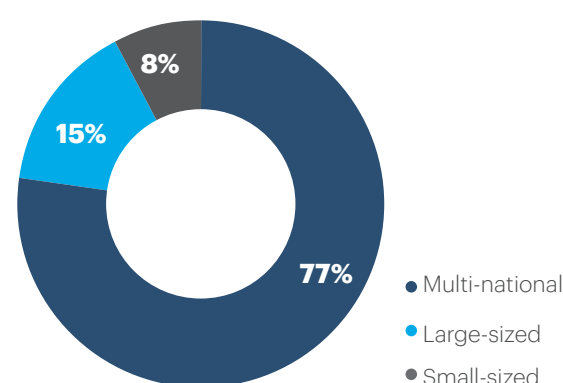
Figure 9: WEPs Principle 4 - Gender responsive training

WEPs Principle 4: Promote education, training and professional development for women

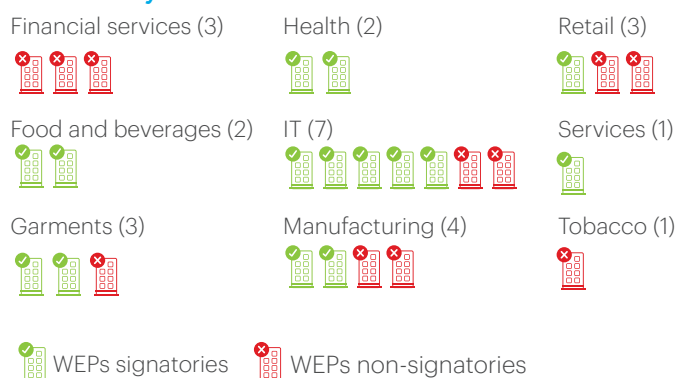
Gender responsive training



Scale of operations



Sector analysis



⁸⁶ Sourabh Sharma, Volkswagen India Starts Women Empowerment Initiative, (Jaipur: Business Standard, March 2015) 1.



3.5 Principle 5: Implement enterprise development supply chain and marketing practices that empower women

Much of the discussion in the preceding sections has focused on improving conditions of work for women engaged in formal employment. This section focuses on challenges to gender equality, barriers to women's enterprise and business and an analysis of government and corporate policies and programmes that tackle these.

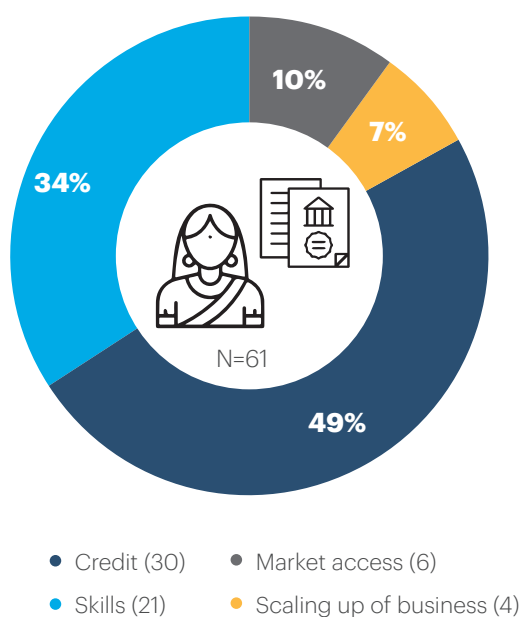
Women's Entrepreneurship: Issues and Challenges

Women entrepreneurs lack the combination of educational, vocational, technical skills and experience necessary to develop a productive business. They have limited knowledge of business planning, financial and working capital management, input/raw material purchase and market linkages. They do not maintain their financial documents in the required formats. This becomes a major barrier to leveraging capital and expanding the enterprise. Women have to compete with male-dominated networks in accessing supply chains, which are controlled by enterprises owned and managed by men. The procurement policies and processes of private sector companies are gender-neutral; these make no allowances for the lack of access of women-run businesses to networks, information and knowledge of corporate norms and procedures.

The next section addresses the degree to which these challenges are tackled in government and corporate policies and programmes.

Figure 10: WEPs Principle 5 - Government schemes for women's entrepreneurship

Government schemes for women's entrepreneurship



Only 6 of the 61 government policies and schemes mention assistance for promoting market access. This applies to the Ease of Doing Business, Udyog Aadhar, Transformative Livelihood Intervention Project (TLI), the Micro and Small Enterprises Cluster Development Programme (MSE-CDP), Mahila E-Haat and Udyogini at the national level. The support is limited, and it fails to fully address the access to markets critical to the growth of women-owned enterprises. In the absence of focused support, women tend to keep their business local and small.

About 75 per cent of the vocational skill training for women focuses on traditional sectors such as textiles, garments, computers, health care and beauty services.⁸⁷ Examples of such schemes

⁸⁷ Woetzel, The Power of Parity, 17.

are the Vishesh Mahila Uthan Yojana (Himachal Pradesh), Manipur State Women Development Corporation and the Training Centre for Self-Employment for Women (Meghalaya). These tend to box women into conventional value chains with limited growth and ignore new and emerging opportunities in these markets and in others (such as IT, biotechnology, food processing, energy, etc.)

Very few policies and schemes guide women entrepreneurs on the legal and regulatory aspects of running a business or provide handholding, mentoring or legal advice. These exceptions are incubators like the Women Entrepreneurship Hub, Start-up Manipur, Financial Support to Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises in ZED Certification Scheme, Women Entrepreneurship Platform under NITI Aayog and the *Udyam Sakhi* under the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises. The absence of support prevents women entrepreneurs and women-managed businesses to qualify as suppliers for private sector companies.

The vocational training programmes do not cover life skills such as leadership, problem-solving and critical thinking, financial and digital literacy, which women need to stay relevant in the job market and progress in their career. The training for women entrepreneurs and employees focuses on preparation and entry, rarely on growth. Only 4 of the 64 government policies and schemes support women entrepreneurs in expanding their business; the others focus on skill-building, technology upgradation, increasing productivity and modest efforts to improve market access. The focus is on the start-up phase and less on fostering women's managerial capabilities necessary to manage and grow existing enterprises.

As discussed earlier inequitable gender division of labor and intra-household inequalities in allocation of roles and responsibilities result in women performing a disproportionate share of unpaid work in the household including care of children and the elderly. This has a major impact on women's time, labor and ability to engage in productive work. A major shortcoming of government schemes and programmes is that they often ignore this fact and treat women's time as elastic. As a result, younger women in the reproductive age group of 20-35 years may find it hard to make full use of the government schemes and programmes and are less free (likely) to do so in the absence of adequate support to unpaid work including child care facilities.

Government Policies on Procurement

To promote the procurement of goods and services from enterprises managed by marginalized groups (Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and women), the Government revised the Public Procurement Policy for MSE Order under Schedule 11 of the Micro Small and Medium Enterprises Development Act, 2006⁸⁸ It was notified in November 2018, and it came into effect on 1 April 2019.

This amendment mandates all central ministry departments and public sector units to ensure that 25 per cent of their annual public procurement is from enterprises owned and managed by marginalized groups and 3 per cent of their annual public procurement is from micro and small women-owned enterprises. Micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) are encouraged to register on the Government e-Marketplace (GeM), an online platform to aid ministries, public sector departments and autonomous bodies procure products and services. Although modest, the 3-per-cent provision is a step in the right direction to support and encourage women-owned enterprises. According to *Sambadh*, the online portal of the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises

⁸⁸ Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, Public Procurement Policy, (New Delhi: GOI, November 2018) <https://msme.gov.in/public-procurement-policy>, 1.

(MSME), 2,170 women-owned medium and small enterprises did about 2.25 Billion worth of business in FY 2019.⁸⁹ It is unclear if it met the 3-per-cent quota mandated by the government.

Private Sector Programmes to promote women's enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practices

High-profile campaigns, such as Oxfam International's Behind the Brands⁹⁰ campaign, have helped promote ethical business practices and persuaded companies to commit to gender equality in their supply chains. Along with greater consumer awareness and the fear of negative publicity, this has persuaded international brands – especially in the clothing, apparel and sports goods sectors, such as Columbia and Levi Strauss – to promote and ensure ethical practices in their supply chains.

Of the 45 private sector, foundation and donor funded programmes reviewed, only 10 programmes focus on promoting women-owned businesses. A large proportion of the 10 are MNCs; small and large companies play an insignificant role in promoting gender-responsive procurement.

Retail-sector companies have actively promoted women micro and small entrepreneurs in their supply chain; Unilever's Project Shakti⁹¹ is a forerunner. Women micro-entrepreneurs in rural areas were provided training on retail, inventory and distribution management; the project provided employment for 80,000 women. The company expanded its retail network and reach in the process, making it core to the business. Walmart Foundation, supported by a job platform, has a similar initiative; it creates retail opportunities for women entrepreneurs by providing training on retail sales and management.⁹² The aspiration is to create a women-focused centre for excellence in retail-sector

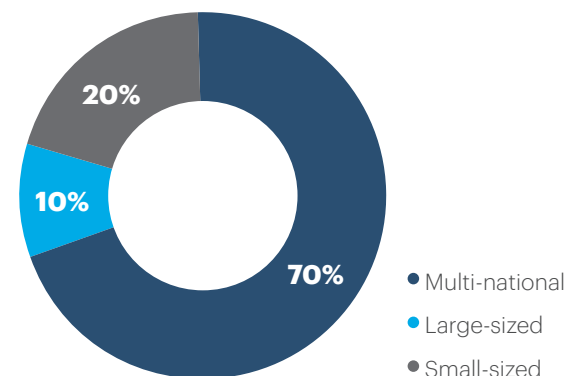
Figure 11: WEPs Principle 5 - Gender responsive training

WEPs Principle 5: Women's entrepreneurship and marketing practices

Gender responsive procurement



Scale of operations



Sector analysis



⁸⁹ Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, Annually Women Procurement Data for FY 2019–2020, (New Delhi: GOI, undated) https://sambandh.msme.gov.in/PPP_WomenData.aspx, 1.

⁹⁰ Wilshaw, R., How Behind the Brands Campaign has driven change in corporate policies, (UK:ETI, November 2015) <https://www.ethicaltrade.org/blog/how-behind-brands-campaign-has-driven-change-corporate-policies>, 1.

⁹¹ Hindustan Unilever Ltd, Empowering women in rural India, (HUL website, August 2018), <https://www.hul.co.in/news/news-and-features/2018/more-power-to-rural-women.html>.

⁹² Walmart, Retail Training, <http://www.wal-martindia.in/community/women-economic-empowerment/retail-training>, undated.

leadership and employment. Through its 5by20 initiative, Coca Cola has managed to mobilize women retailers representing 7 per cent of their 2.5 million retail chain.⁹³

Industry associations – such as the Federation of Indian Women Entrepreneurs (FIWE) and Her Entrepreneurial Network (HEN) – support women entrepreneurs through networking opportunities, seminars, workshops, incubation and pitch preparation. Through its Women Exemplar Programme, the CII Foundation identifies 15 women entrepreneurs and supports them in scaling up their enterprises through a combination of business development training, advisory support and mentorship. Three entrepreneurs are given a cash award of approximately Rs300,000–400,000.⁹⁴ These initiatives attempt to support women-owned businesses in scaling up as most government initiatives focus on entry and start-up and not on helping women entrepreneurs expand their business.

The gender mainstreaming of supply chains and promotion of women-owned businesses is at a nascent stage in India. The retail sector attempts to promote micro and small women's enterprises; the garment manufacturing sector has launched a few select initiatives. For women-owned enterprises to grow and break into conventional value chains, the corporate sector will have to adopt a more proactive and aggressive approach in its procurement process. This is not merely about the lack of access or opportunity; it strikes deep at the gender biases at the heart of market operations.

WEPs Principle 5 underlines the importance of corporate policies in preventing unethical practices and in ensuring the respect for and dignity of women in marketing and outreach material. The Unstereotype Alliance⁹⁵ of UN Women is a good example of gender-sensitive marketing and advertising. The Alliance shows that companies can shape and alter the public perception of how women and men are viewed. The campaign encourages companies to adopt progressive advertising and marketing practices that do not reinforce gender stereotypes. Member-companies of the Unstereotype Alliance, such as Unilever, commit to make a conscious effort to promote positive images in their marketing and advertising practices and avoid gender stereotypes and biases. However, none of the companies reviewed – except HUL, a subsidiary of Unilever – promote gender equality through their marketing and advertising material.



3.6 Principle 6: Promote equality through community initiatives and advocacy

WEPs Principle 6 focuses on promoting the representation, voice and leadership of women in corporate- sector engagement with communities. This stems from the recognition that men and women have different priorities and that women must be involved in shaping CSR agendas and issues.

The subsequent section evaluates the degree to which current government legislation and corporate policies and programmes promote women's leadership, voice and choice in community initiatives and the scope to strengthen these.

⁹³ Rajan Shah, Coca Cola's India Win-Win Growth Strategies: Empowering Women through Parivartan, (Delhi: Amity Research Centre, 2013) <https://www.thecasecentre.org/programmeAdmin/products/view&id=119066>, 2.

⁹⁴ CII Foundation, Women Exemplar Program, https://www.cii.in/CII_Foundation.aspx and <http://ciifoundation.in/Woman-Exemplar-Programme.aspx>, undated.

⁹⁵ Unstereotype Alliance, About the Unstereotype Alliance, (New York: UN Women, undated) <https://www.unstereotypealliance.org/en/about>, 1.

Gender Equality in Community Initiatives: Issues and Challenges

Private-sector engagement with local communities is limited and top-down. Large entities have ESG frameworks, but these focus mostly on managing environmental impact risks and the displacement of communities in the case of acquisition of land. These discussions, typically confined to a few functions and departments in the private sector, engage local administration and community leaders, and often exclude women and marginalized groups, given the prevailing power inequalities in leadership and in access and control over community and individual resources such as land. Women's lack of voice and representation becomes a huge challenge in private sector efforts to promote community initiatives.

The CSR efforts of private sector companies follow conventional gender stereotypes. There is little or no consultation of women and girls in the design of CSR initiatives to find out their needs or priorities. Companies often resort to parochial welfarist measures, reinforcing gender stereotypes and doing little to promote equality between women and men in the communities they work with. Women continue to be perceived as recipients and beneficiaries of corporate goodwill, taking away individual autonomy and agency.

A third challenge is that private sector companies tend to adopt a gender-blind or gender-neutral approach in developing products and services. By clubbing women and men, private sector companies vastly undervalue the power, agency and choice of women customers and ignore gender-differential needs, priorities and preferences in the design and delivery of products and services.

The following section examines the extent to which private sector companies promote gender equality through their CSR and community initiatives.

Government CSR Policy

Section 135, Schedule VII of the Companies Act, 2013, and the Companies Corporate Social Responsibility Rules, 2014 notification issued by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, mandates companies with a turnover of Rs 5 Billion or more or a net worth of Rs 10 Billion or a net profit of Rs 5 Billion in a financial year to spend 2 per cent of their net profit on CSR.⁹⁶ Companies are mandated to include an annual report of CSR⁹⁸ undertaken in the board's annual report.

The activities specified under Schedule VII of the Companies Act include 'promoting gender equality and empowering women and measures to reduce inequality'.⁹⁷ The provision indicates welfarist items – building hostels for women, childcare provisions, etc. The provision is qualified, and companies are advised to interpret these items liberally and broaden the scope, but it does not challenge the status quo or the inequalities between women and men.

Private Sector Efforts to Promote Gender Equality in Community Initiatives

Private sector companies engage in philanthropy through their CSR initiatives. As many as 42 of the 62 companies are engaged in CSR; only 20 have not reported any CSR activity. All the MNCs, foreign and Indian, have a CSR policy; they undertake a slew of activities and report these in their annual reports and on their website, as required. Most companies are in IT, manufacturing, financial services and garments.

⁹⁶ MCA, Notification of the Section 135 of the Companies Act, (New Delhi: GOI, March 2015), <https://pib.gov.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=116728>, 1.

⁹⁷ MCA, Invitation for Public Comments for High Level Committee on Corporate Social Responsibility 2018, (New Delhi: MCA, 2018) 5.

These programmes, implemented in the communities and areas of operation, are seen to be mutually beneficial as communities that thrive economically help ease operations and offer a skilled workforce. Companies tend to focus on complementary development services such as education, hunger, poverty, health care, environment sustainability and rural development. As per the Samhita and UNDP India study, 68 per cent of the top 100 companies listed in the BSE support reported vocational training programmes⁹⁸ as the most common intervention. From a gender perspective, the training initiatives under CSR fall into one of the following categories:

i. Training women to build their capabilities to facilitate entry into the job market

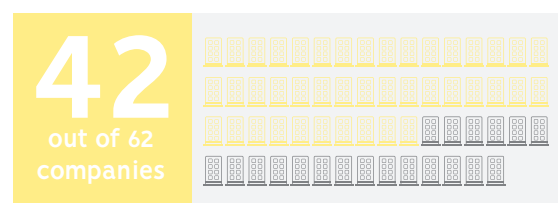
STRIVE,⁹⁹ a Tata Trust Community initiative, curates courses to train and supply a workforce and entrepreneurial talent for industries. The focus is on developing cognitive skills; training in relationship management, responsible decision-making and workplace preparedness specific to women to facilitate the entry of youth into the job market. The initiative is implemented in partnership with governments, NGOs and other companies to 'develop and implement industry- relevant skilling initiatives for marginalized youth'.

Through its PACE¹⁰⁰ initiative, and in partnership with CSOs such as SEWA Bharat, Gap Inc provides women foundational and technical skills like financial and legal literacy. Digital literacy refers to women's ability to use digital services including internet, smart phone, etc., and financial literacy

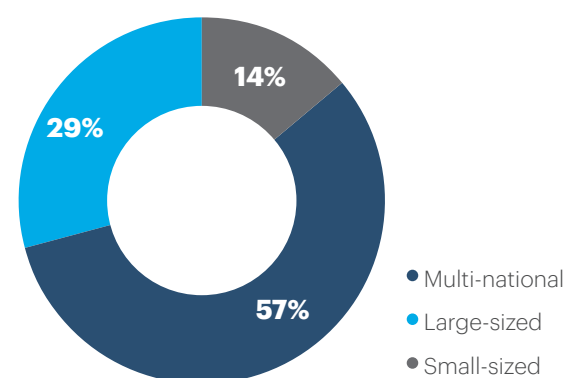
Figure 12: WEPs Principle 6 - Corporate social responsibility

WEPs Principle 6: Promote equality through community initiatives and advocacy

Corporate social responsibility



Scale of operations



Sector analysis



⁹⁸ Samhita, Contributions of Corporate Sector, 1.

⁹⁹ TATA Community Initiatives Trust, Tata Strive Right Skills Bright Future: Transforming The Algorithm of the Future, (TATA: New Delhi, 2016) 3.

¹⁰⁰ Gap Inc, P.A.C.E. Empowering Women, <https://www.gapincsustainability.com/people/pace-changing-one-million-lives>, undated, 2.

refers to management of finances (savings, credit, budgeting, etc.). Several established and well proven financial and digital literacy modules exist, but support to digital literacy is 11 per cent and support to financial literacy is 15 per cent.¹⁰¹ Corporate social responsibility training programmes focus on promoting women's entry into the workforce and emphasize technical, leadership and managerial skills; a few focus on life skills.

ii. Building the capacity of women workers in the supply chain to promote health and well-being and to claim their rights

A second category of women-targeted training under CSR raises the awareness of women factory workers of their rights. Often sponsored by the big garment brands, this category of training is part of the efforts of the international garment and apparel sector to promote ethical practices and offset the risks of exploitation in their supply chains. Greater customer awareness and an increase in the demand for the adoption of ethical, responsible practices is the main driver.

The Tamil Nadu Garment and Textile programme in Southern India, an Ethical Trade Initiative,¹⁰² works with agents and communities from which young women are recruited to work in garment and textile factories in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka to raise the awareness of worker rights and prevent the exploitation of young women. Sponsored by leading garment and apparel brands in Europe and the UK, this programme aims to prevent the exploitation of young women. The Sumangali scheme¹⁰³ recruited young women to work without pay for three years by assuring their families of a large, one-time payment towards their dowry after the three-year period; women who accepted the offer often had to work in sweatshop-like conditions and in violation of decent work norms. International garment and apparel brands (such as Marks & Spencer, H&M, Primark) work closely with their vendors to advocate and support ethical trade practices in their supply chains.

iii. Training women to challenge gender stereotypes and enter new areas of work

Private-sector initiatives such as the Agastya International Foundation fall in this category. The Foundation attempts to break the gender stereotype in skilling initiatives through their Innovative STEM Education Programme;¹⁰⁴ they partner with government schools in remote areas, set up science hubs and train teachers in experiential learning methods and in expanding outreach.

The first two approaches focus on strengthening women's capabilities, knowledge and confidence to facilitate entry and claim their rights in the workplace. They adopt a gender-neutral approach to promoting women's participation in the workforce by emphasizing women's capabilities and leadership. The last acknowledges gender inequalities in the job market and access to training, and makes a conscious attempt to challenge gender stereotypes. It challenges notions of what women can and cannot do, builds their capacities in new areas of growth and expands their job opportunities.

In terms of the overall CSR spend, the focus on women's economic empowerment is nominal and forms only 4 per cent of the overall CSR spend as per one estimate.¹⁰⁵ Given the challenges to gender equality and women's workforce participation, this allocation of resources is very modest,

¹⁰¹ Samhita, Contributions of Corporate 2.

¹⁰² ETI, Garments and Textiles, India, (ETI website: undated) <https://www.ethicaltrade.org/programmes/garments-and-textiles-india>, 1.

¹⁰³ ICRW, Building Effective, 59.

¹⁰⁴ Deloitte, Opportunity or Challenge, 9.

¹⁰⁵ Samhita, Contributions of Corporate sector towards women's economic empowerment in India, (Samhita: New Delhi, 2019), 1.

and there is an urgent need to advocate both government and private sector companies to include women's economic empowerment in their CSR agendas and priorities. This would benefit both women workers and the companies in terms of having a more capable and productive workforce to draw from.

At present, the few women-targeted CSR activities focus on livelihood generation activities. ITC seeks to provide gainful employment in its catchment areas through capacity-building and financial assistance for women in making *agarbatti* (incense sticks).¹⁰⁶ While noteworthy, these activities focus on enhancing women's productivity and increasing their income; the underlying assumption is that the status of women is low because they lack capability, access and opportunity. These initiatives do not attempt to change the gender power relations or behaviours and attitudes necessary for achieving equality and women's empowerment.

Gender in Products and Services

Only 2 of the 62 companies reviewed make any mention of products and services that serve the needs of women and girls. Bandhan Bank designs products and services in accordance with environmental and social opportunities; they give women-led SMEs collateral-free loans, given gender inequalities in access to and ownership of household resources such as land, home and capital. Financial services providers such as non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) and private banks such as Bandhan tailor financial products and services to meet the needs of their women clients.

In the retail sector, HUL has led the way in identifying a business opportunity in involving women-run and -managed small businesses to distribute their products. Products and distribution channels are designed to aid small, women-led businesses to manage with the appropriate training and support. Women are considered a distinct consumer category in the financial services, health and well-being and garments and apparel sectors. There was no other reference to gender-responsive products or services during the course of this review of private sector policies and programmes in India.

We may conclude that private sector companies make little or no effort to consult women in their community initiative process, and their CSR spend on women's empowerment is nominal compared to the scale of the challenge confronting the achievement of gender equality and women's economic empowerment. The training and capacity-building efforts focus on women's entry into the workforce and ignore areas such as growth and professional advancement, which are key to women's economic empowerment. The choices of livelihoods generation activities by CSR initiatives are conventional; these emphasize an increase in incomes and productivity, and miss the opportunity to engage women in newer market opportunities.



3.7 Principle 7: Measure and publicly report on progress to achieve gender equality

Issues and Challenges to Measuring and Reporting on Gender Equality in the Workplace

The spotlight of discussions on gender equality has been on traditional sectors associated with social welfare such as health, education and elimination of violence against women, etc. Women's

¹⁰⁶ ITC Ltd, ITCs Women Economic Empowerment Programme, (ITC website: Kolkata, undated) <https://www.itcportal.com/sustainability/womens-economic-empowerment-programme.aspx>, 1.

economic empowerment is a late entrant, but is gaining momentum in the international and national discourse, and it has moved from the background of the discussions on gender equality and women's empowerment to the forefront. This stems from the realization that women's economic empowerment is essential for equitable, inclusive and sustainable growth. There is also a marked shift in the ethos of how businesses conduct themselves – businesses now lay more emphasis on adopting sustainable and responsible practices. Gender equality and women's economic empowerment form a key aspect of these discussions.

One of the major challenges in this effort to progress on gender equality is the lacunae of robust gender-disaggregated data to assess gaps, missed opportunities and progress on gender equality in the workforce. The data currently available provides a macro-level overview at best of women's labour-force participation, but very little on specifics such as sectors, leadership of women, gender pay gap, staff break-up, adherence to legislation regarding women's care responsibilities, tracking progress on tackling violence in the workplace, etc. – all essential to get a fuller picture on progress and lacunae in women's workforce participation.

It is difficult to measure and capture change and transformation in the absence of a robust accountability framework and gender-disaggregated metrics and data. Also, current individual private sector efforts to promote equality between women and men in the private sector remain scattered and isolated, making it difficult to replicate these efforts or scale up.

The following section examines the extent to which existing reporting mechanisms initiated by the Government address these issues and challenges.

Government Regulation on Private Sector Reporting

In 2011, the Ministry of Corporate Affairs promoted the National Voluntary Guidelines on Social, Economic and Environmental Responsibilities of Business (NVG).¹⁰⁷ The NVGs have nine principles that form the framework that guides businesses in adopting responsible business practices.

In 2012, SEBI mandated the top 100 listed entities by market capitalization to submit the annual business responsibility report based on the NVG. This report details and explains the adherence of businesses to the NVGs. In 2016, SEBI expanded the scope to include the top 500 listed companies.¹⁰⁸ This was the introduction of companies in India to voluntary sustainability reporting.

In 2018, the Government of India adopted the National Guidelines on Responsible Business Conduct (NGRBC); these Guidelines specify the duty of all businesses in line with human rights principles. In 2019, the Government of India announced its commitment to have a National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights. In developing the National Action Plan, the Ministry of Corporate Affairs has involved representatives of businesses, trade unions and CSOs, including organizations working on gender equality and women's economic empowerment (such as UN Women, Fair Wear Foundation and SEWA), through national and regional consultations to incorporate their views.

There are clear overlaps between the NGRBCs and the WEPs. NGRBC Principle 3 focuses on 'well-being of employees', as do the WEPs Principles 2 and 3 – 'Treat all women and men fairly at work' and 'Ensure health, safety and well-being of all women and men workers'. Similarly, NGRBC

¹⁰⁷MCA, National Guidelines on Responsible Business Conduct, (New Delhi: Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Dec 2018) 13.

¹⁰⁸Press Information Bureau, MCA Releases National Guidelines on Responsible Business Conduct, (New Delhi: Ministry of Corporate Affairs, March 2019) 1.

Principle 4 focuses on support to marginalized and disadvantaged groups, as do WEPs Principles 2–5. The NGRBC Principle 8, which advocates for companies to adopt equitable and inclusive growth, is aligned with equality and inclusion, the foundation of the seven WEPs and a recurring theme.

The Guidelines have been revised and updated to reflect the commitment of the Government of India to both the United Nations Governing Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGP) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). The Committee on Business Responsibility Reporting, constituted by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, is tasked with the responsibility of revising the format of business responsibility reports for listed and unlisted companies by 2020. At present, there is no mention of the WEPs in the NGRBCs or business responsibility reports.

The SEBI business responsibility report format mentions women in only three instances – in terms of employee break-up, data related to women permanent staff who have received skill upgradation training and sexual harassment complaints. There is an urgent need to strengthen the gender aspects of the business responsibility report format and data collection. These offer ready opportunities to engage the MCA on commonalities in the NGRBC

Principles and the WEPs and incorporate the WEPs in the NGRBC and business responsibility reporting process. This would strengthen the ongoing efforts of the Government of India to increase the private sector's commitment and accountability to promoting women's economic empowerment and gender equality in their organizational processes.

The next section, which looks at the performance of the 62 companies on monitoring and reporting gender equality achievements, forms the basis for the recommendations on how these may be strengthened.

Private Sector Efforts to Measure and Report Achievements on Gender Equality

Only 20 of the 62 companies reviewed publish business responsibility and/or sustainability reports (Figure 13), and these represent all the sectors evenly; IT, manufacturing, garments and retail take the lead. Seventeen of the companies are MNCs. This is consistent with the increased international push on private sector companies in Europe and US to publicly report on sustainable business practices. The remaining three are large companies and adhere to the business responsibility report requirement of SEBI. Of the 20 companies, 13 have signed the WEPs – it is difficult to establish the causality of company commitment to adopt and publish information on business responsibility and sustainability reporting as a result of this. None of the small companies, including those that have signed the WEPs, publish reports on business responsibility as yet.

The business responsibility report is mandated to provide gender-disaggregated data on employees, but such reporting is uneven; some reports refer obliquely 'to a few women being employed'. The companies that specify the number of female employees do not give a break-up on levels or by gender; it is difficult to understand the gender gap in staffing.

One example of good practice in using gender-disaggregated data to analyse gaps and opportunities to increase women's participation in the workforce is the Vital Signs initiative of Wipro. Vital Signs helps Wipro track the people supply chain for any dips in the percentage of

¹⁰⁹WWIPRO, Women of Wipro, 1.

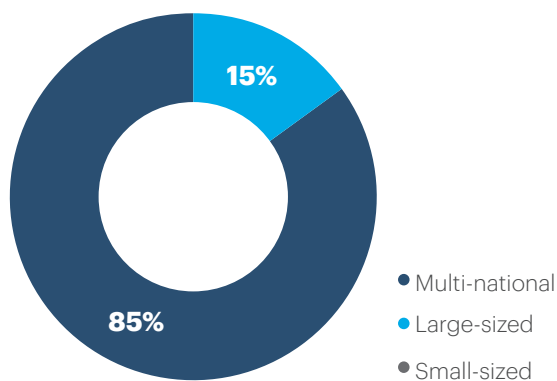
Figure 13: WEPs Principle 7 - Business responsibility reporting

WEPs Principle 7: Measure and publicly report on progress to achieve gender equality

Business responsibility reporting



Scale of operations



Sector analysis



women employees (gender balance), get to the root cause and remedy the problem.¹⁰⁹

Borrowing from other good practices, such as the data provided in the sustainability reports by MNCs like Coca Cola,¹¹⁰ there is scope for the business responsibility report to include data on the total number of female employees along with the figures for the total workforce, a breakdown of percentages at all the levels of the organization and a graph of year-to-year trends. This would aid both the regulator (SEBI) and the company to monitor and track progress in the gender break-up in employment. Companies like Gap Inc¹¹¹ in the United States go a step further and provide detailed, gender-disaggregated workplace data on recruitment and promotions during the financial year.

This gives a holistic picture of the gender status in employment, recruitment and retention, and it reflects whether companies walk the talk on equal opportunity policies.

Large Indian companies such as HCL¹¹² publish detailed sustainability reports, with gender-disaggregated data on parameters such as employee count, re-entry post parental leave for both

men and women, specifics on targeted programmes for women staff including numbers benefiting from these; gender-wise break-up on career development; participation in safety programmes; and CSR women empowerment interventions. It also includes women's representation on the board.

The report adopts a rigorous approach to addressing women's question; conveys the company's trajectory and its efforts to incorporate gender equality through the various functions; and outlines its intent for the future.

¹¹⁰ Coca Cola, 2018 Business and Sustainability Report, (U.S.: Coca Cola, 2019) 6, 11, 28, 29, 37, 64.

¹¹¹ Gap Inc, 2018 Global Sustainability Report, (U.S.: Gap Inc, August 2019) 24.

¹¹² HCL, Rebalance, Creating Possibilities through small acts, everyday, (Noida: HCL, 2016) 2,3,5,9,11,12, 17 and 26.

In contrast, the information in the business responsibility reports reviewed provide only two metrics – percentage and in some instances number or percentage of female employees who received skill upgradation training; and the number of sexual harassment cases reported and status as in closed or pending. The current metrics appear to be tokenistic and undervalue the need to strengthen private sector companies' accountability to promoting gender within their operational design and processes. The demand for gender-disaggregated data across the various functions – leadership, women and men in the workforce, salary differences, recruitment, promotion, career development training, levels, re-entry post maternity and paternity leave, women-targeted initiatives with data on women's participation, information on sexual harassment complaints and comparison on year-on-year change – would compel private sector companies to re-evaluate all the aspects of their organizational processes through the gender-equality lens.

The framework of the business responsibility report needs to be reviewed and revised in the light of the potential of companies to promote gender equality at the workplace and contribute to it. For example, the question pertaining to private sector interface with vendors and suppliers to adopt business responsibility pays little or no regard to gender equality and inclusion. There is potential alignment between the WEPs Principle 5 focus on Implement enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practices that empower women that pertains to this. This offers a ready opportunity to strengthen and measure the extent of private sector engagement in promoting gender equality in its support and auditing of its suppliers and vendors. This would help companies assess and evaluate the non-financial aspects of their business processes from the gender-equality lens. Until and unless private sector companies incorporate reporting on gender equality as core to their business – similar to the efforts undertaken in ensuring fiduciary and financial accountability – their efforts to promote gender equality will remain largely voluntary, optional and unaccounted.

Opportunities for private sector to support women workers and women-owned businesses post covid-19

This section explores briefly the opportunities for private sector engagement in minimizing the negative fall out of COVID-19 on women workers and women-owned business. It highlights potential areas for private sector engagement in adopting a gender inclusive response in dealing with the pandemic.

The World Health Organization (WHO) on March 11th 2020 declared COVID-19 as a global pandemic affecting 114 countries.¹¹³ The global pandemic of COVID19 has set off an economic slowdown of unprecedented proportions. In India, the national lockdown to help contain the spread of the pandemic, has led to disruptions to businesses, jobs, markets and supply chains on an unprecedented scale with an estimated 11 crore jobs at risk, a 30% loss of GDP predicted and putting at risk 45% of manufacturing output and 40% exports according to estimates¹¹⁴.

As in many previous crises¹¹⁵, a pandemic amplifies and heightens existing inequalities with women and girls disproportionately negatively affected. From employment losses and income insecurity with most women concentrated in service industries, in MSME sectors, in informal employment (all

¹¹³ Lan Mercado, "Ideas for a pro-poor and pro-woman approach to COVID-19", (Unknown: Downtoearth, 19th March 2020), pg. 1, <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/blog/governance/ideas-for-a-pro-poor-and-pro-women-approach-to-covid-19-69867>

¹¹⁴ Pranav Mukal et al. "11 crore jobs, 30% GDP: small businesses pushed to brink, amid looming distress and despair", (New Delhi: Indian Express, May 3 2020) pg.1, <https://indianexpress.com/article/business/economy/india-coronavirus-lockdown-economy-msme-6391186/>

¹¹⁵ Wenham, C., Julia Smith & Rosemary Morgan, "COVID-19 the gendered impacts of the outbreak", *www.the lancet .com*, Vol 395, March 14 2020, <https://www.thelancet.com/action/showPdf?pii=S0140-6736%2820%2930526-2>,

sectors that have been especially hard hit by Covid-19) to an increase in their unpaid care work and incidences of violence. Also, evidence from past global epidemics establishes long-lasting negative effects on gender equality with men's income returning to pre-outbreak levels faster than that of women's¹¹⁶. In short, such a crisis threatens the hard-won progress made towards gender equality and women's empowerment.

Undoubtedly the private sector companies themselves have come under enormous stress due to disruptions in the market affecting productivity and incurring losses. Under the circumstances it is expected that the private sector will have to adopt belt tightening measures to cut costs and keep the business afloat. That said, to avert the danger of gender inequitable impact and outcomes and reduce the burden on women workers and women-owned businesses private sector companies may wish to adopt the following steps in dealing with the pandemic:

STEPS TO ADDRESS GENDER INEQUALITY AND REDUCE BURDEN ON WOMEN WORKERS AND WOMEN-OWNED ENTERPRISES



Include gender in assessment of impact of COVID-19 on businesses

Companies in undertaking a stock-taking and review of the impact of COVID-19 on their business operations, activities and processes would need to include potential gender differential impact of women as employees, consumers and women-owned businesses in the supply chain



Decision-making

Ensure equal representation of men and women in key decision-making and consulting forums in dealing with the crisis and ensure women employees are given the opportunity and space to voice their views



Job cuts

If considering termination of employment/job cuts include maintaining gender parity and avoid gender inequitable job losses (in so far as possible) and avoid biases creeping in on 'male as main breadwinner' in decisions on termination of employment



Pay cuts

Companies may require employees to take a pay cut as an interim measure. In deciding terms and modalities of cuts ensure both women and men represented in making these decisions; to avoid the risk of male dominated bodies making these decisions may lead to gender blind and gender neutral decisions with inequitable outcomes

¹¹⁶ Helen Lewis, "The Coronavirus is a Disaster for Feminism", (U.S.A.: The Atlantic, March 19,2020) pg.2, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2020/03/feminism-womens-rights-coronavirus-covid19/608302/>



Work from home

Be cognizant of the increase in women's work load in unpaid work due to school closure and disruptions to support services and responsible for child care, elderly care and sick. Companies would need to demonstrate greater flexibility and accommodate temporary disruptions and demands made on women's time due to unpaid work



Health and safety

Communicate widely COVID-19 prevention measures such as safe hand washing practices, social distancing etc. and include in organization's health and safety measures



Health insurance

Provide workers with enhanced health insurance cover to include COVID-19 medical assistance, hospitalization etc.



Human resource policies

Review and amend sick leave policies to cover absence due to COVID-19 related illness and care of family members given the exceptional circumstances



Procurement policy and processes

Promote gender diversity as requirement in procurement process to ensure inclusion of women-owned businesses in submission of bids and tenders



Payments

Release outstanding dues and release payments to women-owned businesses in the supply chain without further delays



Safe transport facilities

Make provisions for safe and affordable transport for women workers to resume work given disruptions to public and private transport



Review of sexual harassment policies

Review Prevention of Sexual Harassment Policies to reflect the new 'work from home norms' and prevent misuse and exploitation by male colleagues with blurring of the professional and personal space and time



Domestic Violence Prevention

Make online training mandatory for all employees to sensitize them on issues of domestic violence including practical advice on steps to be taken while ensuring anonymity of complainants



Domestic Violence Response

Companies to develop source kit with guidance on safe access to emergency services, helplines, one-stop centers, and safe homes/shelters



Counselling on mental health

Psychosocial counselling to assist staff in dealing with mental health issues as a result of the pandemic

In sum, the COVID-19 pandemic throws up opportunities to address deep seeded gender inequalities and enhance women's economic opportunity. This demands a conscious and deliberate effort to promote equitable access to resources and benefits directed at women workers and women-owned businesses to help them recover from the crisis. If companies fail to acknowledge the gender differential in their COVID-19 response and recovery, in all likelihood women workers and women-owned businesses will get left behind. Companies need to ensure all policies, decisions and actions take adequate cognizance of gender differences and promote more equitable outcomes.

4.0 CONCLUSIONS

All the MNCs and large Indian private sector companies reviewed have instituted policies and programmes to address the gender issues and challenges under each of the seven WEPs. Companies that are strongly committed to the various areas and issues outlined in the WEPs also have a strongly committed leadership; the CEO and senior management drive the process.

The content and focus of the majority of private sector initiatives is on building women's capacities. The challenge ahead for private sector companies is to find ways to address and encourage change in gender biases, attitudes and perceptions that prevent women from getting ahead in the workforce. Engaging men and boys in the transformation agenda would help strengthen current private sector efforts to promote women's economic empowerment.

In terms of the WEPs, efforts have been focused or concentrated in some areas: training and building capacities of women to prepare them to enter the workforce; adherence to national policies such as equal opportunity in hiring, provision of maternity benefits and POSH; and increasing women's representation on boards of listed companies. National legislation and policies with clear, specific mandates have helped companies to incorporate these in their policies and programmes.

The emphasis is uneven, however, and largely ignores other areas of the WEPs: promoting gender equality in the workforce, including preparing a pipeline of women senior executives to take on leadership roles; supporting women and men staff in their care-taking responsibilities, such as of the elderly and dependents; helping survivors of domestic violence; and provisioning for the health-care needs of women beyond maternity.

There is an over-emphasis on preparing women for entry into the workforce and an under-emphasis on preparing women for professional development and growth as workers and entrepreneurs. Procurement policies focus on the supply chain and ignore gender equality, and these policies do not promote women's enterprise. Companies are silent on gender-sensitivity in their ethical marketing and advertising practices. There is scope for improving the involvement of women in community initiatives and in CSR commitments. Finally, business reporting process pay only cursory attention to sex-disaggregated data; that requires urgent attention.

The UN Women WEPs India programme has the potential to build on this small beginning and enlarge and deepen the engagement and commitment of private sector companies to gender equality.

Recommendations

Based on the analysis of the gender-sensitivity and -responsiveness of government and corporate policies and programmes pertaining to the issues in each of the seven WEPs, the following recommendations are made for promoting gender equality in the workplace, marketplace and community.

Government

Principle	Issue	Government	Government
1. High-Level Corporate Leadership	Gender balance in company boards and senior management	Ensure that companies include information on the gender balance in their governance structure and senior management in their annual reports and Business Responsibility Reports (BRRs)	Ministry of Corporate Affairs and Stock Exchange Board of India (SEBI)
		Mandate company's leadership and management to track, progress and report on gender diversity and take action to bridge the gap	
2. Treat all women and men fairly at work	Equal pay policies	Introduce specific regulation under the Code of Wages Act, 2019 to mandate companies – based on either the number of employees or listing on a stock exchange – to report on the gender gap in pay	Ministry of Labour and Employment
		Encourage companies to make public the pay scales for different grades as part of their annual reporting requirement	
	Childcare and dependent care policies	Develop clear guidelines for the provision of crèche and childcare facilities	
	Gender balance in the workforce	Mandate companies to include gender-disaggregated data of staff across the divisions and levels in their annual reports	Ministry of Corporate Affairs
		Government-sponsored skill training programmes should target women and facilitate their re-entry into the workforce	Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship
3. Ensure health, safety and well-being of all women and men workers	Health, safety and hygiene needs of women at work	The government should broaden the scope of legislation on occupational health and well-being to include the provisioning of gender-specific health needs, other than maternity, of women	Ministry of Labour and Employment
		The government should advocate that the Swachh Bharat campaign promotes hygiene and sanitation for women at the workplace and markets	Ministry of Water and Sanitation
4. Promote education, training and professional development for women	Gender-responsive training, skill development and continual education	Broad-base training for women's economic empowerment to include growth and / professional advancement	Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship
			Ministry of Micro Small and Medium Enterprises
		Develop guidelines for training curriculum to tackle systemic biases and expand women's skills to adopt technology, digital and financial literacy as appropriate	Ministry of Women and Child Development
		Create centralized data system to record all training to facilitate annual review and assessment	

Continued

Continued

Principle	Issue	Government	Government
		Rigorously audit impact and outcome of training programme and publish findings	Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship Ministry of Micro Small and Medium Enterprises Ministry of Science and Technology Ministry of Women and Child Development NITI Aayog
5. Implement enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practices that empower women	Gender-responsive procurement	Targeted support to women- owned businesses to grow and scale up	Ministry of Micro Small and Medium Enterprises
		Government women skills and entrepreneurship programmes should shift their focus from facilitating the entry of women into the workforce to facilitating the growth of women-owned enterprises, market linkages and marketing support	Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship Ministry of Micro Small and Medium Enterprises
		Should introduce for listed companies supplier policies and a quota for procuring from women-owned businesses – like the Public Procurement Policy	Ministry of Corporate Affairs
		All advertisements for public sector tenders to include women-owned enterprises encouraged to apply	
		Relaxation on criteria for women-owned businesses to qualify such as not required to be in existence for over 5 years at time of application	
6. Promote equality through community initiatives and advocacy	Gender equality and CSR activities	The Ministry of Corporate Affairs should endorse an increase in CSR spends on women's economic empowerment and gender equality programmes	Ministry of Corporate Affairs
7. Measure and publicly report to achieve gender equality	Public monitoring	Review and revise the NGRBC and BRRs in the light of the WEPs and strengthen the provisions on gender equality	Stock Exchange Board of India
		Should include WEPs priorities in sector-wise business responsibility report formats for listed and unlisted companies	
		National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights should include WEPs priorities	
		Audit reports and ensure that there are no omissions on gender-specific data in the governance structure and top management	

Private sector

Principle	Issue	Private Sector
1. Establish high-level corporate leadership for women	Women's leadership	Companies should set organizational wide goals and targets for gender equality and measures progress through clear performance indicators
		Incorporate performance and achievement against gender equality goals and targets in performance appraisals of senior managers
		Invest in building staff capabilities to promote equality between men and women in the workplace
		Institute special rewards for teams that promote gender equality and demonstrate women's leadership in organizational wide annual performance reviews
		Undertake a gender audit of company policies to assess gender sensitivity and inclusion and fill gaps
		Make public company performance on gender equality and women's empowerment and include in annual reports, business responsibility reports etc.
		Make mandatory women's representation in board, governance bodies and committees and remove bias and discrimination that prevent women's entry
2. Treat all women and men fairly at work	Equal pay policies	Refrain from asking job applicants about their previous salary to prevent women being pigeonholed into lower wages
	Non-discrimination and equal opportunity in recruitment, retention and promotion	The senior management of companies should review and analyse the gender data of employees and hold managers to account for delivery
		analyse gender-differential occupational segregation (roles, seniority and pay) and include these in annual reports and BRRs
		Industry leaders and WEPs signatories (such as Reddy Labs, HUL, Infosys, Wipro, etc.) should leverage their influence among their industry cohorts and sectors to commit to equal opportunity in recruitment and retention
		encourage and support the adoption of concrete measures to plug gender gaps in pay and gender variations in occupational roles as appropriate
		Industry bodies and associations (CII, FIWE, FISME, etc.) should support companies in reviewing the gender-sensitivity of their HR policies and processes, including recruitment and retention
		incentivize and reward delivery on equal opportunity by, for example, awarding bonuses for achieving gender balance or inclusion targets
		address unconscious biases through sensitization and training and by reiterating zero tolerance for discrimination in organizational processes

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Principle	Issue	Private Sector
	Work-life balance initiatives	promote parental support policies to free women of their domestic roles and responsibilities such as child and elderly care
	Childcare and dependent care policies	audit and review parental leave and care policies in the light of their WEPs commitments and adopt more gender-equitable measures, such as flexible work arrangements
		promote policies and allocate resources to support men and women in their caregiving responsibilities
	Gender balance in workforce	provide refresher training for women and managers after childbirth to help them reintegrate into the workplace
		earmark resources and time to research, analyse and review opportunities to incorporate diversity into workplace policies and practices
	Gender balance in company boards and senior management	enlist industry bodies, regulators and investors to promote gender diversity and gender balance in their boards and the workforce
		build the capability of their senior managers to support and retain a diverse workforce and commit to a clear action plan with targets
	3. Ensure the health, safety and well-being of all women and men workers	incorporate women's health and well-being into their Occupational Health and Safety policy
		expand the health insurance cover to the dependents of staff and include elder care
		promote leave provisions and flexible work arrangements to support the responsibilities of women and men in caring for the sick and elderly
		Safety and protection from violence and harassment at work
		The government should engage smaller Indian private sector companies to incorporate POSH and appropriate redressal mechanisms into their HR policies and ESG frameworks
		commit resources to training employees on zero tolerance to harassment, including sexual harassment
		promote the adoption of POSH with vendors and suppliers and train their employees as part of their CSR initiatives
		promote the inclusion of data on sexual harassment complaints and status in annual reports and BRRs
		include an audit of basic amenities like toilets and sanitation facilities in workplace audits of offices and factories
4. Promote the education, training and professional development of women	Gender-responsive training skill development programmes and continual education	The CEO and senior management of companies should review, monitor and report on gender diversity at all levels of the organization
		institute incentives and rewards for senior managers to promote gender diversity in training, sponsorship and career coaching of women employees

Principle	Issue	Private Sector
		include gender-diversity metrics in training and promotions and include these in their annual reports and BRRs
		train senior management and staff responsible for hiring and performance reviews in recognizing and accounting for unconscious bias
		Industry-leading companies should adopt gender-responsive education, training and career advancement as a core business practice, invest in these and incorporate these into their action plans
		In partnership with big brands, garment sector companies should expand the ambit of training to include unconscious bias and engage men
5. Implement enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practices that empower women	Gender-responsive procurement	Retail and garment sector companies should use best practices in the sector to design gender-responsive procurement policies
		link CSR initiatives to gender-responsive procurement processes
		sign on to the Unstereotype Alliance
6. Promote equality through community initiatives and advocacy	Gender equality and CSR activities	increase the proportion of CSR spend on gender equality and women's economic empowerment initiatives
		broad-base training for women's economic empowerment needs to include preparation, entry and growth/ professional advancement
	Promotion and engagement with women's leadership and organizations and communities	The senior management of companies should mandate the inclusion of women in community initiatives and promote women's leadership

UN Women

Principle	Issue	UN Women
2. Treat all women and men fairly at work	Childcare and dependent care policies	Review and analyse the draft Paternity Leave Bill and the Maternity Benefit Amendment Act in the light of the WEPs and best practices in other countries and draft a more inclusive Parental Leave Policy
		In partnership with industry associations, corporates, women's rights advocates and civil society, advocate for passing a Parental Leave Policy that promotes the involvement of both men and women in caregiving responsibilities

Principle	Issue	UN Women
		Commission research to analyse the cost and benefits of parental and childcare policies to companies and propose alternative cost-sharing models to make adopting such policies attractive, especially for smaller companies
		In partnership with the Ministry of Labour and Employment, Ministry of Corporate Affairs, industry associations and private sector companies, UN Women should use the findings to consult and advocate for the wider adoption of holistic childcare policies
3. Ensure health, safety and well-being of all women and men workers	Safety and protection from violence and harassment at work	design and pilot a toolkit or campaign to tackle unconscious biases at the workplace and create zero- tolerance policies for WEPS-compliant companies to adopt and roll Out sensitize and support companies that adhere to the WEPS in developing policies, programmes and mechanisms that support employees affected by domestic violence and include such development in the mandate of senior Management
4. Education and training for career advancement	Career advancement	Continue investment in education and training programmes for career advancement
		Advocate with Skill India Mission/ Start up India, Stand up India, Ministry of Women and Child Development, Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship and similar initiatives for re-skilling, upskilling, capacity building of women in the face of growing automation including artificial intelligence
5. Implement enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practices that empower women	Gender-responsive procurement	help companies map and identify opportunities in their supply chain to procure from women- owned businesses get companies to commit to institute policies and mechanisms that prevent unethical practices and that promote respect for women and their dignity in all marketing and outreach materials
6. Promote equality through community initiatives and advocacy	Gender equality and CSR activities	support private sector companies to design and review their CSR priorities to align with their WEPS commitments and priorities
	Products and services to serve – not discriminate against – women and girls in local communities	pilot and promote marketing campaigns of products and services (financial services, health, etc.) that fulfil the gender-specific needs of women and girls
7. Measure and publicly report on progress to achieve gender equality	Sex-disaggregated data and targets	develop systems to collate and analyse gender-disaggregated data from annual reports and Business Responsibility Reports (BRRs)

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Principle	Issue	UN Women
	Public monitoring	engage the CEO and senior management of private sector companies in reporting on gender-disaggregated data, analysing progress and developing actions for improvement in their annual reports
		collaborate with Stock Exchange Board of India (SEBI) in strengthening gender metrics in the reporting process of companies
		partner with listed companies in building their capacities to develop and publish (BRRs) with due regard to gender equality
		UN Women should assist companies in piloting gender pay gap reporting as part of their responsible business ethos

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About WeEmpowerAsia

Launched in 2019, WeEmpowerAsia, a UN Women programme funded by and in partnership with the European Union, works to increase the number of women who lead and participate in business in China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam. Its purpose is to advance inclusive and sustainable growth and build more gender-sensitive trade and supply chains between European and Asian markets through the Women's Empowerment Principles focus.

About UN Women

UN Women is the United Nations organization dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global champion for women and girls, the organization was established in 2010 to accelerate progress on women's rights worldwide. UN Women's efforts are based on the fundamental belief that every woman has the right to live a life free from violence, poverty, and discrimination, and that gender equality is a prerequisite to achieving global development.

About the European Union

The European Union is made up of 27 Member States who have decided to gradually link together their know-how, resources and destinies. Together, during a period of enlargement of 50 years, they have built a zone of stability, democracy and sustainable development while maintaining cultural diversity, tolerance and individual freedoms.



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