

# SCALING WITH PARITY

A publication by CII Indian Women Network

Providing equal opportunities for women allows them use their talents in the workforce and make better choices for themselves which in turn positively impact their families and communities.

Healthy development and engaging the women talent pool has a vast bearing on the growth, competitiveness and future-readiness of economies. It is a well-accepted fact that in a full-potential scenario women play an identical role in the economy to that of men and can add to the economic growth of the country.

Women tend to excel in academics. But this excellence has to be also brought to the workplace. Bringing women to the mainstream of economic activity has been my passion. I have been fortunate to be associated with CII Indian Women Network (IWN) which has a similar focus and goals. IWN has, since its launch in 2013, been engaging with career women and entrepreneurs in encouraging them in the economic activities. Needless to mention that the participation of women in the economic activities comes with its own set of challenges – be it at the personal front or at work. Secondly, women tend to face a lot more challenges than their counterparts. Traditionally, women have been engaging in certain roles in industry.

However, with the emerging trends, it is apparent that women need to shed their inhibitions and embark on opportunities which can open up a whole new world of prospects for continuous engagement and growth.

Against this backdrop, this initiative on Gender Parity was carefully thought through and launched by IWN, to recognise unique practices by industries and academia. As part of this initiative, specific focus has been given to the manufacturing sector as the representation of women is very minimal in this sector. Also the educational institutions play a major role in the development of women students and preparing them for the workplace. Hence the best practices in this sector are also being recognised.

We also envisioned creating a movement by industry on Parity. The book *Scaling with Parity* will serve as a reference on good practices on parity by industries.

I would also like to acknowledge the immense contribution of Madhu Vasanthy and Hema James from IWN Southern Region for this project.

On behalf of IWN and on my personal behalf, I would like to thank all the stakeholders who have supported this initiative.

I look forward to many more industries taking such progressive initiatives to engage more women thereby benefiting industry and society.

Anu Sriram  
Chairwoman  
IWN Southern Region

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# Introduction

## Journey towards justice, equity and gender balance at the workplace

In most societies since time immemorial, women have played a supportive role to men in family and work. Old texts of early period in India claim that there was a time when there was gender equality. But what is seen for the past few centuries is that women have been facing discrimination. And they continue to face injustice in all spheres where they work shoulder to shoulder, sharing the same responsibilities. In economics, the definition of work that is done by women changes the very concept of finding the total value of production. The opportunity cost of doing a particular chore changes its value. To date, it is impossible to get the right estimate of gross domestic product because of the inability to estimate the value of services of women at home, such as teaching children, providing managerial advisory on wealth creation and so on. Society thought that women were obligated!

When started working as part of workforce, for some time, men thought that the economic compulsions drove them to work, or these women were weird to exert themselves unwanted. Art and craft and a few select domains were some areas where women were invited, celebrated and even pampered. Changing fortunes of the world economies post World War II, developed nations like Germany, Japan, France and the United States of America started showcasing the power of women. Baby boomers in the 1960s in the United States and growth of the economy brought in vast changes. Then, explosive growth of technology, private equity and digitisation triggered further welcome changes. After a few corporate scams in the United States and Europe, late 1990s and early 2000s, need for better governance became a topic of serious discussions in media and in several other investment forums. Demands of the technology sector, capital providers and regulatory systems started sensitising gender parity.

India is a force to reckon with in the global economy, and there is high demand for talented workforce in India. Indian women continue to be a key source of this talent. Women comprise around 48.5 per cent of India's population.<sup>1</sup> More and more women are getting access to education and are opting for work. The number of women forming

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<sup>1</sup> Women in the Workforce: India, 17 November 2015, available at <http://www.catalyst.org/knowledge/women-workforce-india> last accessed on 03-04-2017. Also see Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation, Statistical Year Book India 2015, "Table 2.1 Area and Population by States (Census 2011)" (2015).

part of India's growth initiatives has seen steady increase since globalisation. Many women have exhibited leadership positions in both government and corporates since independence. Ms Indira Gandhi, the formidable Prime Minister of India; Ms Pratibha Patil, former President of India; Ms Sumitra Mahajan, the current Speaker of Lok Sabha have excelled in their respective fields. From the corporate world, we have Ms Indira Nooyi, CEO of Pepsi Co; Ms Kiran Mazumdar Shaw, MD, Biocon, to name a few who are role models to many. Nevertheless, a lot of disparity is seen when it comes to women employees. Indian corporations are yet to recognise fully or engage women in their organisations.

Challenges in employments in developing and emerging economies are far more complex. A lot of work from the developed nations have been moved to sectors like manufacturing, information technology, banking and financial services. Typically, the cost arbitrage was the driving force. Even in manufacturing, such a move attracted more women than men in sectors like apparel, consumer and fashion goods manufacture.

This book brings out how in a country like India gender parity is being handled by some of the institutions.

## What is gender diversity?

Gender diversity can be defined as equal treatment and representation of both males and females in an organisation. Businesses, being a part of society, necessarily reflect the way society behaves and performs. But businesses also hold a key to transformation of society by bringing about changes in its working environment. The Companies Act 2013 has tightened corporate governance norms by bringing in legislations on board independence and gender diversity. Gender diversity is not only a goal for corporate governance, it also makes perfect business sense. There exists a strong business case for adopting gender diverse workforce in organisations as they become more flexible and balanced.

A majority of buying decisions are made by women. They also influence the buying decisions of men and children. Additionally, women bring their inherent qualities such as empathy, listening skills, collaborative attitude and creativity to the table. Around 50% of customer base for any company is women, so their presence in organisations' decision-making should be a given.

## Context setting of the book

Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), Southern Region (SR), deliberated in its steering committee meetings on creating an exclusive system for women to network. The objective was to create an environment for increasing women participation in the workforce, attracting right talent, creating safe and congenial work environment for women in the Indian industry.

Ms Suchitra Ella mentions: "CII SR steering committee was brainstorming the key deliverables of an organisation for women. We referred to many organisations across the globe to understand the areas where we could initiate and enable engagement for

career women. We conducted a survey to understand the challenges and gaps existing in an environment that was still nascent in terms of having a strong platform for sharing, learning, enabling and networking. IWN was thus founded to provide the much-needed support mechanism with focus areas of learning and development, well-being and policy advocacy.”

Since 2013, IWN has been established in all the southern states and has also spread to other CII regions across the country, impacting several working and entrepreneurial women.

## Challenges of Indian women at the workplace

Indian women face several major challenges at the workplace. Some of the biggest and common problems faced are:

**1. Work–Life Balance:** Two important domains of life are work and family. It is important that the balance is maintained. It has become even more important in the changing social structure of nuclear families, ageing parents, working couples and pecuniary demands of life and family. To cite an example, today within 25 km of central business district (CBD) or an economic cluster, the real estate costs are high. An average dwelling costs about a crore of rupees and more! How would a school teacher or a nurse afford this cost? For a middle-class family buying a flat around the CBD is like building a Taj Mahal! It commits long years of paying EMIs – a lifetime effort. Similarly, healthcare has improved and longevity of life has gone up. These are welcome but the challenges include savings for retired life and for meeting the costs of healthcare. One may compare with developed nations and lament about inadequate social security, especially for senior citizens. India is in a transition phase where the average citizen wants to scale up the quality of life through owning property, healthcare and education to self and family. This change requires women in urban areas to contribute with an income.

Educated Indian women entering the workforce, face demanding conditions at work. At the same time, marriage and motherhood put additional pressure on them. The biggest challenge faced by women today is ensuring the balance between work and life. So, friendly HR policies and programmes that facilitate work from home, flexitime, maternity leave and a month’s leave in a year are required by women.<sup>2</sup> These are gaining acceptance and prominence only in the post-tech company growth era which is of a decade plus.

In a candid interview, Pepisco CEO Indira Nooyi weighed in on the provocative work–life balance debate, telling that it remains difficult for her to manage both her intense personal and professional demands. Ranked #13 on Forbes’ Power Women’s list, Nooyi candidly shared her journey of leading one of the world’s largest corporations while also trying to raise her two children and ensure adequate time for her family. For Nooyi, “having it all” is just an illusion that comes with painful sacrifices and trade-offs. “You have to cope,” advises the 58-year-old executive, Nooyi’s candour is refreshing as she doesn’t sugar-coat the challenges that so many professional women struggle with

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<sup>2</sup> Srivisan, V. & Valk, R. (2011), “Workfamily balance of Indian software professionals: A qualitative study”, *IIM Management Review*, Vol.23, pp39–50.

today, and she advises women to co-opt a lot of people to help them run both family and business. (<https://www.forbes.com/sites/moiraforbes/2014/07/03/power-woman-indra-nooyi-on-why-women-cant-have-it-all/#507ed6cd36bc>).

**2. Equal Pay and Promotion:** A recent study found that women earn 56% of what their male colleagues earn for performing the same work. This is ridiculously low as women exert the same amount of energy and deploy the same level, if not more, of intellect at work, and also being smart! This disparity would by itself demand a change – movement towards gender parity at workplace. As successful women grow, it is bound to bring justice to women workforce. Today, women hold only 7.7% of board seats and just 2.7% of board chairs in India.<sup>3</sup> With equal opportunity for women in higher levels of management, hopefully such symbolic needs would be phased out.

Women are promoted on performance while men are promoted on potential. Equally qualified women sometimes get less pay and are not promoted as quickly as their male counterparts. A study by Thomson Reuters Foundation shows that 43% of the women in US think that they get less than a man doing the same job.

**3. Career Opportunities Especially Coming Back after a Break:** Women employees seek assistance when they come back from career break. Many a times they are not able to regain their position when they come back after a break, particularly after child birth. Companies must ensure that these women employees who are coming back after a break get reasonable career opportunities and are integrated into the system.

**4. Sexual Harassment:** Sexual harassment at workplace is a major issue. In many cases, such incidents are not reported. Sixty per cent of the women interviewed by Thomson Reuters Foundation admitted that the incidents of harassment are not reported. In India, however, 53% of women do report about such incident. Companies need to have HR policies in place to address the issue of sexual harassment.

An inclusive and women-friendly organisation not only is beneficial to the ecosystem but also contributes to economic development.

Recommended HR Management practices to create a “women-friendly” organisation:

- Senior management commitment to gender issues
- Career development programmes for women
- Exposure of women to top management
- Leadership development programmes for women
- Job rotation for women
- Recruitment of women at senior-level positions
- Regular survey of women to assess job satisfaction
- Mentoring programmes for women
- Childcare facilities at work<sup>4</sup>

The case studies included in this book have tried to validate these aspects.

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<sup>3</sup> Women in the Workforce: India, 17 November 2015, available at <http://www.catalyst.org/knowledge/women-workforce-india> last accessed on 03-04-2017

<sup>4</sup> Adapted from Saini, D.S. (2006). “Labour law in India,” in H.J. Davis, S.R. Chatterjee & M. Heur (eds) *Management in India: Trends and Transitions* (pp60–94), New Delhi: Response Books

## Legislations on women employees in India

Women at workplaces are subjected to discrimination, unequal treatment and sexual harassment either from colleagues or their bosses and, at times, from customers in the healthcare, hospitality, financial services or wherever there is a retail interface. One can observe challenges to the dignity of counter sales women in retail stores when an arrogant, affluent customer disrespects her labour, effort and time by improper engagement of her service. Thousands of girls and women who come for livelihood to cities serve in tough working conditions and often confront an affront to their dignity! They are there to make a living, and this must be understood and respected.

Even in this modern world, where women excel in every field, they are still considered weak and vulnerable. The workforce is divided into organised and unorganised sectors. Though laws such as The Factories Act, 1948; The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976; The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013; The Maternity Benefits Act, 1961 have been enacted to address several important issues pertaining to the organised sector, challenges in the unorganised sector remain unaddressed. Many laws legislated for the benefit of women employees lack effective enforcement and are often dodged by employers, especially of the unorganised sector. It is, therefore, important to understand the existing legal framework as the first step towards women empowerment at workplaces in India and, if needed, to effectively implement the laws and take stringent action against violators and suitably amend laws when needed.

### A few important legislations are discussed below:

***The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976*** The Act provides for equal pay to men and women for same or similar work and aims to prevent discrimination in recruitment and service conditions, except where the employment of women in such work is prohibited or restricted by or under any law for the time being in force.

***The Factories Act, 1948*** The Act is a welfare legislation aimed to secure health, safety, welfare, daily and weekly hours, overtime pay, leave and protection of employees from their employers from unfair exploitation of the workers employed in a factory. Regarding women, it provides that “No woman worker shall be allowed to work in a factory except between 6 a.m. and 7 p.m.” State governments may, by notification, vary the limits as set out, but in no circumstance will women employees be allowed to work between 10 pm and 5 am. Further, there are prohibitions for women workers to work in hazardous occupations, for example, in pressing cotton where a cotton opener is at work and limits to the maximum permissible load. The Act also mandates the employer to provide facilities for washing and bathing, separate urinals, restrooms and canteens. One of the important features of the Act is that it requires every employer, employing 30 or more women workers, to provide for crèches for children aged six years and below of the women workers. However, one of the disadvantages of such a provision is that it would disincentive the employer from employing more women. One solution to this is that the government can provide subsidies or assistance in such cases.

***The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961*** The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 provides maternity leave upto 12 weeks for all women. The Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Bill, 2016

extends this period to 26 weeks. However, a woman with two or more children will be entitled to 12 weeks of maternity leave. The Bill also introduces maternity leave up to 12 weeks for a woman who adopts a child below the age of three months and for commissioning mothers. Additionally, the Bill requires every establishment with 50 or more women employees to provide for crèche facilities within a prescribed distance. The woman will be allowed four visits to the crèche in a day. However, it should be noted that as the costs for the leave are to be borne by the employer, it might have an adverse effect on women employment. Also, few inconsistencies with other legislations that provide maternity benefit can be seen. Most women employed in the unorganised sector may not be covered under this legislation.

***The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013*** The Supreme Court of India, in a landmark judgement in *Vishaka & Others vs. the State of Rajasthan* clearly stated that every instance of sexual harassment is a violation of fundamental rights under Article 14, 15, 19(1)(g) and 21 of the Constitution of India. It is the responsibility of every employer to ensure a safe working environment for women and provided guidelines making it mandatory for every employer to provide a mechanism to redress grievances pertaining to workplace sexual harassment and enforce the right to gender equality of working women. The Act defines sexual harassment in any form of unwelcome behaviour, direct or implied, that has sexual overtones. This includes physical contact, comments, demand for sexual favours, showing pornography and any other physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct. Any behaviour that is not welcome should not be tolerated. It should also be noted that any implied or explicit promise of preferential treatment or threat to a woman's employment, threats of present and future employment, interference and creating an intimidating or hostile work environment or humiliation that endangers the employee's health and/or safety could also amount to sexual harassment. The Act also mandates that every employer of a workforce shall constitute a Committee to be known as the internal complaints committee wherein, the presiding officer shall be a woman employed at a senior level at workplace from amongst the employees and the Act clearly provides that every employer shall provide a safe working environment at the workplace which shall include safety from the persons coming into contact at the workplace. The Act further lays out various guidelines to prevent sexual harassment and gives the steps to be followed for redress. The Act is applicable to any lady in the workforce – whether she is a domestic worker, daily wage, temporary or permanent worker or a volunteer – irrespective of her age. Additionally, it should clearly be noted that workplace does not only mean office premises it also includes “any place visited by the employee, arising out of, or during employment, including transportation provided by the employer.” A woman is free to either go for conciliation to settle the matter or to proceed with the enquiry.

Despite stringent legislation, lacunae still exists in implementation. Not all companies are complying with this requirement to establish the internal complaint committee for sexual harassment. Strict action must be taken against such companies. Companies must know clearly that a failure to constitute the Internal Complaints Committee calls for

a penalty of Rs. 50,000 whereas in case of repetition, punishment is doubled and / or de-registration of the entity or revocation of any statutory business licences. The aim of law is to prosecute offenders and render justice to the victim, though much remains to be done to improve the situation of women at workplaces.

The problem that persists is that we lack in effectively implementing the laws. Lack of awareness is another major concern. Strict action must be taken against the violators. Frequent training programmes must be conducted to create awareness among men and women. Rules should be conspicuously displayed in every office wherein every employee can read. Women contribute a lot to nation building.

The growth of the country can be deciphered by considering how women in the country are treated. India is a great nation. Many women have contributed and many are contributing to its growth. Nevertheless, we can grow effectively only when the spirit behind Article 14 – ‘Equality before Law’ of our Constitution is taken seriously and when women are given equal opportunities.

## How does India fare?

At 17%, women in India are contributing much less to GDP than global average of 37%. The McKinsey Global Institute’s (MGI) 2015 report, “The power of parity: Advancing women’s equality in India,” examines gender equality under four categories. The first relates to gender equality in work and the other three to gender equality in society:

- Gender equality in work (labour-force participation rate, professional and technical jobs, perceived wage gap for similar work, leadership positions and unpaid care work)
- Essential services and enablers of economic opportunity (unmet need for family planning, maternal mortality rate, gap in education level, financial inclusion and digital inclusion)
- Legal protection and political voice (presence of legal protections for women in 11 different areas and representation of women in parliamentary and ministerial positions)
- Physical security and autonomy (sex ratio at birth, child marriage and violence against women).

India’s position on gender equality is somewhat lower than its stage of economic development would warrant. Twenty six countries of the 95 that were studied, had a lower per capita GDP and Human Development Index (HDI) than India, but showed higher levels of gender parity. These included Cambodia, Bangladesh, Ghana, Malawi, Kenya, Madagascar, Tanzania, Uganda, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. This suggests that it is not only the economic stage of development that influences India’s position on gender equality but also non-economic factors, such as deep-rooted social attitudes.

**TABLE: Additional GDP growth from advancing women's equality**

Incremental 2025 GDP to 2025 business as usual scenario

	Full potential scenario		Best in region scenario	
	%	2014 \$ trillion	%	2014 \$ trillion
India	60	2.9	16	0.7
South Asia	48	0.4	11	0.1
Middle East and North Africa	47	2.7	11	0.6
Latin America	34	2.6	14	1.1
East and Southeast Asia (excluding china)	30	3.3	8	0.9
Sub Saharan Africa	27	0.7	12	0.3
<b>World</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>28.4</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11.8</b>
Eastern Europe and Central Asia	23	1.1	9	0.4
Western Europe	23	5.1	9	2.1
China	20	4.2	12	2.5
North America and Oceania	19	5.3	11	3.1

Note: Number may not sum due to rounding

ILO; World Input Output; Oxford Economics; HIS; national statistical agencies; McKinsey Global Growth Model, McKinsey Global Institute Analysis

Source: McKinsey Global Institute The power of parity: Advancing women's equality in India, Nov. 2015

The MGI report says that bridging the gender gap would bring substantial increase in economic value as measured by GDP. On full potential it is USD 2.9 trillion and best in scenario would be USD 0.7 trillion. It is possible to achieve 16 per cent increase in global GDP from women matching men in three key areas:

Area of improvement	% share in increase
Workforce participation	70
Mix of part-time and full-time	10
Sector mix and productivity	20

India has medium gender inequality on two indicators of essential services and enablers of economic opportunity (unmet need for family planning and education level) and high inequality on the other three (maternal mortality, financial inclusion, digital inclusion).

Indian women face extremely high inequality on two of three dimensions associated with physical security and autonomy (sex ratio at birth and intimate partner violence) and high inequality on the third (child marriage).

The MGI study further estimates that about 70 per cent of the opportunity in the best-in-region scenario would come from raising women's labour-force participation rates to those of men with the rest coming from narrowing gaps in hours worked and equalising the average productivity level of male and female workers. This implies 68 million more women would be part of India's workforce in 2025 than in a business-as-usual scenario. The national female labour-force participation rate would rise by 10 percentage points from 31 per cent at present to 41 per cent in 2025, closer to countries such as Italy and

Greece with participation rates today of 40 per cent and 44 per cent respectively. The box highlights gender parity indicators at workplace.

The study underscores the importance of supportive policies and practices in employer organisations and included a set of eight critical areas for India to consider. The eight areas could be part of a national roadmap for raising the economic empowerment of India's women, specifically bringing 68 million more women into the workforce by 2025. The government could take the lead in some of these areas, but the private sector can also play a significant role in many of them.

#### BOX 1 Gender parity indicators at the workplace

Area	India	China	North America
Labour force participation rate (F/M)	0.39	0.82	0.82
Professional and technical jobs (F/M)	0.49	1.10	1.30
Perceived wage gap for similar work (F/M)	0.48	0.57	0.61
Leadership positions (F/M)	0.18	0.20	0.74
Unpaid care work	0.10	0.39	0.62

#### Key insights:

1. India has the lowest performance among BRICS in removing gender disparities as per the Global Gender Gap Report (2014) by WEF.
2. In all Asian markets except India, the average representation of women at junior levels exceeds 50%. China shows the most marked improvement, particularly in terms of representation of women at senior levels at 35.6% whilst India shows marginal change with 10.6%.
3. Developed countries in North America far ahead as compared to India or even China.

Source: Adapted from MGI data.

The eight focus areas are:

1. Closing gender gaps in secondary and tertiary education in India's larger states
2. Lowering barriers to job creation to facilitate 68 million more non-farm jobs for women over the next decade
3. Expanding skills training for women to boost their employability in target sectors
4. Expanding the reach of financial and digital services to enable women entrepreneurs
5. Improving infrastructure and services to address the burden of routine domestic work, childcare and elder care
6. Stepping up gender diversity policies and practices in private sector organisations
7. Further strengthening legal provisions for women and enforcement of laws
8. Reshaping deep-rooted attitudes about the role of women in work and in society

Enabling women to be equal partners in society and in India's workforce would not only be inclusive, but also give the economy a substantial boost. Without tackling gender equality in society, those large economic benefits will not be realised. This research offers a framework for action and collaboration by governments, NGOs and the private sector based on the many successful stories of initiatives around the world that could help clarify the road ahead and open the door to creative partnerships.

## Best Practices

1. Empowering women to have equal opportunity as men is the basic foundation of gender parity – Gender equality in society and attitudes on the role of women are key to equality in work and economic development, creating a virtuous cycle.
2. Bridging the gender gap is important as substantial economic value is at stake in all regions – especially in India.
3. Gender parity indicators at work influence gender parity in society
4. Besides being a moral obligation to society, gender parity at the workplace has a number of benefits for an organization. MGI studies show an improvement in firm performance as women participation increases.

Better financial performance – Companies in the top quartile of Executive Board diversity have 53% better RoEs, 14% higher EBIT margins and better stock prices than those in the bottom quartile;

**(a) Better organisational performance:** Companies with more women in top management perform better on organisational criterion – 7% improvement of work environment and values, 10% improvement in co-ordination and direction; Improvements in leadership styles and capability building initiatives

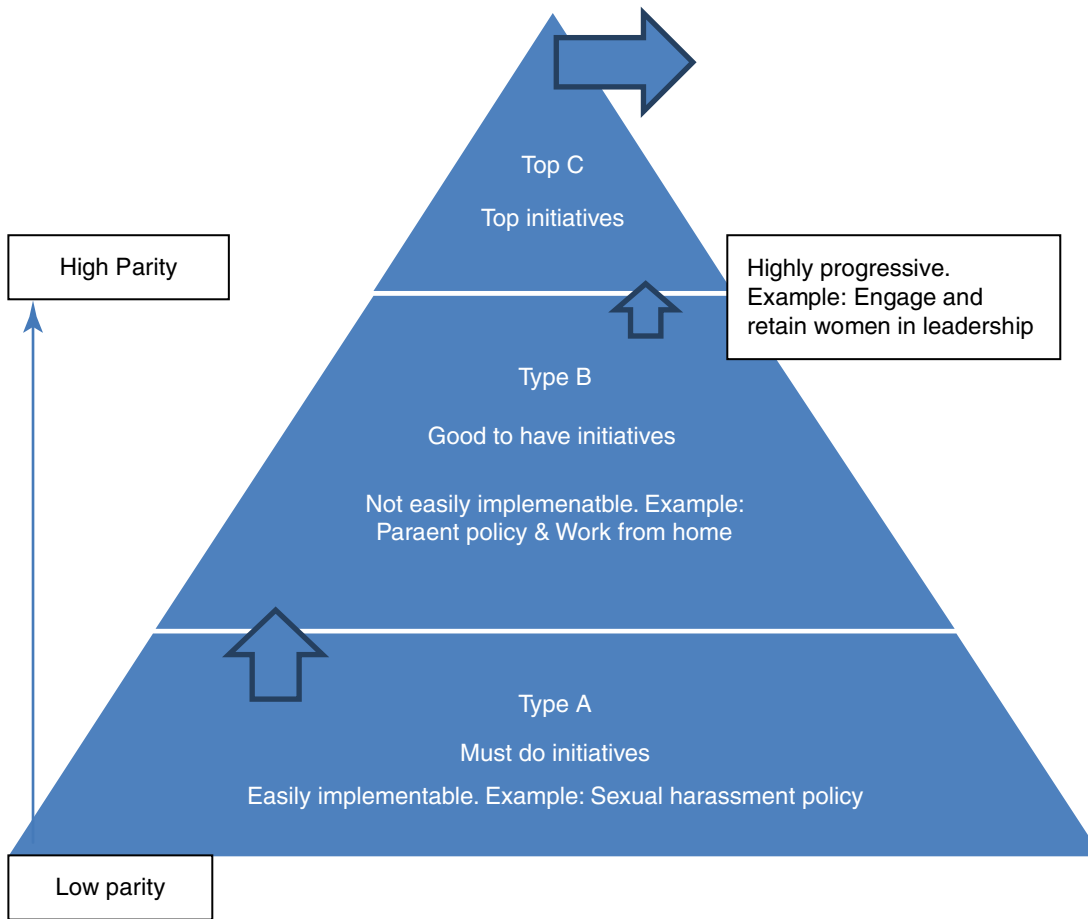
This could be by way of sourcing as companies that are perceived to be more equal, attract more and better women; and retention as firms provide more equal opportunity, they can retain more female talent and thereby cut talent acquisition costs. It is believed employee loyalty of women is high when other things are common.

5. **Business case for a company:** Companies who manage diversity well do better in performance and health dimensions. Gender diverse companies performed better than industry average. Companies with women in top management score better on organisational criterion than companies with no women. Fortune 500 companies with female board members out-performed those with single-gender boards.

## Key success factors for parity management

- (a) Clearly articulate the business case
- (b) Understand the current situation
- (c) Champion from the top
- (d) Define targets and consequences to underpin change
- (e) Increase awareness and skills
- (f) Create mindset shift rather than just redressing imbalances

The cases discussed in the book independently validate the above. Below is a McKinsey analysis of the types of interventions that companies can make. Companies should try to move to higher levels of intervention. Authors have tried to validate this framework and made a few suggestions on way forward.



Acknowledgement: Authors acknowledge inputs from MGI's 'Power of Parity: Advancing women's equality in India' report of 2015, McKinsey & Company analyses, and IFIM Institutions, Bengaluru. Adaptions of the content are done with permission from CII-IWN as they are part of this publication.

# Unlocking India's power of parity

## Bringing more women into the workforce

### Anu Madgavkar, Shishir Gupta and Taniya Bajaj

India has made strides on basic elements of gender parity, such as improving the child sex ratio and ensuring education for the girl child. Enabling more women to become economically independent could be the next leap forward. Technology is shaking up the way we work in a number of ways, and could help challenge gender stereotypes.

As we think about how to quicken the pace of this change and derive benefits of gender diversity for both business and society, here are a few significant prospects to consider.

### Opportunity for India's GDP growth

Women in India contribute only 17% of India's GDP, compared to 35–40% in most other regions of the world. This is because 83% of men are part of our labour force while only 33% of women participate in it. The McKinsey Global Institute (MGI) looked at three different factors – labour force participation, hours worked and the sector mix of employment between men and women, to arrive at these numbers. Among the women who are in paid-work, most are employed in informal/family work, with low wages and productivity.

It is worth highlighting that women in India do about ten times more unpaid work than men, as opposed to three times globally. In its report “Power of parity: advancing women's equality in India,” MGI estimates that India's GDP can increase by USD 0.7 trillion (INR 47 lakh crores) by 2025, if we are able to improve gender parity in work. This would entail adding 68 million women to the workforce.

Apart from the impact on the economy, the social implications of this addition could be very significant. Women's work would be recognised and valued, they would be able to earn an income and invest in their children's health and education. They would also improve their own financial independence and socio-economic status.

From a business point of view, the advantages of diversity broadly, and gender-diversity more specifically, are well-documented. Diverse groups outperform more homogeneous groups. This is not just because of an influx of new ideas, but because diversity triggers more careful information processing that is absent in homogeneous groups. Studies show that teams that include women are smarter. The collective intelligence of a group with women

members rises, regardless of individual members' intelligence. The number of women in the group significantly predict the effective problem-solving abilities of the group.

Diversity matters to financial performance. Studies show that companies with more diversity on average have 55% higher EBIT (earnings before interest and tax) margins and 47% higher return on equity.<sup>1</sup>

## India's missing women – what holds them back?

India is starting from a low rank and high barriers for women in the workforce. It is important to note that the problem is manifold. Women fall behind early in the talent funnel and lose ground at every step in their careers. One way to understand this is to examine the progression of women in the workforce.

As their tenure increases, women often shift from “line roles,” which are positions with profit-and-loss responsibility and focus on core operations, to “staff roles” in functions that support the organisation like IT, HR, Legal. The transition hurts their odds of getting the top job. This is true across geographies. In 2015, 90% of new S&P 500 CEOs were promoted or hired from “line roles,” and all of them were men.<sup>2</sup>

There are several barriers to women's advancement. They have less access to mentorship and senior leadership. A 2016 study in the US and Canada shows that, while over 62% men in senior management positions had substantive interaction with a senior leader once per week, the number was only 51% for women in the same positions.<sup>3</sup>

Companies often struggle to put their commitment to gender parity into practice. Though more than three-fourths of them say gender diversity is among the top ten priorities for their CEO, but employees do not see that commitment in action.

At a more basic level, women also face gaps in essential services such as education and healthcare, financial and digital inclusion; in legal rights and political representation; and finally in physical security and autonomy. Women's advancement needs across all these areas to remain a top priority in order for India to realise the potential of women in the workforce.

## Optimism that the next decade can be different

We believe India is at the cusp of major change on women's empowerment, and that the next decade could look very different from the past. At the heart of this is a structural driver – more educated girls. The share of girls in school is now almost as much as boys, and more women are enrolled in tertiary education than men in several states. U-DISE (Unified-district information system for education) data for 2015–16 shows female/male student school enrolment ratio for 2015–16 is 101.24% (enrolment rate is calculated as the number of students enrolled for a specific class divided by age-specific population). Higher rates of women's education, coupled with wider access to information including

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Women Matter (McKinsey), HBS and Kellogg school

<sup>2</sup> Spencer Stuart, 2015

<sup>3</sup> McKinsey and Leanin.org “Women in the workplace 2016” report

through the internet, are likely to shift mind-sets and attitudes. Boosting the shift are some notable efforts to raise women's recruitment in non-traditional areas: the Indian Air Force recruited its first female combat pilots last year, and Bihar has reserved 33% of its police recruitment for women.<sup>4</sup>

Government schemes are bringing a wider set of gender issues into focus. For example, the “Beti Bachao Beti Padhao” scheme seeks to protect the girl infant and child now covers 11 States. The Ujjwala scheme aims to provide LPG connections to 50 million below-poverty-line families, directly addressing the issue of unpaid drudgery and health hazards faced by women. Similarly, the “Swachh Bharat,” or Clean India campaign, empowers women, both as change-agents and as beneficiaries of improved sanitation. The private sector is making some major strides too, building on the pioneering steps in the banking and finance industries, which has many women in leadership positions.

## How businesses can catalyse change

Businesses can start change from within to attract and retain a diverse talent pool. We have observed that best-in-class companies who lead in terms of gender parity- i.e. companies with a woman CEO or where 30% of top management are women- have strategies to promote diversity which others could find useful to emulate.

These companies start to work on gender diversity earlier, three to five years before others, as there is a time-lag to impact. They offer commitments over a longer timeframe at least ten years in most cases. CEOs of these companies have identified gender diversity as a strategic priority and have cascaded it at all levels. Overall, the best-in-class companies initiated holistic change programs, they support and nurture a culture of gender diversity, and they often have a compelling change story to tell. Role models and change agents embracing diversity are able to inspire attitudinal changes among the workforce.

The journey to gender parity will require CEO commitment and continuous attention. But the prize of a vibrant economy and a balanced society is well worth striving for.

**Anu Madgavkar is a partner at the McKinsey Global Institute; Shishir Gupta is a Knowledge expert and Taniya Bajaj is an Associate at McKinsey & Company**

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<sup>4</sup> <http://time.com/4771825/india-air-force-women-equality/>

# What the Laws Say

By Hufriz Wadia, Partner, Kochhar & Co.

In today's diverse work environment, it is critical that employers and employees alike understand and imbibe the practices mandated by the law to safeguard the rights of women at the workplace; for a discrimination-free, equal and safe workplace. A gist of some of the more important laws and their provisions concerning women are set out below.

## 1. The Constitution of India and Fundamental Rights

Every citizen of India is guaranteed certain basic rights as the Fundamental Rights under Part III of the Constitution of India. The State is bound to protect the Fundamental Rights of every citizen of India, subject only to certain reasonable restrictions set out by statute or case law. Fundamental Rights safeguard against discrimination including on the basis of gender. Some of the most relevant Fundamental Rights in our everyday worklives are:

- **Article 14 – Equality before law and equal protection of the law.** Some of the landmark cases under this article in relation to women employees include *R Vasantha v. Union of India* where women's right to work in the night shift was championed and the Madras High Court struck down as unconstitutional, Sec. 66(1) of the Factories Act that prohibits women from working in night shifts during certain hours. Another interesting case is that of *Workmen of International Franchises Pvt. Ltd.* where the rule automatically terminating women employees on marriage was declared unconstitutional.
- **Articles 15 and 16 – Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth.** This article protects against gender discrimination. Positive discrimination in favour of women, however, is not prohibited. For example, the Maternity benefit for women under the Maternity Benefit Act and the anti-sexual harassment law currently only protect women.
- **Article 21 – Protection of life and personal liberty.** This article also covers the right to work with dignity and the right against sexual harassment. Various laws have emanated from Art. 21, including the right to medical termination of pregnancy, Protection from Domestic Violence Act, requirements for safety at the workplace including special safety provisions for night shift in various laws, etc.

## 2. Equal Remuneration Act, 1976

This law addresses and prohibits discrimination with respect to recruitment, wages, work transfers and promotion. The law mandates the payment of equal remuneration (both cash and kind) to men and women employees for performing the same work or work of similar nature.<sup>1</sup> Employers cannot use the pretext of equal pay to reduce wages of men to make it equal to that of women. Companies must pay the higher rate to all equally.

Companies are prohibited from discriminating against women in recruitment or, subsequently, in conditions of service such as promotions, trainings, transfer, except where employment of women in such work is prohibited/restricted by law. For example, under the Factories Act, women are not to be employed in certain processes considered hazardous to their health. The law requires companies to maintain a register with details of men and women employees, their roles and remuneration and provides for penalties for contraventions, including imprisonment.

## 3. Maternity Benefit Act, 1961

Where a woman employee has worked for a minimum of 80 days (including declared holidays) in the last 12-month period, the employer<sup>2</sup> is required to provide her with the following main (amongst other) maternity benefits:

- Maternity leave with pay (at the rate of average daily wage based on last 3 months wages) for:
  - 26 weeks for women with less than two surviving children;
  - 12 weeks for women who already have two surviving children or to a commissioning mother or an adopting mother<sup>3</sup>;
  - 6 weeks in cases of miscarriage or medical termination of pregnancy and 2 weeks in case of a tubectomy;
  - an additional month's leave with pay for illness arising out of pregnancy or miscarriage, etc.
- Low stress month: During certain part of the pre-delivery period, arduous work or work which involves long hours of standing, or which may interfere with the pregnancy or adversely affect her health, is prohibited.
- Nursing breaks: Women are entitled to nursing breaks up to a certain age of the child as specified for each state in the rules.
- Option for “work from home” for nursing mothers
- Medical bonus is payable where no pe-natal confinement and post-natal care was provided by the employer.

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<sup>1</sup> Sec.4 + “Same Work or Work of a Similar Nature” means work where the same skill, effort, responsibility is required by a man or a woman, and any difference is not of practical importance in relation to the terms and conditions of employment.

<sup>2</sup> The Act applies to all shops and establishments with 10 or more employees any time in last 12 months and to all factories, mines, plantations, irrespective of the number of persons employed as well as other notified establishments. It does not apply to establishments to which the ESI Act applies, except in certain circumstances.

<sup>3</sup> From the date the child is handed over to the adopting mother.

- Another important provision to be aware of is that an employer cannot deduct wages or discharge or dismiss a woman employee or vary her conditions of service to her disadvantage on grounds of maternity leave, etc.
- A woman cannot be made to work during the six weeks immediately following delivery.
- With effect from 1 July 2017, establishments with 50 or more employees must also mandatorily provide a crèche facility.

Companies seeking to incorporate industry best practices may, in addition to the above mandatory provisions, also consider the option for flexible timings and mandatory paternity leave.

#### **4. Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 and the Rules Thereunder**

Sexual harassment is a violation of several fundamental rights of a woman. Amongst others, it violates the right to equality,<sup>4</sup> right to life and to live with dignity<sup>5</sup> and the right to practise any profession or carry on any occupation, trade or business (which includes a right to a safe environment free from sexual harassment).<sup>6</sup> The definition of sexual harassment includes any one or more unwelcome acts or behaviour (whether directly or indirectly or by implication), namely:

- Physical contact and advances;
- A demand or request for sexual favours;
- Making sexually coloured remarks;
- Showing pornography; and
- Any other unwelcome physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct of sexual nature.

The law recognises that sexual harassment may sometimes involve quid pro quo situations such as where sexual favours are sought with an implied or explicit promise of preferential treatment or a threat of detrimental treatment and may also involve the creation of an intimidating, offensive or hostile work environment.

The law aims to prevent sexual harassment at the workplace, provide protection against sexual harassment of women at the workplace and redress complaints of the same or matters connected or incidental thereto. It applies to all organisations (not just to those with 10 or more employees) and mandates that no woman shall be subjected to sexual harassment at any workplace whether she is employed there or not. It mandates the creation of an Internal Complaints Committee (“ICC”) by every employer who employs 10 or more people (not necessarily women). Those with less than 10 employees can approach the local complaints committee established at the district level. The ICC/LCC is the redressal committee, conducts enquiries and recommends action, where required.

Employers are required under this law to inter alia:

- Provide a safe working environment with zero tolerance towards sexual harassment.
- Have in place an anti-sexual harassment policy in writing, which must be accessible to all employees.

<sup>4</sup> Articles 14 and 15 of the Constitution of India

<sup>5</sup> Article 21

<sup>6</sup> Article 19(1)(g)

- Display certain details of the law as well as penalties for contravention and the contact details of the complaints committee on notice boards accessible to all.
- Constitute an ICC to hear and redress complaints – with minimum four members of which at least 50% must be women and
  - The presiding officer of which must be a senior female employee;
  - Two other members must be employees preferably with experience in social service or dedicated to the cause of women; and
  - The fourth member must be an external non-employee member (being a lawyer or NGO member or social worker with relevant experience as prescribed in the rules)
- Arrange/conduct awareness and training programmes sensitising employees about sexual harassment (including the concept of consent, impact versus intent) and its consequences.
- Arrange for training for the ICC on how to conduct enquiries, etc.
- Enable the ICC to conduct its conciliation/enquiry proceedings without interference and recommend action to the employer.
- Take effective enforcement measures and action based on the ICC recommendations.
- Ensure annual reporting as per the Act.

It should be understood that this law is in addition to and not in derogation of any other laws in force and therefore action under this law can be taken simultaneously with action under another law (such as crimes under the Indian Penal Code) for the same acts of sexual harassment. Employers should take note that the filing of a police complaint is no reason to abandon a complaint made to the ICC. The law provides strict and severe penalties for contraventions under this law by employers, including cancellation of licenses in case of a repeat offence.

It may be noted that sexual harassment is also a crime under the Indian Penal Code and is punishable as an offence with rigorous imprisonment of up to three years and/or fine. Companies are mandated by the law to provide assistance to a woman if she chooses to file a police complaint in relation to the offence under the IPC or other law. Cause to initiate action under IPC or other law against the perpetrator or if the aggrieved woman so desires, where the perpetrator is not an employee, in the workplace at which the incident of sexual harassment took place. Certain serious offences are required to be reported by any person who has knowledge of the same as per Section 39(1) of the Code of Criminal Procedure.

## **5. Shops and Establishments Act**

Each state regulates the conditions of work and employment of employees in shops and establishments in the relevant state, through a Shops and Establishments Act for that state. Tamil Nadu has the Tamil Nadu Shops and Establishments Act, 1947. These Acts usually provide for tighter security to ensure safety of women working late hours, require the provision of separate safety lockers, restrooms, wash rooms and other basic amenities for women employees by the employer, transport for

those working on late shifts and some also specify or limit work hours for women. In Tamil Nadu, by a notification under this law, the state government prohibited women from working beyond 8pm on any day in normal circumstances but exempted software companies (IT/ITES/BPO sector) from this exemption, thereby enabling women to be employed in the night shift in this sector. Stringent safety and security requirements, however, need to be met by the employer. The courts in the case of *R Vasantha v. Union of India* recommended certain measures that can be adopted to ensure women's safety at the workplace, which included:

- Women working in shifts to be in batches of not less than 10 or not less than two-thirds of the total night shift strength;
- Provision of all women transport facility;
- Proper lighting in and around the premises; and
- Security personnel.

## **6. Factories Act**

This Act regulates the employment terms and conditions of service and work of those employed in factories. Some of the provisions relevant to women employees are set out below:

- **Creches:** Every factory with more than thirty women workers is required to provide and maintain a suitable room or rooms for the use of their children under the age of six years, must have adequate lighting and ventilation, be maintained in a clean and sanitary condition and be under the charge of women trained in the care of children and infants. States enacted rules under the Factories Act also list out further requirements for crèches, such as facilities for washing and changing their clothing, providing free milk and refreshment for the children and facility as well as breaks for mothers to feed their children.
- Factories are prohibited from employing women workmen in hazardous occupations, such as pressing cotton where a cotton opener is at work, limiting weights that women workers are to carry and prohibiting them from certain dangerous occupations prescribed by the State government, that are likely to cause health concerns.
- Factories are required to provide separate toilets and washing facilities for women.
- Section 66 of the Factories Act prohibits the employment of women in a factory at any time except between 6 a.m. and 7 p.m. The State Governments however have been given the power to vary these timings by notification. However the section still prohibits the employment of women between 10 p.m. and 5 a.m. This provision is seen by many as being discriminatory and has been struck down by two High Courts including the Madras High Court, as being in violation of fundamental rights guaranteed under the Constitution of India.

There are several other laws that aim to protect women. Companies and employers may consider educating their employees on the rights of women under these laws to

ensure the welfare and safety of their employees. Some of these laws include the Dowry Prohibition Act, the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act and the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act.

Educating employers and employees of their rights and obligations is the first step towards a more equal workplace. It is hoped that companies and senior management will lead by example and strive to build a woman friendly workplace, ensure zero tolerance to sexual harassment and invest the time and effort to train personnel on gender and workplace sensitivity concerns.

### Introduction

Commercial vehicle sector is one of the key industrial segments in India, which impacts the economy significantly. Its demand is also a derived demand. The growth of commercial vehicles production and sales is one of the key indicators of economic growth. The Hinduja Group runs one of the well-established commercial vehicles manufacturing company, namely Ashok Leyland, based out of Chennai.

Ashok Leyland, a flagship company of the Hinduja Group, is the second largest manufacturer of commercial vehicles in India, fourth largest manufacturer of buses in the world and sixteenth largest manufacturer of trucks globally. With a turnover more than USD 2.3 billion (2012–13) and a footprint that extends across 50 countries, it is one of the most fully integrated manufacturing companies this side of the globe. It has its headquarters in Chennai, India, with manufacturing footprint spread across the world with eight plants; including one at Ras Al Khaimah (UAE). It has state-of-the-art manufacturing facilities spread across the country with factories located at Alwar, Bhandara, Ennore, Hosur and Pantnagar.

### Need for gender parity practices

There are many young women in Chennai and Tamil Nadu today who have taken to assembling parts of the engine of best-selling cars in India. Their hands are nimble and they all finish the given delicate task in less than three minutes, and their ability to effortlessly repeat the work is commendable. These women have all come up the hard way to get a better life. Many times the family has given support in the hope that these young women will push forth to make a better life not only for themselves but for everyone in the household. To keep the faith reposed in them, these girls are well qualified too. Most have a diploma in electrical and electronics engineering, which they hope will help in getting them a good well-paying job in the manufacturing industry. This is the story of most women today from small towns who are increasingly opting for careers in manufacturing. They are doing it at the right time, as the auto industry is facing a shortage of skilled labour.

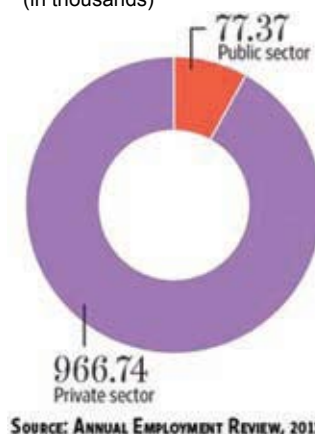
The Sriperumbudur–Oragadam belt on the outskirts of Chennai accounts for 40% of the country's automobile production. Even though Tamil Nadu has about 479 polytechnics and 689 industrial training institutes (ITIs), human resource (HR) heads of

auto companies have raised the alarm on the number of employable, skilled labour from these institutions. ITIs are the places from where the automobile companies hire their entry-level employees. Many large carmakers have adopted ITIs under public–private partnership in a skill development initiative.

**Figure 1: Women in organised manufacturing sector**

**PRIME NUMBERS**

**Women employees in  
the organised  
Manufacturing sector**  
(in thousands)



“Availability of skilled labor is grave. It is becoming even grimmer because of lack of quality, especially at the entry-level position,” says N V Balachandar, executive director, HR, Ashok Leyland. Of the 1600 people on its shop floor in Pantnagar, Uttarakhand, only 148 are women employees.

The skew in the number of women in this workforce starts early: 70% of students in manufacturing-related courses at ITIs are male (Figure 1). As per the Directorate General of Employment and Training (DGET) reports, even though women have been admitted into ITIs since 1960, they still constitute only 25% of the total 25,000 students in Tamil Nadu who study each year in ITIs.

In the World Economic Forum’s 2012 Global Gender Gap Report, India is in the lowest rank of the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China) economies featured in the Index. Out of 135 countries, India ranks 123 in the economic participation index and 121 in education attainment, while China ranks 58 in economic participation, and 85 in education attainment.

One of the main reasons is the constraint that women can work only in the general shifts. This is because The Factories Act, 1948 (Act No.63 of 1948) mandates that women cannot be employed in any part of the factory during the night or to be specific, they can be employed only between 6am and 7pm. And with State Government permission may be extended up to 10 pm on certain conditions.

## Gender parity initiatives

Ashok Leyland, right from the corporate, plant, departmental and team levels, has focused on bringing inclusivity and improving gender equality. Ashok Leyland is focused on empowering women by enhancing self-esteem, confidence and capability to take up

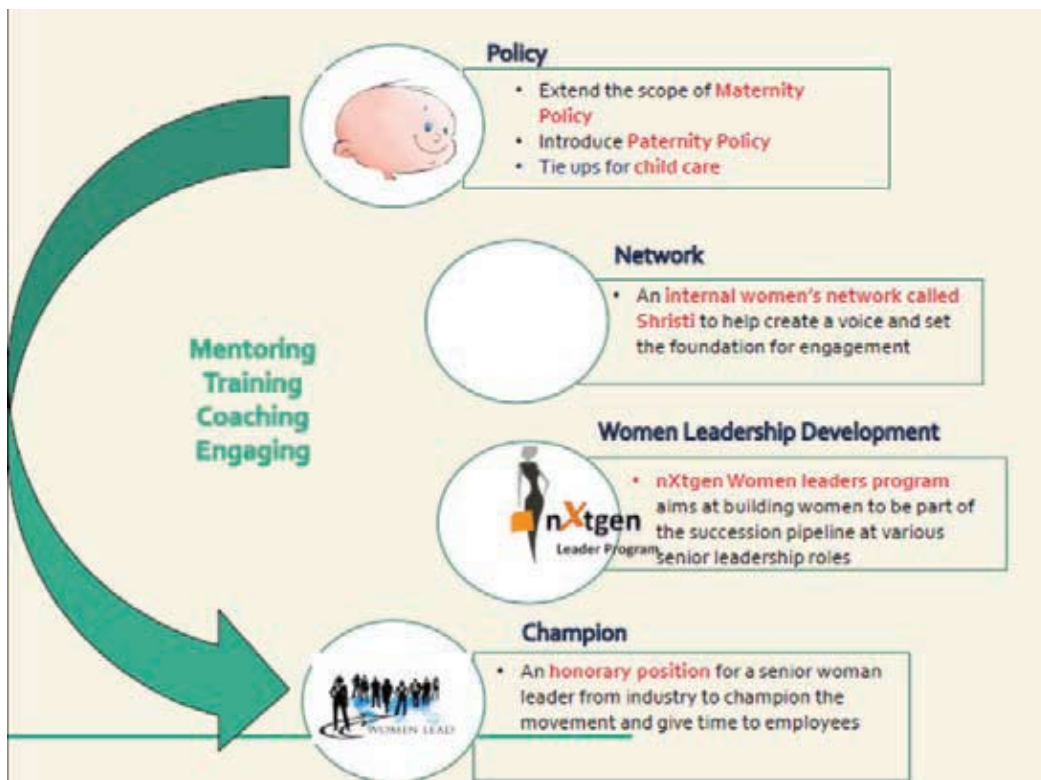
even leadership positions by implementing inclusive approach and creating a congenial environment for the same. The overall inclusivity objectives of the company include:

- Increase women's participation in the workforce
- Make environment more conducive for collaboration and diverse ways of working.
- Create a framework for encouraging and capturing voice towards better engagement.

The current share of women employees in all roles in Ashok Leyland is 5%. The general history of factories operation in India shows conservative engagement of women workforce. The company has about fifteen women in senior management levels. Again, the share seems conservative but stands out in the traditional automotive business in India. One of the facts that need to be reckoned is that number of women engineers passing out with a mechanical engineering degree has been very less.

Society is opening up, and other socio-economic factors are becoming conducive. More women are pursuing higher education in engineering and management and are keen in taking up careers in corporate and plant-level positions. In line with this, Ashok Leyland has drawn an ambitious plan. It wants to take gender diversity from 5% to 12% by 2022. It aims at increasing the entry-level positions (Graduate Engineer Trainee (GET) and Diploma Engineer Trainee (DET)) to 50%. Further, it aims at increasing the demographic diversity from 20% to 40% by 2022. These are five-year targets, which can be reasonably achieved with strategic implementation.

**Figure 2: Diversity and inclusivity agenda at Ashok Leyland**



Ashok Leyland gender diversity and inclusivity agenda is broadly categorised in Figure 2.

**Scope of Maternity Policy:** The company has been proactively working on providing maternity benefits to its employees. It provides 12 weeks of paid leave benefits as per the statutory requirements. It further provides another eight weeks with full pay and four weeks with half pay. This procedure was before the Maternity Benefit Amendment Act (2017) was implemented.

When women employees join back after their maternity leave, they can opt for crèche facilities with which the company has tied up. As part of its diversity and inclusion agenda, the company is developing a crèche for working parents at their Guindy Corporate Office and Tech Centre. The crèche at Guindy is started and run in partnership with Amelio, a dedicated service provider in the field of child care. The capacity of the crèche is 52, and the number of children the company opted for is about 40. Age group of children ranges from 6 months to 8 years. The Tech Centre crèche is operational in-house for five children.

The company is also deliberately implementing a policy of reducing working hours to 5 hours a day for another 24 weeks after rejoining for which pay would be proportionately adjusted for those who want to avail this option. This is helpful as some women employees may not have the necessary support system till the new born settles down in the crèche facility. The company has also included one week of paternity leave. These are challenging to implement in a factory setup where workforce deployment challenges would be aplenty. It is worth noting that about 50 employees have already benefited in the last two-quarters of the previous financial year.

**Figure 3: Shristi – Women Empowerment Approach**

Career Development	Inclusive Policy	Engagement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skill building initiatives</li> <li>• Leadership development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workshops</li> <li>• Discussions</li> <li>• Polls</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inspirational speakers</li> <li>• Cultural events</li> <li>• Rewards and recognition</li> </ul>

The company has started an internal network in September 2016 called “Shristi” for empowering women. Its vision statement is: “Empower women at Ashok Leyland by enhancing self-esteem, confidence, and capability to take up leadership roles in an inclusive and appreciative environment.” Shristi has three pillars, namely career development, inclusive policy and engagement. Each of these has focused action items as shown in Figure 3.

Employee coverage under this programme is about 190, and there are eight governing member committees, which oversee the implementation.

Progress on the above are enumerated as follows:

#### **a. Career development:**

- Leadership talk by Ms. Manisha Girotra who is an independent Board Member of the company.
- Workshop on “Art of Letting Go” by Sumathi Narayanan.

- Seminar on Stress Management and Life Skill Management.
- An interactive session for Hosur women executives with the senior leadership.

**b. Inclusive policy initiatives like maternity benefits have been covered earlier.**

**c. Engagement initiatives include:**

- Workshop on Ayurveda and organic living by Mr. Srinivas Krishnaswamy, co-founder of Krya.
- Online session on “Implication of medical disorders in women” by Dr. Nithya Babukumar.
- Workshop on professional grooming and executive presence, by Sulakshana Badani and Cynthia Devaprasad.
- Session on “Women empowering women” by Sumathi Narayanan.
- Medical health check-up vouchers from Apollo Hospital.

These initiatives, when pursued over time, are likely to yield substantial progress towards gender parity.

## nXtgen Women Leadership Program

One of the premium initiatives launched by Ashok Leyland is the women leadership development programme. The company is focused on nurturing more prospective leaders among women employees for future positions at senior levels. It wants to ensure there are potential candidates in the pipeline as and when the opportunity arises. This is clearly a significant step towards gender diversity in the leadership pool. It does not speak of equal opportunity but signals much more!

The company brings onboard bright, experienced, premium B-school groomed women leadership talent. They are there as part of a 12-month intense development with hands-on practical exposure across functions, mentored by business leaders. Learning labs to augment their leadership journey are facilitated. The focus of the programme is to set them up for success in business roles.

The company has some good to-do and top-of-the-draw initiatives. The initiatives of “must do” policy like directives to handle sexual harassment are also in place.

## Learning from the initiatives

Ashok Leyland is one of the long-standing and highly valued companies in India. The company operates in a sector, which faces vagaries of business cycles. The demand for the product it produces, namely commercial vehicles are derived based on economic activity and development in the country. Such a company is likely to be following conservative policy towards gender parity. Limitations at the factory are understandable. Only men did support functions and business development earlier. Those men who preferred to be with the company would have grown based on their capability and energy. Hence, there would be limited opportunities for women to raise up to senior levels.

The initiatives now launched are clearly focused on bringing out a cultural change and attracting more women in the years ahead. Since the company has some tier I and tier II suppliers and downstream supply-chain partners like distribution intermediaries, any positive impact will have rub-off effect with such firms.

## Conclusion

Gender parity and equal opportunity initiatives at Ashok Leyland are a strong welcome move. The policy statements and interaction brings out the commitment of senior leadership for such a change. The success of Ashok Leyland would impact not only companies belonging to their group but also to their supply network partners and a whole lot of enterprises in the industrial towns in which they are located, owing to their brand recognition and long-standing values.

<http://www.ashokleyland.com/overview>

<http://www.livemint.com/Leisure/bJCTZqlhGYVWfBwgaI7A6N/Freedom-from-gender-stereotypes--Wheels-in-motion.html>

# Bharat Biotech International Limited

Gender parity being a component of strategy towards growth

## Introduction

While biotechnology and pharmaceutical companies both produce medicine, biotechnology companies' medicines have a biological basis, whereas pharmaceutical companies' medicines have a chemical basis. Biotechnology companies use live organisms or other products, such as bacteria or enzymes, to manufacture the drugs. There are similarities between biotechnology and pharmaceutical companies concerning research, manufacturing and distribution of drugs. However, biotechnology products have a much greater challenge in the research activities. Research and new product development may have a longer cycle and thereby are expensive too. The length of the period of availability of patent is longer for a biotechnology company (12 years) compared to a pharmaceutical company (5 years). This is a unique factor, apart from a deep desire of the promoters to make changes at the gene level for a safer future, that the industry is found to be attractive.

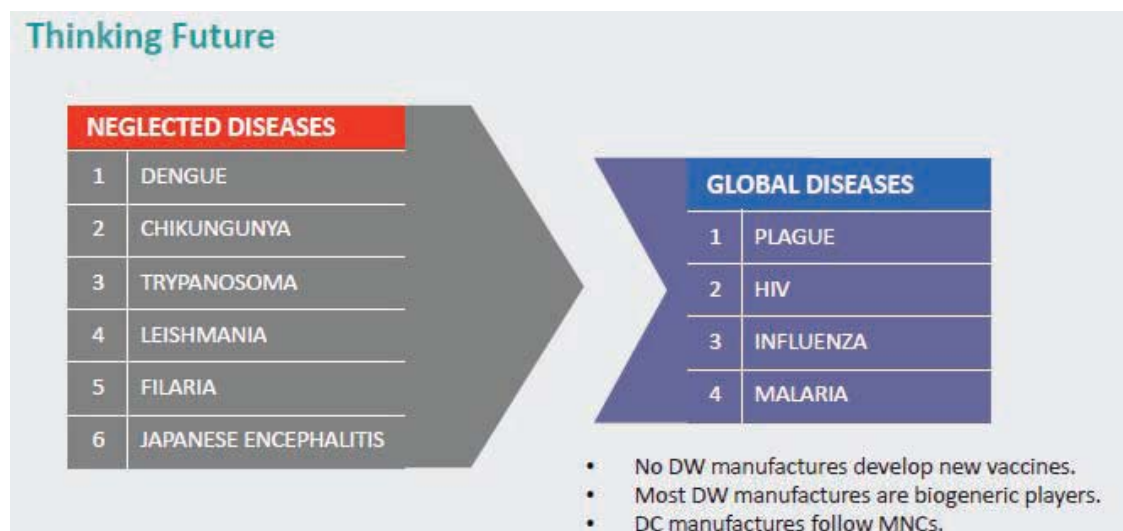
Opportunities for the companies lie in taking the threat to society. There are some dreadful diseases which are life threatening. When it affects the common man and the children, especially in the lower echelons of society, nothing can be more horrifying! Many a time such diseases not only kill children but also the dreams and happiness of the common people and their families. Some of these are listed as follows:

**TABLE 1 Neglected diseases in emerging nations**

Water-bound diseases	Insect (mainly mosquito) spread diseases
Typhoid	Japanese Encephalitis
Hepatitis	Dengue
Rota	Chikungunya
Schistosomiasis	Malaria
E Coli	Trypanosoma
Cholera	Leishmania
Other Diarrhoea	Filaria

Source: <http://www.bharatbiotech.com>

These diseases require political will, commitment and sustained investment to eradicate them. It requires public health policies and implementation plans which would attract the voluntary support of people. Over and above, policies must be supported by cost-effective bio-technology companies to develop and manufacture vaccines at affordable price.



Note: DW – developing the world; DC – developing countries ; MNC – Multinational co.

Source: <http://www.bharatbiotech.com>

It may be noted here that vaccines and other products can significantly reduce the threat of diseases which are often fatal. Today more people benefit from safe and efficacious vaccines than ever before. However, the list of diseases that vaccines can help prevent, continues to grow. Vaccines prevent infections from severe, life-threatening diseases and they can also contribute to reducing health-care costs to both patients and the broader health care system by reducing the incidence of vaccine-preventable illness.

These opportunities assist the biotech industry, which is growing at a fast pace. The Indian biotech industry witnessed a YoY growth of 57.14% in FY16; the total industry size stood at USD 11 billion by FY16 and is estimated to reach USD 11.6 billion by FY17. The driving factors are growing demand, intensive R&D activities, and strong government initiatives. In FY 2005, the industry revenue was USD 1.1 billion, and thus in a period of 10 years, it has achieved a compound annualised growth rate (CAGR) of 20%. Within the biotechnology industry, bio-pharma has a 64% share. Our case analysis is about one such company.

## About the company

Bharat Biotech is an Indian biotechnology company, headquartered in Hyderabad, India. The company was founded by Indian scientists Dr Krishna Ella and Ms Suchitra Ella in 1996. Bharat Biotech has one of the largest biotechnology-based pharmaceutical manufacturing plants in Asia-Pacific. Bharat Biotech sprawls over a 15-acre picturesque campus at Genome Valley, Hyderabad, and is equipped with a state-of-the-art manufacturing

facility. It employs over 700 personnel and has to its credit over 50 global patents. The first project was to prepare the hepatitis B vaccine. The role of Bharat Biotech assumes significance in that Dr Ella is also involved in shaping India's science education and policy. He also has international collaborations by being a member, advisor or chairman of numerous committees. He has recently been nominated as a Member of the Scientific Advisory Committee to the Prime Minister of India.

The development of vaccines to prevent serious diseases is an extraordinary story of medical achievement. Bharat Biotech and its “legacy” companies have played a critical role for more than a decade. Bharat Biotech is helping to usher in a new era of vaccine innovation both to prevent and treat diseases. Focused around neglected diseases of the developing world, Bharat Biotech will continue to push the boundaries of innovation, to pursue the next scientific breakthrough for the prevention of such neglected diseases. Also, Bharat Biotech has developed a vaccine that targets Rotavirus, the common cause of severe diarrhoea in infants, which till date causes more than 600,000 child mortality cases globally each year.

To quote company sources: “Bharat Biotech had pledged to supply its Rotavirus Vaccine at USD 1 to global agencies. And today the vaccine is sold at USD 1 to Universal Immunization Programmes. The company has till date distributed 2 billion doses to over 65 countries.” It further states: “Bharat is also working on a vaccine for *Staphylococcus aureus* — the leading cause of hospital-acquired infections. With the intent to combat region-specific and neglected diseases and not necessarily competition, Bharat Biotech is working on developing vaccines for Zika, Chikungunya, Chandipura and Non-Typhoidal *Salmonella*; more as a social commitment and responsibility towards society.”

The company is on its journey to combat against global mortality and morbidity of the developing world with particular focus on neglected diseases. With the philosophy of “lead innovation”, Bharat Biotech strives to bridge the gap between the developed and developing the world with newer research-based products in vaccines and bio-therapeutics at an affordable price for those who need it most.

Thus, the company works on niche area that is “focused research” and is long-drawn. There is a scope to attract the best of talents in the chosen domain, who can look forward to working with the best if they look at work satisfaction as the key driver.

## Need for gender parity practices

It is seen that women in life sciences score over those in banking and financial services for being an entrepreneur or CEO rather than professional managers. The trend is quite visible. The list of luminaries includes senior industry leaders like Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw of Biocon, Swati Piramal of Piramal Healthcare, Suchitra K Ella of Bharat Biotech International, Anu Acharya of Ocimum Biosolutions, Viloo Morawala-Patell of Avesthagen, Mahima Datla of Biological E and KR Rajyashri of Navya Biologicals. Being a relatively new sector, it is also gender agnostic. There are no sector-specific gender barriers for aspiring women entrepreneurs here. The fact that a large number of women have biology background has made it easier for them to start something new in this field.

Bharat Biotech is a place where innovative minds come together in pursuit of a shared vision. Gender parity at Bharat Biotech starts with Ella couple themselves. Suchitra

K Ella, joint managing director, Bharat Biotech International says: “Women entrepreneurs were often invisible earlier as they worked under their father, brothers or husband. Today, the knowledge industry has widened the scope for them to work independently or in partnership with their families and professionals. It has, in turn, enabled them to become their masters.”

Given this fact, there are a lot more of expectations from such a company. Bharat Biotech acts as the path-breaker to make a new paradigm and redefine gender practices.

However, there could be particular challenges in attracting women to work across the firm. The work conditions require continuity of engagement and long tenure. Hence, women in different age groups, social status, marital status, spouse and children choices for location at various stages, may influence this factor. Second, certain process-related works may require women to work in shifts. Hence, it required a well-conceived and implemented environmentally healthy and safe plan in place.

## Gender parity initiatives

Bharat Biotech does not distinguish the ability to perform based on gender. The company believes in providing equal opportunities to all. Contrary to popular belief that women are employed only at entry-level, at Bharat Biotech there are women at mid-level and senior management levels. The gender ratio is about 30–40% across various departments. The average age is around 35 years.

Joint Managing Director Suchitra Ella has set the tone for equality in the company. The company is a reflection of her ideologies and values. The ultimate aim is to have a woman representative in every department. Bharat Biotech has managed to have women in almost all departments such as Quality Assurance, Quality Control, Purchase, Production, R&D and Medical Affairs. Even so, the organisation is trying to be systematic in the recruitment process to recruit women into the engineering department which remains a male domain. The philosophy of the company is to promote professional interaction between men and women to bring out the best in every individual.

In fact, the bioprocess of Rotavirus vaccine (India’s first made-in-India vaccine) was headed by Ms Krishnakumari. The Head of Documentation Ms Laxmi Pothina was, in fact, the second employee in the company. Her career graph has grown with the company. Ms Jyothi started out as the Chairman’s Secretary and grown to become the Head of Procurement. Director of R&D Dr Sumathy has been an integral part of the development of vaccines against Zika and Chikungunya. Dr Radhika Bobba, Head of Medical Affairs, has been involved in monitoring the various clinical trials carried out by Bharat Biotech. These women stand testament to the fact that the “glass ceiling has been broken” at Bharat Biotech. By all means it is a significant achievement of infusing women in leadership positions. For first-generation promoters, this is significant all the more as they break traditions.

Being a continuous process industry, works schedules are round-the-clock. Even today, there is a reluctance for women to come forward and take up such jobs. The vaccine industry is guided by stringent regulatory requirements. In containment facilities, there are specific gown-in and gown-out procedures. Additional infrastructure has to be built in to accommodate women. Visual inspection of products is an important activity that

involves very high precision. The visual inspection team includes a large proportion of women, and in fact, the team is overseen by a woman in-charge, Ms Aruna.

As an organisation, they are working on all perspectives to overcome these challenges. Regular orientation programmes are conducted that highlight the infrastructure the company has provided for women working in containment facilities. The shift schedules are flexible to accommodate the needs of women employees. Women employees have been sent abroad for training programmes. These programmes have been very effective.

There are company-developed training programmes, online learning tools and resources for self-study and development. All training processes have been designed with innovation and keeping future project development in mind. This ensures that employees are ready to face any challenging role with specific skills and determination. Employees are constantly encouraged to join the special courses offered which help them to adapt to the needs of professional expectations, enhance competencies and further hone their abilities. Many Ph.D. students are helped with their thesis and projects.

## Benefits and scope of such initiatives

These initiatives have been well received by the employees and have helped many women shape their careers along with the company, like Ms Laxmi Pothina, Head of Documentation. With respect to core competency, the senior management women leaders are a great source of inspiration and motivation. This has led to many women emerging as potential leaders in the mid-level and junior level. There are women in the cadre of general manager, senior manager and managers. The concept of leadership has percolated down the order, has strengthened the workforce and nature of work environment. Further, the initiatives are aimed at efficiency improvement and thereby incidental economic benefits rather than any direct economic benefit.

At the middle and junior levels, there are periodic reviews to appreciate employees' performance and reward those contributing to help the organisation to achieve the company's vision and the growth for a better future. To help people focus on what they do best, an environment conducive to performance and learning is created with the support of several initiatives and measures, ensuring apt training and development and skill enhancement for employees. The annual performance appraisal is the tool to monitor this effort. Feedback is taken from a 360-degree perspective to understand the overall performance and contribution of employees to the organisation.

## Learning from the initiatives

The equal opportunity action is gender sensitive. This policy has been implemented by the Assistant General Manager-Human Resources, Mr Praveen Ram, under the direct guidance of Ms Suchitra Ella, Joint Managing Director. He is ably supported by the HR team which, in fact, contains a larger proportion of women. Over the years, the company has seen more women coming forward to take up job offers, but there is still a long way to go.

The key learnings are:

- Equal opportunity needs to be implemented carefully. Women need to be encouraged to assume leadership positions for challenging assignments. HR has to play a significant role.
- Leadership should be committed and need to “walk the talk”, which is critical for success.
- A blend of business strategy and equal opportunity must be ensured.
- Must have all statutes and good-to-do initiatives in place.

## Conclusion

The equal opportunity initiative has been successful. The company has an excellent representation of women in the senior and mid-level management. The senior management women leaders are a great source of inspiration and motivation. This has led to many women emerging as potential leaders in the mid-level and junior level. As a company, this has strengthened the workforce and the nature of work environment.

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# Brandix India Apparel City

This empowerment and enrichment of rural women...  
Global business synchronised with local advantage

## Introduction

With supply chain issues addressed, the apparel industry is transforming into an attractive business globally. Some of the best international brands such as Zara, Marks & Spencer, HM, Gap, Wal-Mart, Target and Carrefour, to name a few, have revolutionised their businesses through supply chain innovations. Manufacturing innovations, especially reduction in the duration of the product value chain and contract manufacturing, have phenomenally redefined the global textile and apparel industry.

Countries such as Sri Lanka, India, Bangladesh, Vietnam and China have a significant advantage because of the ability to deploy low-cost labour. For example, India leads in apparel clusters like Tirupur, Ludhiana, Bengaluru and to some extent, even Mumbai. All these employ a large number of women from the design stage to retail store level. For a manufacturing unit, it is more of a challenge to attract rural women and still provide a safe, healthy and conducive environment to work. Here, in this case, we discuss one of the leaders in the apparel industry that had its roots in Sri Lanka and has the experience of operating in Sri Lanka, India and Bangladesh.

## Brandix

With a vision “To be THE inspired solution for branded clothing”, Brandix has been the pioneer of the concept of “total solutions” in Sri Lanka’s apparel sector. The name Brandix combines “Brand” and “Phoenix”, the family’s holding company, owned jointly by Ashroff Omar, his two brothers, and their parents. The Omars acquired their first apparel factory in 1972. Today, Brandix Lanka is Sri Lanka’s largest apparel exporter and a supplier to Gap, Victoria’s Secret, Marks & Spencer and other large international retailers. With the civil war and the 2008 financial crisis, there was fear of a meltdown. But with Omars managing to turn around, Brandix moved into places like Mauritius and Madagascar that provided opportunities for European and U.S. apparel markets.

## Brandix India Apparel City (BIAC), Visakhapatnam

To keep up the scale of manufacturing, Brandix turned to India for its tremendous potential in terms of labour, cotton and spinning. Brandix India Apparel City (BIAC), a 1000-acre textile park, was originally an initiative taken by then Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh along with Brandix Lanka, a textile and apparel major from Sri Lanka in 2006 with multi-fold objectives aimed at the economic growth of the state primarily and Visakhapatnam in particular. The rationale behind the initiative was to facilitate employment among rural women in Visakhapatnam district where the land for the textile park was sanctioned. The economic growth envisioned was to enhance socio-economic development through direct and indirect employment in the region.

BIAC, being a textile and apparel manufacturing park, facilitates work to a large workforce, of which 80% constitutes women from the rural hinterland of the park within a radius of 60 km of its location, Atchutapuram. BIAC is home to 14 manufacturing units (foreign and domestic) engaged in a vertically integrated apparel supply chain. The native women thus get multinational exposure.

Originally a fishing and agriculture-based region dictated predominantly by seasonal demand, Atchutapuram soon evolved into a manufacturing hub with assured jobs to thousands of local women hailing from humble educational backgrounds. Employment rose to over 18,000 in a decade and offers sustained living and growth opportunities to women employees. The organised employment and multicultural exposure benefit their families and communities alike, contributing to improved living standards.

## Gender parity initiatives

There were challenges when BIAC was initially set-up, the major one being the introduction and acceptance of shift system in production. For village communities from where the majority of women workers hailed from, the concept of womenfolk starting for work before dawn and reaching back late night was unheard of, and the challenge of changing their mindset was humongous. While faith and conviction in the system in safely transporting the women workforce back and forth were built outside the organisation, within the organisation, there was a greater challenge in sustaining that faith among women. Another problem faced in taking the initiative forward was in creating a disciplined workforce in terms of commitment towards target-based work, adaptation to module changes and significance of quality in every process and so on. These were quite daunting tasks considering the minimal educational background that most of them possessed. A further challenge was in implementing health and hygiene practices that matched the best in the industry, which warranted tremendous cultural change among the women employees owing to their rural and humble educational background.

These challenges were addressed exclusively with teams working diligently on each one of them. A fleet of buses to transport the women workforce between residence and work place was put in place, carefully monitored by a dedicated team from each manufacturing

unit. The parents/spouse of the women employed were brought for a plant visit, giving them an insight into workplace environment that further consolidated their confidence on the safety of their ladies employed in Brandix. These baby steps eventually transformed the initial doubts on women security that had emanated from the village communities, into faith in the organisation and its systems. The workforce was exposed to a series of training programmes on a consistent basis on each of the challenging aspects identified in addition to the regular process-training programmes, all of which were executed by expert teams from the corporate headquarters. The initial batches were role models to those which followed, thereby setting standards in employee behaviour that was superior and unmatched in the industry. Learning on aspects related to health and hygiene were regularly reinforced to bring about attitudinal changes in the workforce.

Expert teams worked from the initiation to implementation. The initiative warranted holistic training to impart women employees with knowledge in the manufacturing process, recognition of quality as an essential prerequisite for production, maintenance of health and hygiene, skill upgradation, talent management and so on. The conscious efforts of the multiple teams succeeded in achieving desired standards on par with the best in the industry.

BIAC promotes the concept of rewarding employees with non-financial incentives that are motivating and learning-based. Every year top performers are identified based on certain parameters and are sponsored to visit Brandix Headquarters at Colombo, Sri Lanka. The learning programme also includes visits to various manufacturing plants of Brandix in multiple locations across Sri Lanka. BIAC involves plans to take the initiative forward by implementing futuristic concepts that include: sending employees for overseas exposure to related companies, train the employees for multi-skilling across functions, employee engagement and planning programmes to advance their careers up the managerial cadre and so on. Such initiatives that aid higher benchmarking facilitate higher-order thinking among women employees that will eventually benefit the organisation as well.

Brandix has a strong CSR culture. The social agenda includes a resolute stance on gender equality, non-discriminatory practices, child labour and employment of the differently abled. Their certifications like the WRAP are stringent on social disclosures and practices in absolute conformation to those principles.

## Benefits and scope of such initiatives

The company has linked the initiatives with their business objectives, where one of their primary goals is to provide employment to rural women. The company kept its goals transparent.

The company has been taking a diagnostic approach to identifying the key barriers and the action plans are dynamically revised to address the surmounting obstacles. Many participants of these programmes have become natural leaders and brand ambassadors on the factory floor. BIAC initiative has reduced the attrition and absenteeism rates of the organisation (<5% per month) well below the domestic as well as international industry standards.

Outside the organisation, the impact of the initiative is measured in terms of socio-economic benefits, importantly, employment – both direct and indirect. Direct employment of over 18,000 women assures regular income. Steady income supports households either as primary or secondary income leading to improved living conditions and rising aspirations.

BIAC is also responsible for creating high indirect employment in the hinterland of the park mostly in the tertiary sector. The region which was originally rural in landscape has evolved into a bustling trade centre supporting vendors and retailers from various industries, including educational institutions offering professional courses and skilling. Thatched huts and run-down hamlets have given way to concrete structures and upcoming towns full of economic activity.

## Learning from the initiatives

Focused initiatives on gender parity would provide a comprehensive scope to impact the life of each woman employee. The company has linked the initiatives with their business objectives, to provide employment to rural women to achieve high productivity and enjoy global cost competitiveness. The company has succeeded in keeping their goals and initiatives transparent, thanks to the vision of top management and well-crafted and efficiently executed plan. The ability to utilise the external environment depends upon the ability to deliver promises, and BIAC has done exceptionally well in this regard. Leadership commitment, execution and synchronisation of business objectives are the key learning in this case.

## Conclusion

There has been a cumulative growth in employment in just a decade of establishment. The success of the initiative can be attributed to the vision as well as the innovative initiatives taken from time to time in making the women workforce efficient and effective. These initiatives have spurred year-on-year growth in the turnover for the organisation. The trainable and cost-effective workforce has facilitated BIAC in attracting the best of customers, vendors and partners from the international textile and apparel industry and bears eloquent testimony to the success of the initiative, the socio-economic benefits it has showered on the region and the communities around.

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# Broadridge Financial Solutions (India) Private Limited

Gender Parity being a component  
of strategy driving growth

## Introduction

Broadridge Financial Solutions (India) Pvt. Ltd is a wholly owned subsidiary of the US-based Broadridge Financial Solutions Inc. (NYSE:BR), a leading provider of investor communications and technology-driven solutions for broker-dealers, banks, mutual funds and corporate issuers globally. With more than 50 years of experience and over 10,000 associates globally, Broadridge helps clients reduce their capital investments in operations infrastructure, allowing them to increase their focus on core business activities. Reporting record revenues of USD2.90 billion in fiscal year 2016, Broadridge began operating as an independent public company on 30 March 2007.

The company has a solid foundation built on two businesses, Investor Communication Solutions (ICS) and Global Technology and Operations (GTO). They serve a large and diverse client base across four client groups: capital markets, asset management, wealth management and corporations. Broadridge continues to invest in organic growth through internal product development, and executing their strategic M&A programme in order to enhance their position in the targeted market and build capabilities.

Broadridge India, which started its journey as an offshore partner, soon evolved to being a strategic enabler for Broadridge. They owe this growth and success to their culture of collaboration, award winning HR and business practices, robust infrastructure and over 3000 associates spread across three cities delivering excellence unceasingly.

## Need for gender parity practices

Data from “When Women Thrive” Survey by Mercer 2016 shows that financial services business has a typical perspective compared to all industries. Some of the inferences drawn from Table 1 are as follows:

- Financial services industry overall employ more women to men compared to overall industries.
- Gender ratio is more skewed towards women in financial services business compared to men at the staff to managerial level. Ironically, middle level is a challenge.
- Recruits and exits are more favourable to men and hence naturally would be promotions.

The global survey further brings out that women enter the financial services industry with the same ambition level as men, retain this ambition during the early years of their career, and usually also have similar ambition later in their careers. However, in mid-career, a significant gap opens between men and women in their willingness to make sacrifices in their private lives and in their career ambition levels.

**TABLE 1 Women representation in labor market across globe%**

Category level	Market	Average representation		Total hires		Total exits	
		Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Executive	Global labour	20	80	9	6	10	8
	Financial services	21	79	5	7	13	9
Senior manager	Global labour	26	74	8	7	8	9
	Financial services	28	72	8	5	10	8
Manager	Global labour	33	67	8	9	9	10
	Financial services	40	60	8	10	11	8
Professional	Global labour	38	62	14	14	12	12
	Financial services	48	52	10	12	11	10
Support staff	Global labour	49	51	18	21	15	17
	Financial services	71	29	10	12	15	17
Overall	Global labour	38	62				
	Financial services	50	50				

Source: When women thrive, Mercer 2016

Adapted from: [http://www.oliverwyman.com/content/dam/oliver-wyman/global/en/2016/june/WiFS/WomenInFinancialServices\\_2016.pdf](http://www.oliverwyman.com/content/dam/oliver-wyman/global/en/2016/june/WiFS/WomenInFinancialServices_2016.pdf)

Most societies still expect women to play a greater role in caring for children or elderly parents. No matter whether they agree with the traditional roles or whether they feel the societal expectation – most women will place a higher value than men on the opportunity cost of working. This is because of cultural and social expectations thrust by society. Unless, this changes women would have a disadvantage especially at mid-career. Some parameters, such as average age of marriage, age at which to have a child, number of children and support system like day care for children, will impact. Further, an emerging market like India would also have commuting distance and ease of transportation to attend to quick demands would influence. Finally, in India though there is fair attraction in this sector to have women employees at the junior level of hierarchy, as it progresses, retaining becomes difficult as these are outsourced service providers, to Western market and shift timing do not fit for a nuclear family system.

This is again attributed to support role women are expected to play. The society is used with women working in support roles. The transition is harsh. Women who are trying to change could be facing challenging times as men are not likely to take it easily. At times they may hurt women by negatively highlighting their emotional and sensitive nature. This has to change by involving men in the change management process as well. Further, girls and boys continue to be raised differently even today. This is an age-old

phenomenon in countries like India where girls are expected to be subdued. Though it is changing, pace of change is less than desired.

Technology is a great democratic tool to bridge the gender gap. It seems easy for organizations working in the services sector to become equal opportunity employers as they provide knowledge based services. However, gender parity practices need to be in place to reiterate this belief. Best practices set in the services sector can go a long way in encouraging younger women to seek newer avenues in the knowledge sector.

Fortunately, growth of information technology sector, knowledge process outsourcing business and certain cluster growth like in Hyderabad, Noida, Pune, Bengaluru and Chennai have helped to change the perspective.

## Gender parity Initiatives

Mr V Laxmikanth, Managing Director, Broadridge India, has always sent a powerful message demonstrating his commitment, as a leader, to diversity and inclusion that goes beyond rhetoric.

He says, “At Broadridge India, we always believe in doing the right thing and that lighting a fire within a person rather than under is what gets results. These beliefs laid the foundation of our Gender Inclusivity Council and led to the formation of our women’s forum named ADVIKA, which means unique in Sanskrit. Advika group works with a core belief that all individuals are unique. The primary focus of the group has been to build awareness around various policies, and to understand and address the sensitivities of a diverse workforce. It is a highly inclusive program that invites participation from both men and women equally, and proactively drives each of our associates to do the right thing.”

The business case and rationale for diversity and inclusion at Broadridge India are aligned and linked to strategic business objectives of the organisation, which is to enhance Broadridge’s competitive advantage, positively impact Broadridge’s service profit chain, and create a great place to work.

Furthermore, Broadridge is engaged with global diversity and inclusion at the highest levels through an Executive Diversity Council and creates an inclusive workplace by leveraging associate networks (namely “Women’s Leadership Forum”, “Leading Broadridge to Greater Awareness”, and “MultiCultural Associate Network”) and enhancing benefits and policies.

Ms Rajita Singh, Head – HR, Broadridge India, mentions “Women’s Leadership Forum (WLF) is a Broadridge initiative launched in early 2010 with a select group of senior women representing a diverse and global blend of all divisions and corporate areas within the organization. The group articulated the vision and defined the WLF’s strategic objectives. WLF values the perspectives of our women associates and leverages their views on diversity and inclusion to better address the needs of our clients while actively working to remove barriers for women’s advancement at Broadridge. Their actions are well in sync with their mission statement that says ‘Extraordinary women bring global thinking, delivering extraordinary results, leading Broadridge to innovation, networking and growth.’”

The WLF has the following committees to develop programmes, tools, and communications aligned with the forum's objectives:

- I. **Developing Extraordinary Women** – It focuses on the development of all women at Broadridge in areas such as negotiation skills, networking and mentorship.
- II. **Networking** – It initiates and enhances networking opportunities among men and women, both within Broadridge and externally, to build and strengthen relationships with its clients, business partners and across the financial services industry.
- III. **Marketing and Communications** – It communicates the plans and accomplishments of the Women's Leadership Forum to Broadridge associates as well as to external audiences.
- IV. **Accountability and Metrics** – It analyses Broadridge's business results and measures the return on investment as well as positive qualitative outcomes.
- V. **Governance** – It clearly defines and documents the mission, background, membership composition and, generally, the rules of engagement.

The company has some "Must do" initiatives as required by statutory system. Further, it has a number of "Good to do" initiatives like focused women talent attraction, involving men in changing gender parity and developing leadership among women and so on. Some of the "top of the initiatives" are sustained leadership commitment, visible execution of gender parity policies in letter and spirit across the organisation and demonstration of its relevance to business.

## Benefits and scope of such initiatives

Broadridge realises that the focus on diversity and inclusion is a strategic imperative. The WLF is an extension of the Executive Diversity Council and its efforts in support of diversity and inclusion. A key element of its commitment to diversity and inclusion ensures that it is able to attract, develop, retain and support a diverse workforce. As the clients become more global and diverse in nature, it becomes a business imperative to support diversity and be inclusive in nature.

Rajita Singh is a fine example of someone with a fire within. She represents the changing face of Indian IT/ITES industry, where human resource professionals are increasingly becoming strategic partners to the core functions. In a short span, she and the company have won many awards at national and international levels.

Rajita took up her first job in 2000 as a recruiter at Broadridge Financial Services. She explains, "When I first joined the company, it was just about financial independence and watching movies with friends and grabbing the free goodies. However, 2002-2003 came as a turning point when I attended a conference where I met with a lot of seniors with two-three decades of experience. While they were all sharing their experiences, I asked a leader how she had made it. There was only one thing she told me, 'first you complete 20 years and then come back to me. I don't think it is easy.' I took that as a challenge. Since then I have a goal, and that is to be talked about for my work all over India. From then on, my strategy changed, and I started learning everything about every function in HR. I started doing everything from recruiting to operations then moved

on to talent management and then compensation management. I did a whole range of functions before I made a transition as Head of HR at Broadridge.”

While she acknowledged the support of her family, it is clear that her networking skills and long hours at work helped her. She also maintained her focus on staying ahead and relevant with the knowledge of the latest in the industry and various certifications. She says, “Women have the unique flair to connect the dots and read beyond the obvious, and we should leverage this ability”.

Broadridge has been recognised at global platforms for their D&I programs, some of these recognitions include:

- Best Places to Work for LGBT Equality, recognised among the “Best Places to Work for LGBT Equality” by the Human Rights Campaign (HRC), scoring 100 on the coveted HRC Corporate Equality Index
- NASSCOM Excellence in Gender Inclusivity Awarded the NASSCOM Excellence in Gender Inclusivity in the Best Emerging Company category in India
- One of the most distinguished Women’s Choice Awards in India, organised by the WILL Forum

## Learning from the initiatives

Companies are increasingly recognising that having women on board at all levels in the organisation makes good business sense and is important for companies to proactively create an environment of inclusion to attract and retain women. The task is not only for organisations but for women too. Women have to develop their skills, understand ways to break out of the cultural stereotypes and change perceptions in order to take leadership positions. As Broadridge strongly believes in the motto that “each of us is essential; each of us is indispensable”, women too need to feel that they are indispensable.

Without relying on industry feature or staying convinced with limitations and focusing on numbers within the ambit of socio-economic milieu, commitment of leadership to drive change is critical. Banking, finance, insurance and gamut of financial services are breaking into a new era especially with digital banking and other services. This would create explosive demand for mid-career women. In fact, there is an industry-wise change that needs to be initiated because the industry has a substantial retail characteristics, and mid-level managers operating at retail need to be tossed around for fairness and creating non-sticky relationships with customers for objectivity and fairness of business. We hope Broadridge would motivate big players to take a leaf out of its practices.

## Conclusion

It can be seen that good HR practices go a long way in molding the DNA of a company. The policies should be able to foresee the change and accordingly guide the company. Just as technology changes the ways of manufacturing or services industry, human resources also while keeping the fundamentals in place, needs to be sensitive. Parity

in compensation, growth avenues and flexibility has to go a long way and blend with business sense. The ecosystem is an enabler, but it also needs to be influenced if we have to break barriers for creating a new growth story, which has to be gender inclusive at all levels and not by characteristics of business at entry level alone. Participating workforce must be sensitive to change mechanism and bring a balance in the change mechanism as “liberty is not just a right but way of life!” especially at workplace.

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# BVRIT Hyderabad College of Engineering for Women

An exclusive brand in engineering education for women

## Introduction

The Indian economy has been on a spell of growth, a self-propelling phase reflected in huge positivism and euphoric feelings of change. The first single party majority over the last three decades at the centre is an uncommon experience. There is a consistent policy outlook towards development. The government focuses on fostering leadership and enterprise. There is a change in socio-economic traits due to Swachh Bharat and anti-corruption initiatives, and digitalisation trends are galvanising youth to be participative in the country's agenda. Further, Hyderabad will remain the capital of two states after bifurcation of the state of Andhra Pradesh for some years. Hyderabad has been the hub of activities for the last three decades and will get intensified further.

The views above are apolitical. The sensation created due to certain political and societal changes that are likely to impact the economy are relevant.

In this context, we look at the emergence of an institution focused on educating women in engineering. But that is not what makes it spectacular. The targeted initiatives on building the careers of these women students make it different and unique!

Attracting women students to engineering streams is in itself a challenge. The proliferation of new generation engineering and technology institutions is one change factor. Second, we live in an era when the country has come out of the "Hindu rate of growth" of around 3% that prevailed for 25 years. This change has created a demand for engineering talents without any gender bias. New generation businesses like information technology services, knowledge process outsourcing, banking, finance and insurance, to name a few, are some fields where demand for technical talent is high. As a country, we have seen an extraordinary evolution and a steep rise in the hopes and aspirations of policymakers, entrepreneurs and citizens at large. We now have the confidence that we will move away from economic-aid-and-subsidies driven growth to an era of "competitive and aspirational growth." This change is women inclusive and needs attention to ensure gender parity and equal opportunity.

Here, we discuss an institution that has resolved to empower women students. This institution is especially for those who may have a conservative background; they are made ready to meet the challenges of the competitive world.

# BVRIT Hyderabad College of Engineering for Women

BVRIT Hyderabad College of Engineering for Women is the youngest college under the umbrella of Sri Vishnu Educational Society under the stewardship of Chairman Shri K.V. Vishnu Raju. Established in 2012 to help women engineers, in a short period it has already acquired many accolades in academics, placements and professional competitions. With exceptional results seen in its very first batch, BVRIT Hyderabad is now one of the most sought-after institutes in Hyderabad for prospective female engineering students. It may also be that parents feel comfortable sending girls to a women's college. According to them, engineering may have been a distant choice. They also felt the course gives extra four years of maturity to their wards to distinguish themselves in a gender-competitive society. They felt that the college prepares them for the later life when they start their career. There are women's colleges in arts and science that are working well for society; a similar system must work for engineering education as well.

## Initiative

A nation's intellectual capital is a measure of its ability to compete in the global marketplace. Women have an important role to play in this. Engineering is vital to any economy and offers substantial benefits to society. In earlier eras, women felt less attracted to engineering. Even today pursuing opportunities outside the IT and banking is less common for women. Realising this, BVRIT was setup in 2012 with the mission of creating women technocrats.

The college initiated a programme called "Women in software engineering" (WISE), in collaboration with industry practitioners to differentiate women engineers from the rest.

The programme is spread across three years of engineering course a student spends in the college. With five lecture modules of 30 hours each spread across each semester, it is focused on current and latest technologies, and three mini projects of 50 hours each are conducted during semester breaks.

Currently, the five lecture modules are: professional C programming; core Java programming; advanced Java programming; Android mobile development and big data and Hadoop. Thus, it is focused on nurturing talent in information technology, technology products, mobile computing and analytics, apart from others. The user industry needs these skills.

By implementing a flipped classroom model, students are oriented towards self-learning. Such orientation is crucial since, in the field of ever-powerful information technology, new programming languages and tools keep coming up frequently. And there is a high risk of obsolescence if one is not used to self-learning of evolving technologies. This unique programme was initiated with an aim to impart deep technology skills to students and make them confident and competent in the IT/product industry. One of the important features is creating a self-learning attitude among students, which would sustain a learning attitude throughout their careers.

Students are encouraged to work as teams on projects simulating actual industry environment. Each project is presented by the student group and assessed by industry experts.

Right from inception, the BVRIT Hyderabad management decided to make the wards different from the commonly available resource pool. Candidates have to be highly competitive to grab employment opportunities, irrespective of their chosen field of engineering. The college focuses on skill training some of the students to enable them to get employed in product companies, which requires a superman-level calibre!

BVRIT has conceptualised a unique training programme in collaboration with industry experts, which starts from the first year of engineering and is spread across the semesters during the three years a student spends. The programme is offered free to all students of all streams (CSE, IT, ECE, EEE) provided in the college, while management absorbs all the costs of third-party faculty, infrastructure and private faculty efforts.

## Challenges

There were several problems faced before and during the implementation of the WISE programme.

Management had foreseen that students and parents will not be willing to bear extra financial burden. It is all the more so when they do not know the outcome or benefits of this programme!

Even students joining this programme were initially reluctant to continue after experiencing the additional burden of learning matter over and above their regular academic curriculum. The learning methodology is also different, as the flipped classroom model is followed for this programme. The programme was a cultural shock for students and harder to cope. The students were used to tutored-learning till then. Students, especially long-distance travellers, were also not interested spending more time, beyond the regular hours, in the colleges.

All this meant that students had to come out of their comfort zone to balance with regular academics and the need to keep up with new learning methodology. It is also a challenge for the university management in terms of provisioning for infrastructural requirements like computer labs, classrooms and audio-visual equipment and also for supervising faculty.

## Steps to overcome the challenges – lightened financial burden

To overcome the first and primary challenge of a financial burden on students and parents, the management decided to bear all the costs of the programme. Courses are being offered free of cost to the students. Management is spending about INR 45 lakh per year in direct costs for this programme.

It was decided to conduct WISE training sessions during regular college hours. The usual class work and the WISE sessions are planned accordingly. Students are divided into batches, and sessions are scheduled in different time slots for each batch. The

university had to keep in mind the mandatory need for engineering education. So there were extended working days in the calendar.

Students are also individually monitored, counselled and motivated from time to time by the faculty and management to join the programme. Initially, they had to persist with solutions to the challenges of learning new technologies in a new learning model. The need and benefits of such programmes were also explained to the students. After seeing the success of the first batch of students, it became easier for the succeeding batches to appreciate the importance of such programmes.

Students are also provided a course completion certificate (as “WISE graduate”) upon successful completion of all the modules. Management has given particular focus to this unique programme and has taken care to arrange for all infrastructural requirements to run it smoothly, without compromising on the regular academic requirements of the students.

## Renowned MNCs offer mentoring, internships and so on

After completion of two batches of WISE, the benefits of this unique programme were clearly visible. Since the college invites experts from industry to review and assess the projects done by WISE students, the unique efforts of the institute attracted the attention of senior leaders of the industry. And they, in turn, came forward to offer mentorship and internship opportunities to the students.

Microsoft has provided mentorship to a group of students, with each of them assigned to a senior leader of Microsoft. Students are groomed in teamwork, communication skills, presentation skills and corporate etiquette, apart from understanding and working on technical skills. Students visit the Microsoft office once a month and meet their mentors and work offline the rest of the time.

After seeing the performance of the WISE student project as well as the mentorship model, Amazon has also initiated a mentorship programme for women engineering students. They offer further internships for selected students who went through the mentorship programme.

Qualcomm, a product design company, has also come forward to offer knowledge sharing sessions to the students. In total, 17 sessions covering various topics and their practical application were conducted and about 170 students got the benefit of this programme.

The WISE programme has received widespread acceptance from industry. It has encouraged industry leaders to offer industry mentorship programmes not only benefitting BVRITH students but also women engineering students from other institutions.

The WISE programme has turned out to be a huge success, going by the job opportunities the students received as well as by their success in other platforms.

## WISE graduates in great demand

In the first batch of students that passed out in 2016, out of 65 WISE graduate students, 92% got placed, with 102 offers. The second batch of students, which will pass out this year, is doing even better even as campus recruitment is still in progress. As of March 2017, out of 93 WISE graduates, 92% got placed with 131 campus placement offers.

Many of them got offers from core and product companies like Microsoft, Mu Sigma, SAP, Kony Labs, Pega, Pramati, HP Inc, John Deere, ZOHO, Bosch, to name a few. This highlights the transformation of students made possible by the WISE programme.

Further, one student won first prize at the India Skills Competition at the national level in “IT Software Solutions for Business.” This competition is an initiative of the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) under the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship. With this success, she is now shortlisted to participate in the World Skills 2017 competition. Another student was selected as a speaker at the FOSSASIA 2016 conference about “FarmMind Technologies” in March 2016. In 2017, two WISE students have been chosen to talk about their work at FOSSASIA 2017. Two students were selected to participate in prestigious Google Summer of Code (GSOC). Students are also involved in several hackathons and project/product competitions outside. They are winning laurels continuously.

## Other initiatives

**Assistive technology lab:** This provides a platform for proposing and developing novel applications to cater to the needs of differently abled people. As part of this programme, the college has been inviting professors from various universities abroad to train the students. This year, Professor Hallowell Brooke from Ohio University visited the campus. Further, online classes are being held throughout the year by distinguished professor Alan Rux from the University of Massachusetts.

Projects like alerting systems for IV fluids, tutoring autistic kids, smart shirts for people with hand fractures as well as various apps and websites for NGOs have been developed by the students and also been showcased and distributed to the needy on World Disability Day. This is done to create a spirit of social concern, to spread happiness and warmth among the deprived and to inculcate more of compassion and sensitivity to social needs.

**Foreign languages:** The college believes in students having knowledge of at least one foreign language to be able to avail more opportunities for career development. German language classes are regularly conducted in the campus in collaboration with the Vivekananda Institute.

**Incubation Centre:** To groom entrepreneurial skills and explore creative ideas of students, the Incubation Centre was initiated at BVRIT Hyderabad in February 2014. Here, students came up with various projects like water-level indicator, battery-operated potable food maker, low-cost solar water heater for the common man, solar-powered bird scarcer, portable lunch box, pen-size portable mosquito repeller, pollution control device and several other apps.

## A brand that lends for easy adoption

BVRIT has created an exclusive brand in engineering education that provides rich opportunities for women students in professional career development. BVRIT provides the right ambience and the required support in terms of time and resources to be

competitive. The offering is truly a welcome opportunity for girl students and their parents! It is not against gender parity and equal opportunity: it prepares girls to achieve equal status in society and to grow in their career paths. This model can be useful as example for the management of time and resources for a particular agenda. This approach is better than simply worrying and policing for fairness and equality in a gender agnostic group.

## Conclusion

This college and its initiatives are creating ripples among students and parents in its neighbourhood. This commendable management vision of focused drive for the empowerment of girls through engineering education and improving their employability makes business sense. The exclusivity and its execution of plans have made a vast difference. We wish to see more such engineering colleges and technical institutes, even coeducational, to focus on employability and empowerment of women students. BVRIT Hyderabad offers quite a few unique, precious and novel.

# Dr. Reddy's Laboratories

## Gender parity as a component of strategy towards growth

### Introduction

India is today the world's third largest producer of medicinal drugs. The industry employs about 49.5 million, both directly and indirectly, across the value chain. Manufacturing is one of the principal employments that drive the whole value chain. In fact, India's trade is substantial in the pharmaceutical arena by way of not only importing drugs but also exporting them.

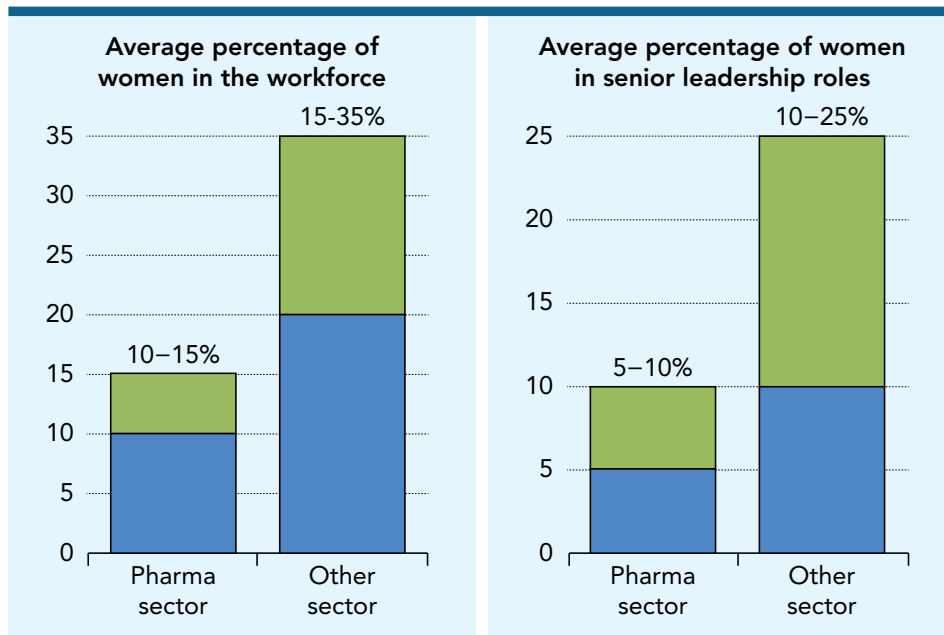
Dr. Reddy's Laboratories in Hyderabad is one of the largest pharmaceutical manufacturing companies, employing 22,681. Dr. Anji Reddy, the late founder, built this company with a dream to bring new molecules into the country at affordable costs. In 1984, he established Dr. Reddy's Laboratories and the rest is history.

### Need for gender parity practices

The pharmaceutical industry has been struggling with an immensely skewed sex ratio. It employs just about 15% of women in its workforce. While a handful of companies with direct global affiliations are attracting more women employees, most others still remain male-dominated.

The key reasons include the large sales force where women don't work, conservative policies that do not adequately address the creation of women-friendly work environments and the traditional perception that pharma is a male-dominated sector. Pharmaceutical sales jobs require long and late working hours. Medical representatives need to wait for doctors to be free from patient consultations. Unless the industry makes this segment attractive to women by facilitating flexible work hours, an equal gender balance seems difficult to achieve.

Unlike the sales sector, the R&D segment in the pharmaceutical industry can provide more opportunities for women. Though the research set-up in the local pharmaceutical industry is comparatively small, the sector needs to get more women in the other two segments—production and sales—for better diversity. The gender ratio in the R&D units at Dr. Reddy's Laboratories is quite balanced, even though the total number of women employees mirrors numbers for the rest of the industry.



Source: WILL Gender Quotient Index (GQI) – “Leadership by Proxy” – Poonam Barua.

Compared to the rest of corporate India, the pharmaceutical sector lags far behind in the percentage of women it employs and the proportion of women in senior leadership positions. While the average percentage of women in the workforce in most sectors ranges from 15–35%, in the pharmaceutical industry, it is 10–15%. A Mercer study puts it at 11%. On the metric of women in senior leadership roles, other sectors (average) and pharmaceutical sector are 10–25% and 5–10%, respectively.

The WILL Gender Quotient Index (GQI) for pharmaceutical companies, which measures the gender maturity of the sector, remains low. This implies that the pharmaceutical sector is still at the entry level of building ecosystems for gender inclusivity and women leadership. A Mercer study on Gender Diversity in Life Sciences pegs the pharmaceutical industry at 12%. Simply put, this means there is no leadership in pipeline. All the hiring is happening at the entry level, which means it will take years for the pharmaceutical sector to have senior women leaders. While the focus continues to remain on entry-level hiring and mid-level mentoring, the only way to build leadership strength is by hiring women at the second and first top tier levels, even at board level.

## Gender parity initiatives

Talented and capable people have played a significant role in powering and defining the growth of Dr. Reddy’s Laboratories over the last three decades. An enabling environment that buoys individual talent while fostering teamwork and the creation of shared success has supported them.

Namrata Gill Tyagi, Vice President Corporate HR, mentions: “Two years back, when we were taking stock of diversity within our organisation, we realised that while we had a good overall representation of women, the number of women in manufacturing

was minuscule. Given that 40% of our workforce is in manufacturing, we knew that something needed to be done to bring more gender parity in this space.”

Key features of this initiative included:

- Hiring was focused on bringing women in entry, mid- and senior levels. The number of women increased from 778 in FY15 (8.37%) to 1352 in FY17 (11.9%) in manufacturing. To increase our talent pool, Dr. Reddy’s Laboratories partnered with various agencies, put in the mandatory 25% CV slabs and also deployed an entirely women-led self-managing team at our plant in Baddi to serve as an example for others to follow suit.
- It was necessary to become legally compliant with the requirements to deploy women in API production and also in night shifts in select plants. A small number of women are working in our plants in the night shift. This is a major mindset-changing behaviour, and its success can bring more women to work in manufacturing drugs so that they can feel proud at helping achieve parity at the production floor.
- Bringing more women into work required garnering support of the women’s family members. This was done by organising plant visits for the family members and dialed up their interactions with plant leaders. Such events brought confidence among family members that we offer a safe workplace for women.
- We provided point-to-point cab facilities and women drivers to drop the women home from their night shift duty at the plant. Along with this, we have also provided them with crèche and healing room facilities at all our plants, implemented a POSH awareness drive and empowered our local and apex diversity council to conduct reviews and check-ins on the progress made.
- We hired women who are on career breaks through our unique platform, “Career Comeback for Women.”
- We redesigned shifts to enable us to change over to a five-day workweek in our Bio-similar plant, making it flexible enough for more women to participate. We have today become one of the first API manufacturing plants in India to have women associates working in production. We also have a woman leader heading operations of one of our formulation plants.
- Managers avoid taking women into manufacturing because the managers typically think that women would not opt for unique roles, nor would they take up the gruelling shifts in production.

Namrata adds: “We had to break these stereotypes by making the workplace more conducive and encouraging women to challenge the conventions. What differentiates our rationale from other manufacturing companies is that we did not approach the issue purely from a numbers perspective. Instead, we adopted a pull-based approach. We tried to create openings for them in roles that were otherwise not available to them, such as process engineering, warehouse, R&D, etc. and the women themselves applied for these positions. This demonstrated that women were not only capable of taking these roles up but, given a choice, they willingly chose to take them up, thereby breaking the stereotypical images that managers initially had. Watching some women take up these

roles inspired many others to follow suit. This rationale has been supported by senior leaders, who have championed the cause of diversity.”

Apparently, some of the initiatives led to multiple challenges. First, women had very few role models within manufacturing they could look up to. Second, family members were anxious, which is understandable in a country where the family often determines career choices. This was compounded by unwillingness among women to take up roles in manufacturing. A lot of this was due to lack of awareness about the kind of roles available for women. Third, managers were biased and were not sure if women would take up these positions. Four, enabling women to take up night shifts in our plant also meant ensuring that existing security and safety mechanisms were beefed up so that all women felt safe and empowered to take up evening shift work. This initiative required a lot of legal approvals and compliances, which were not there at that point. Finally, the women talent pool in the market was limited. The industry does not employ any women in manufacturing.

## Comeback careers for women

Marriage and maternity are the primary reasons for organisations losing most of their female workforce. In the Indian context, companies lose women employees on maternity leave, marriage, and so on, and hardly focus on encouraging them to return after an extended break.

Namrata mentions: “We welcome applications from women who have taken a break from professional work to devote time to their personal lives. ‘Comeback Careers for Women’ is a unique platform at Dr. Reddy’s where we provide career opportunities to women who have taken a break from professional work to devote more time and energy to the demands of their personal lives.”

“We understand the crucial role that women, who return to after maternity play at the workplace. We have created several initiatives to support them through the entire process and empower them without any bias or discrimination. For instance, we provide maternity counselling services to all our women employees, along with access to a ‘buddy mothers’ programme wherein soon-to-be parents can reach out to ‘buddies’ within the company who can help them with their doubts and queries around pregnancy. Our policy in this space has always been far ahead of the times. We offered six months of paid maternity leave much before the maternity bill was passed, followed by three months of extended leave and the option to extend the leave further. Post-motherhood, women are exempted from the bell curve appraisal and are eligible for reduced work hours for one year.”

“What is overlooked is that we need men to take the agenda forward and hence, involving men in the gender diversity discussion is paramount. We realised that these policies also require the buy-in of male colleagues and also provided them with 15 days of paternity leave and reduced work hours for six months, as well an option to avail of family care leave.”

## Benefits and scope of such initiatives

Namrata mentions: “The impact of our diversity initiative has been manifold. Our gender diversity in the organisation has increased from 9.3% in FY16 to 10.6% in FY17. The gender diversity within manufacturing rose from 8.4% in FY15, to 10.25% in FY16, to the current 11.90% (as of 28 February 2017). Diversity hiring increased from 19% to 21% as of FY17 YTD, thanks to our managers actively trying to build more gender-balanced teams. Diversity attrition reduced in all our plants from 15.9% in FY15 to 10.96% in FY17. Our supportive policies and practices such as maternity counselling and buddy mothers have enabled maternity resignations to drop from 15 to only 1 in a period of one year. Our pro-women policies and diversity agenda were also shared and discussed by the media and opinion makers. Over 600 pledges were taken this international women’s day by men as well as women, to work towards unleashing women’s power and potential.

## Tops – diversity in corporate Asia

Our focused hiring efforts for gender balance combined with other initiatives to build a more inclusive workplace, have helped us top the “Diversity in Corporate Asia” among 200 major companies in a report issued by Carnstone. The Dow Jones Sustainability Index is the leading global benchmark for corporate sustainability. DJSI tracks leading sustainability-driven companies based on the analysis of financially relevant environmental, social and governance factors. It is the manifestation of these efforts that has resulted in Dr. Reddy’s Laboratories being recognised by Dow Jones as the only generic pharmaceutical company featured in the list from the emerging market regions and as one among the 10 businesses that are from India.

The authors were able to observe that employees have positively responded to diversity initiatives. Employees across work levels have actively sought to embrace a culture that promotes gender parity and empowers women across the board. Sheetal Anand mentions: “I have always been empowered to pursue my passions here. My head of department encouraged me to pursue a Ph D On 25 July 2016, I was declared Doctor of Philosophy in the field of Chemistry, one of the happiest days of my life. It would not have been possible without the support I received at Dr. Reddy’s.”

## Home-away-home facility

Another employee, Roja Ramani, said: “I availed of maternity leave twice during my four years of working here. Initially, I was extremely worried as it had been just two months since I joined the organisation, but the maternity policy of DRL took away all my worries. My boss was very understanding and supportive, which gave me immense mental strength. Another impressive facility is the crèche, a home-away-home for my kids. My husband had questions about managing work and kids, but his questions were answered by DRL’s maternity policy, reduced work hours and the crèche facility.”

## Good health can't wait

Namrata adds: “Bringing more women into manufacturing has an immense economic benefit to it. It has not only helped us in diversifying our thought but has also helped us in increasing our engagement levels. First, the growth in engagement has created a culture of high productivity and second, it has contributed a significant decrease in our recruitment costs. It has also driven us to create a culture of innovation and creativity, which reflects in our work. For instance, we have leveraged our women’s expertise to take care beyond the pill and devised new methods of improving adherence to therapy. New kinds of packaging, grass root level patient campaigns and other successful design-thinking inputs have come from our women-led teams. This just goes on to show the role our initiative has played in not just bringing about gender parity at the workplace, but also strengthening our core resolve to accelerate access to innovative and affordable medicines because good health can’t wait.”

“Our initial success has given confidence. Our plan is to continue to expand hiring of women into roles within manufacturing and sales. By the end of FY19, we are aspiring to run the Baddi plant with 50% women. We would assess development needs and provide access to training programmes for women to take up the next big roles in their careers. We want to create greater awareness about their career paths within the organisation. We are building real women’s networks within the organisation through engagement initiatives, social media and more awards/scholarships. We have designed a programmatic approach to increasing inclusion by adding women into decision-making bodies such as the Apex Diversity Council, the National Governing Council, etc. We would like to extend industry networks for women in science and manufacturing and provide them with opportunities to network with colleagues across their industry.”

## Learning from the initiatives

Hiring women at all levels will give an impetus to the double-digit trajectory of the industry. Hiring women bolsters bottom lines. For an organisation to get ahead of the curve, HR needs to draft policies that need to be more inclusive and also foster change in attitude in the workplace. Gender diversity is needed as much for economic prosperity as for equal opportunity and HR should empower their organisations to align their business goals with a particular diversity agenda. Its HR strategy and cultural change stand out and can be adopted by every large firm.

## Conclusion – it takes two to tango

Gender balance is possible even if it is uncommon in current practice – but it needs both men and women to take equal responsibility for it to happen. If an organisation is aspiring

to become a diversity champion, they need to think through the strategic interventions required for attracting, retaining and developing their women workforce. Well-crafted interventions can make a difference! That's the experience of Dr. Reddy's Laboratories.

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# Farida Shoes Pvt Ltd

## Gender Parity: A strategic orientation

### Introduction

The Indian leather industry accounts for around 12.9% of the world's leather production of hides/skins.

The country ranks second in terms of footwear and leather garments production in the world.

*This particular sector is also among the top 10 foreign exchange earners for the country.*

This sets the context for the company discussed here: Farida Shoes Ltd.

### Pioneering best practices – Farida Shoes Ltd

Farida Shoes is the flagship company of the Farida Group engaged in manufacturing and marketing high-quality men's footwear. The products are sold under popular brand names in more than 40 countries globally. Farida shoes is one of the biggest facilities in South India with an employee strength of around 4000. The factory's systems and practices meet the requirements of various international standards and has been awarded ISO 9001:2008, ISO 14001:2004, OHSAS 18001:2007 and SA 8000:2008.

### Need for gender parity practices

Farida management believed that empowerment of women leads to empowerment of families and their communities. It was also realised that women's empowerment consists of four components, namely safety, health, education and livelihood. In order to empower women financially, they needed opportunities for income generation.

### Initiatives by Farida Shoes

Farida thoughtfully initiated several measures to motivate women to join the workforce and contribute to the economic development of their families. Some of the measures include:

- Perks and benefits beyond legal mandate
- Constantly improving quality of work life

- Innovative solutions for work–life balance
- Family and community involvement

Some of the practices followed by Farida for the benefit of its employees are as follows:

1. Flexible working hours
2. Walk to work
3. Nutrition supplements for expecting mothers
4. Additional recess time for expecting mothers
5. Spoken English classes
6. Self-defence classes
7. Health camps
8. Family days
9. Exercise routine recommended by physiotherapists

## Project on development of women supervisors

Training and development for women employees is a routine activity to make them skilled workers. Though women constitute around 94.7% of our employees, there were less than 5% women among the supervisors. It was noticed that there were number of graduates and high school qualified women employees who could become supervisors. However, they lacked the confidence to take up higher responsibilities. It was noticed that wherever talent was identified and mentored, they were performing really well. Hence, it was decided to have a structured project to identify, nurture and promote women employees as supervisors. The initiative focused on building capacity in women employees in order to promote them to supervisory level as well as uplift unskilled women employees to skilled operator level. The primary objective of the initiative was:

1. to empower women employees socially as well as economically by increasing their self-confidence, skills (leadership and technical) and earning capacity;
2. to involve women employees in decision making of the business;
3. to increase ratio of women to men in staff cadre as well. The project was started in 2014.

Challenges in implementing the initiatives included:

- Disturbance to regular work to some extent as the selected employees had to attend training
- Supervisors unwilling to let them go as they have to train someone else to fill their current position. Difficulty in taking written examinations
- Domestic responsibilities made some of them to take leave quite often
- Resistance from few old co-workers in accepting them as supervisors
- Interpersonal relationship issues between new supervisors and co-workers
- Family priorities over need to attend calls after office hours

To overcome these challenges, counter balancing initiatives like recruiting of additional manpower at work stations, facilitating with practical assessments rather than written assessment, motivational trainings and mentoring for being supervisor and so on were under taken.

To win support of family members who especially did not want higher responsibilities as commitment of employee would go up, the company invited family members for family day meetings to make them appreciate the greater responsibility handled by the employee.

They also turned out to be better brand ambassadors for the company in the community.

The initiative helped women employee ratio in supervisory category increase from less than 5% to 13%. 168 women moved from unskilled to skilled workforce.

The initiative also gave significant results in terms of productivity as well as quality.

Women-managed production lines receive monthly best performance award consistently based on their quality and productivity results.

## Learning from the initiatives

Reward and recognition has to be systematically done in order to sustain and improve upon the the proportion of female supervisors. Career path to be widely disseminated to motivate more employees to come forward to take up supervisory roles.

## Conclusion

Farida plans its employee initiatives as well as community development initiatives around women. This project's outcome has reinforced our belief that latent skills and talent of women helps the organisation, family, the community and the nation at large. The case clearly shows that women can be made to handle roles that were hitherto classified as male-only domain by adequate training, mentoring and other appropriate initiatives. There are challenges to keep abreast in a market with stiff competition coming from other low-cost countries. However, the study showcases the sensitive manner in which the organisation has come forward to not only promote a social issue, but also develop the business.

# Integra Software Services Pvt. Ltd

Naturally subsumed gender parity!

Integra Software Services Private Limited is a leading digital content services company providing content enrichment and transformation services to publishers and educational institutions and workplace learning and development services to enterprises.

Founded in 1994, Integra is an end-to-end publishing services provider offering the whole gamut of services from developmental editing to digital products for global publishers. It also provides complete solutions across all aspects of digital and eLearning content lifecycle to non-publishing verticals, such as educational content providers, educational institutions and corporate entities, thereby transforming traditional media-based content into new-age interactive learning products.

Digital transformation is essentially a disruptor in various value chains and has forced many a company and educational institutions to rethink its long- and short-term strategies. Integra enables this rethinking and restructuring of traditional practices through its customised services like creation of journals, teacher and student edition eBooks, curriculum design and blended learning courses, eBook/iBook with interactive content and game-based learning.

With a competent team of over 1500 qualified professionals with diverse skill sets, Integra meets discerning quality standards and demanding delivery schedules. Headquartered in Pondicherry, India, Integra has its Global Service Delivery Centres in India (Pondicherry, Chennai, Pune and Bangalore), the UK (Middlesex), the USA (Chicago, IL) and Japan (Tokyo).

The company's clients include elite publishers like Palgrave Macmillan, Taylor & Francis Group, Pearson, Cengage, Oxford University Press and the Cambridge University Press, and established corporate players like Larsen & Toubro, Arcelor Mittal, and IFRC to name a few.

## Need for gender parity initiatives

The advent of digital technologies created a universal need to learn newer technologies. Publishing and digital content got a lot more complex as content had to be repacked to fit end consumer's needs in different digital formats and books. With an ever-increasing demand for tablets, e-readers, educational eLearning tools, an average consumer in an

educational institution or a publishing house had to cater to these diverse demands and passed on the expectation to their content supplier companies.

Creating an expert workforce is only half of a company's solution. Retaining the expert workforce is the other critical half as learning and development costs tend to eat into any organisation's bottom line. To succeed, content houses have to create the best content at the least possible cost. Retaining trained workforce, therefore, becomes one of the core needs to run a successful enterprise.

## Women wired to connect better

By nature, women are wired to connect better their analytical and intuitive skills, which help them excel in many publishing needs like having an eye for detail, language and teamwork. The talent crunch in publishing is aggravated by the high attrition rates among women, thereby creating an acute need to create gender parity programmes to attract and retain women talent.

Integra's location is also a critical factor in understanding the need to attract women to work. Puducherry is a tier II city on the South-East coast of Tamil Nadu. Being located close to Chennai and closer to Chennai's IT corridor, it is surrounded by the smaller towns of Cuddalore, Villupuram and Tindivanam whose population are willing to commute daily to their job sites. The 15 colleges in and around Puducherry create a large pool of unskilled labour every year, who find it hard to be suitably employed. It is a matter of pride and privilege for this raw talent to work in a world-class environment and build their skills. While some migrate to other cities, some would prefer to stay closer to their roots and enjoy a better quality of life at a much lower cost when compared with tier I cities like Chennai or Bangalore.

Some of the other challenges in getting the right women talent lie in the fact that Puducherry was, as part of its history, a French colony. Even today, such tendencies are ingrained in the people and their culture. Respect for liberty and freedom of expression are important. From a social perspective, this region carries the spirit of freedom fighter and poet Subramaniya Bharathi who vociferously expressed his uplifting views on freedom, justice and women equality. Finally, the business requires working in shifts as they operate for clients from Japan in the East and Europe and USA in the West. When a business has a tendency to have women workforce and works in shifts, which is typical of IT services, local labour force supply would support only if women safety at workplace and commutation are ensured.

Here's how Integra turned these challenges into its strengths. Integra's in-house training programmes, InfoTeach, transforms the raw talent pool into industry-savvy professionals. Being located in Puducherry, it provides the necessary incubation *via* training and allows the students and mid-level experienced employees to move up the corporate rungs. Integra provides a liberal, yet safe environment with measures such as "Zero tolerance for sexual harassment," "Individual Mentoring programmes to groom middle and top women leaders."

Finally, Integra offers women-centric development programmes like Career Mentorship, Work-Life Balance workshops, pick-up and drop and crèche facilities, which are

rare even in a metro, and very precious to find in a tier II city. These locational and organisational factors helped Integra become the first choice of employment for both men and women.

## How Integra broke the glass ceiling

While Integra through its proactive policies and winning work culture managed to recruit a high percentage of women, retaining them was a big challenge. Most of them though loved working in Integra and having a professional career left because of non-organisational reasons such as marriage, child care and so on. This triggered the company to think about special initiatives to facilitate the women to continue and grow in their career.

In 2008, on Women's Day, the company launched a unique initiative called "Sakthi Oli" (The Radiance of Woman Power: a task force at Integra for women empowerment) to develop and empower the women working at Integra. The primary objectives of Sakthi Oli are: to equip, encourage and empower women to grow in their careers; prepare women at Integra to meet business challenges; develop and retain women leaders; build support systems for women employees and help them balance family responsibilities and work. Sakthi Oli is chaired by Mrs Anuradha Sriram, Co-Founder & Joint Managing Director of Integra, and she is supported by a team of women employees passionately dedicated to the cause and objectives of Sakthi Oli.

Shiny Rajesh, Sakthi Oli champion, says: "Through Sakthi Oli, we have implemented a slew of welfare measures. Like individual health check-ups, day care facility, safe pickup and drop for women coming in second shifts and night shifts, having onsite lady doctor providing special treatments for expecting mothers and creating women-friendly policies. We also carry out special mentoring programmes for women to groom them to become effective managers and leaders."

Anuradha Sriram adds: "Women excel in academics, but this does not translate to the workplace. Though we had a large number of women at the entry level, most of the supervisors and managers were men. We felt the need to undertake focused initiatives to empower the women to think about their future and create a conducive business environment to unleash their potential and grow within the company. In 2008, a workshop titled "Breaking the Glass Ceiling" was conducted by a team of 18 women participants from various levels and functions of the organisation. The workshop was aimed at actuating a discussion among the 18 participants about the strategies to elevate women employees up the career ladder. A study was conducted on a sample of female employees from across positions and levels to get a hue on their achievements, future goals and constraints as part of the workshop, to get an insight into the prevailing mindset of women employees in the organisation.

Findings of the study concluded the following: achievement centred on family and self. Women were reluctant to acknowledge self-accomplishments which were a disadvantage to their career. The company realised that future of women at work revolved around family and career and constraints were family and social dogma about certain cultural traits. Women felt that coming to work by itself was a challenge. Even

if some women could break through this barrier, a sizeable number of women with potential lacked career aspirations. For many of these women, having a job itself was an achievement. Based on these findings we identified the need to have a task force at Integra specifically for women to champion women development initiatives at Integra and to facilitate support systems. The working group was created to empower women and address issues from different perspectives like self, family, society, managers, and organisation in that same order. While a few could see from their self-perspective, a large contingent saw primarily from a societal perspective. Our initiatives meant to customise for every woman employee or prospect with us!

Sriram Subramanya, Founder, CEO and Managing Director, observes: “For me having a diverse workforce was critical as it promotes innovation and produces better performance. All the investments we have been making in empowering our women employees have started yielding results, and it is a journey.”

## Preparing men to accept women!

The journey was not smooth, and there were several challenges. Muthulakshmi, Manager, L&D remarks: “Men colleagues felt that Sakthi Oli was investing only in women, with priorities being given to them, and various programmes were conducted only for them. Initially, they thought that we had just formed a separate group. The introduction of flexible hours for expectant mothers under this initiative was not readily welcomed by the production heads. We had difficulty in getting nominations and participation for the various programmes that were conducted since the production heads were not keen on releasing their women employees. Finding an appropriate place for crèche was another challenge as our office premises then did not have sufficient space. Pondicherry being a tier II city, there were challenges from women employees who hailed from a traditional background and were hesitant to take higher responsibilities.”

The company handled the challenges through a systematic plan and proper execution. Daisy Michael, Vice President – International Operations & Quality, mentions: “We sensitised the men that they were already empowered and that women needed extra support. Further, we organised special programmes for men to let them know the importance of diversity and how to handle a diverse team. We conducted various programmes that were beneficial to men as well making them realise that this was not something against them. The production heads were sensitised that empowered women meant better results for the team and the organisation. We had an external diversity champion talk to men managers to address their concerns. We also awarded men managers who supported the cause of gender diversity with a Diversity Champion award. We located a place close to the office to address the challenge of running a crèche. Motivational programmes were conducted to inspire women to take higher responsibilities. Transport facilities helped women to commute to office safely during second and night shifts. The senior management was also involved in giving the right directions to the Sakthi Oli team.”

Thus, the organisation accomplished its list of “Must do,” “Good to do,” and “Best to do” parity activities around the single empowerment project, Sakthi Oli.

Anil Karthikeyan, Associate Vice President – HR, observes: “After marriage, we found many of the women relocating to Chennai. So we started our Chennai centre to retain these high potential women. We now have offices in Pune and Bangalore and try to accommodate women in these centers when they relocate because of marriage.”

## Impact on performance

Gender parity initiatives yielded a positive influence on the performance of the firm on both financial and non-financial parameters. For example, promotion ratio of women in the last financial year (55%) is more than that of men. Seventy per cent of women employees get top scores in appraisals, and 60% of top performers are women. These points prove that Integra strongly encourages women employees to perform and succeed. Sakthi Oli satisfaction survey result showed that 96% of respondents expressed high satisfaction with work environment. Further, women have comprised 50% of Integra’s workforce for the past nine years. Currently, women comprise 60% of Integra’s workforce. The average tenure of employment with the company is high for women compared with men. This shows women are loyal and this can be attributed to Integra’s Sakthi Oli programme.

## From breaking glass ceilings to bulldozing walls...

It was observed that many women are thankful to Sakthi Oli for their initiatives as they were successful in sustaining their careers through flexible options and work-from-home options. Kavitha Kuttikan, Manager, Photo Research and Permissions, mentions: “A journey started to break glass ceilings has endeavoured to bulldoze walls. That is Sakthi Oli! The team has continually strived to unravel the potential of women employees not just in their careers but at home too. Parenting skills, financial enlightenment, quick cook recipes, health care and what not! I am not sure if the scriptures said that a woman’s place is at home, but definitely, her heart is there when her intelligence and talent are required for the larger world. Sakthi Oli recognises and works to balance this equation for women – a critical balance that ensures God’s creation of equality of gender being restored!”

## Recognition as a women-friendly company

Integra has been recognised as a women-friendly organisation in many forums and associations. In 2009 the company was bestowed with an “Award for Gender Inclusivity” by NASSCOM. In 2010 it won “Best Employer for Women Development” prize. In 2013 it bagged the award of “One of the top five companies in India for Gender Diversity” by NASSCOM. And in 2016 it was named “One of 100 Best Companies for Women in India” by Working Mother and AVTAR Group.

## Learning from gender parity initiatives

Integra clearly shows that even for a medium-sized IT services company, gender equality can be part of HR strategy and a decent execution will produce desired results. The company's practice of having a chairperson review the outcome and survey results showcases the top management's commitment. The sustained change deployment through the Sakthi Oli programme chaired by the senior management again communicated the tone and rigour of change.

Two of the most crucial factors in effecting this win were men employees' active involvement in the initiative and women employees' overwhelmingly positive response by way of contribution to the business. By identifying male "Diversity Champions", they provided the necessary support for the movement on a continuous basis. This initiative was a critical factor and paved the way for the programme to succeed.

## Conclusion

The case of Integra Software Services proves that an IT services company can be successfully run in a tier II city by combining business objectives and apt HR strategies oriented towards active women workforce participation. Gender parity leveraging on social, cultural and locational factors is clearly visible in this case. The top management addressed the acute need of the hour by creating a programme, appointing champions who carried out the initiatives and brought about sustained change. And that's how Integra broke the glass ceiling.

# JKK Nattraja College of Engineering And Technology

Nudging entrepreneurial spirit and scoring on gender parity

## Introduction

JKK Nattraja College of Engineering, established in 2008, is one of the educational institutions developed by the JKK Rangammal Charitable trust. The trust was formed in 1969 to cater to the region's needs in the development of a technically skilled class. The goal was to impart knowledge and training for men and women to meet entrepreneurial and management needs. The institution is in a sprawling campus of 40 acres in Kumarapalayam, Namakkal, and provides a clean and invigorating environment conducive for higher education.

JKK Nattraja College of Engineering's aim is to develop the people academically, socially and economically. Approved by AICTE, New Delhi, and affiliated to the Anna University, Chennai, the college offers B. E. (Computer Science, Mechanical, ECE, EEE, IT), ME (Computer Science) and MBA courses.

The trust's founder, JKK Natarajah, was keen on providing competency-based education to the younger generation. He dedicated his life to imparting professional education. The college's vision is to produce world-class engineers for converting global challenges into opportunities through "Value Embedded Quality Technical Education" and to develop this college as an Academy of Higher Learning in the field of engineering and technology.

## Need for gender parity

Kumarapalayam is on the banks of the Cauvery River (and its tributary, the Bhavani River) of South India, in Namakkal District. Kumarapalayam is famous for its textile industry. There are many spinning mills, yarn dyeing processing units, manual dyeing units, weaving units, calendaring mills, export-oriented units and related ancillary units in and around. The town upgraded as a municipality from the status of town panchayat has a population of 71,594 (2011 census) and extends over 7.10 sq. km (2.74 sq. miles), as per survey and land records.

The students are mostly from the western and central parts of Tamil Nadu. As of 2011, Tamil Nadu had a population of 67 million. The male to female ratio is 1000:995.

When it comes to higher education, especially in technology and engineering, where there is likely to be co-education, one would expect the ratio to be representative. It may not match with the gender distribution of the population, as the choice of higher education is still harder to exercise for girls than for boys in Tamil Nadu, compared to neighbouring state Kerala. Further, the selection of discipline in engineering would also influence gender parity. We see unfavourable bias, as the female to male ratio at JKKN College is 3: 1.

The location has a competitive disadvantage as a higher education centre. Tamil Nadu leads India in the number of educational institutions in engineering and technology. But supply for educational services is higher than demand. Some of the institutions had increased capacity a decade or two back when there was a boom in the market. The top percentiles of the population moved towards those colleges. The western region of Tamil Nadu has a few well-established institutions and Coimbatore-based institutes were preferred by the people in Kumarapalyam. Further, nearby Erode and Salem have competitive colleges. Hence, attracting quality intake is going to be a challenge for JKKN College. This issue does not reflect on the college as a brand. It is rather an environmental condition that is a threat to many colleges!

In such a background, a pleasant environment has to be created for female students to enrol. Students can choose any institute based on factors like brand, specialisation and placements. Safety and security of women could also be a factor that students research while applying for colleges. If the institution can create clear guidelines, policies and the commitment to transform plans into actions, more girl students will be inclined to join. Fee concessions can be offered to help girl students go through a college education. Exceptional opportunities in placement or employability could be a differentiator too!

Moving on, let us focus on the faculty. The college has faculty with nine different departments to teach, counsel and guide the students. Historically, engineering has been a man's world. Until the late 1990s, most women showed interest in learning and working in fields like literature, pure science and arts. Only during the early 2000s, due to the massive boom in information technology, did more women start showing an interest in engineering. The college's management has to develop policies that help attract more women employees, like flexible hours and other perks. The institute must help women to balance their work and family lives.

Some of the controversial questions are: is this all for meeting the demand of the information technology industry? Can all colleges collectively meet the demand? If some of the colleges do not meet the requirement, what kind of justification can they provide to girls who enrol with them? How are we responsible for those who dream of success without the ability to see the horizon?

The next focus area would be staff. The institution is spread over 40 acres of land, with nine departments and placement and R&D cells. Of a workforce of 180, about 101 are teaching staff. The balance comprises non-teaching staff in administration and maintenance. About 68% of the staff is men. Policies and guideline changes need to be made to reach a gender balance in the workforce. Table 1 shows that women students constitute 31.8% and women faculty members comprise 19.8%.

## Numbers on gender parity

**TABLE 1 Percentage of women**

Category	No of men	No of women	Women as % of population in 2017
Students	617	283	31.8
Faculty	81	20	19.8

## Initiatives at JKK Nattraja College

A Women Entrepreneurship Forum (WEF) was initiated in August 2016 to promote women start-ups. The HOD of EEE Department, Professor Mabujohn, heads the forum. She mentions: “The Forum is tied up with private organisations that are aligning with us for building a positive entrepreneurial ecosystem in tier II and III regions. We have also taken the support of Native Lead, an agency from Madurai focused on nurturing entrepreneurial talent, especially for small and medium enterprises and in the micro sector. Located between tier II and tier III towns, students from the same sections are now breaking their confinement within the limits of their homes and coming out for their education. But education alone does not play a significant role in development and upliftment. Entrepreneurship among women is an important avenue, through which women can overcome their constraints and solidify their places in society. In consideration of all these factors, the JKKN management, which believes in economic development through quality human resource, has initiated the forum. The dream is being realised by conducting unique entrepreneurial awareness and development programmes.”

Students from different branches have attended with enthusiasm and come forward to become entrepreneurs. They attended some development programmes like Trispark and Ideation, systematic entrepreneurship programmes designed and conducted by Native Lead Foundation. Their expertise in finance is helpful in achieving a major role in becoming an entrepreneur. Additionally, after becoming an entrepreneur, women face several problems: the challenges of obtaining financing, sales promotion, permission for starting a business, gender discrimination, illiteracy, lack of business knowledge, lack of managerial experience and so on. The WEF programmes help students learn to face these challenges.

Students from humble backgrounds show keen interest despite their socio-economic background. Besides, the students’ dependence on parents, helps them to bounce back after get initially rejected by their parents (for their entrepreneurial ideas). Parents are not negative but are confined to traditional thinking that women cannot equal men, especially in professional careers and that, at best, women can play a support role! The myth is challenged by the JKKN initiatives.

It would be unbelievable that a tier III engineering college that cannot attract top students can venture into nurturing entrepreneurial talent. One of the management team members states: “Tamil Nadu, and especially this region, has humongous spirit and deep strengths

in propelling growth through trade, exports and SMEs in automobiles, textile machinery, agricultural equipment and financial services. There are a couple of banks having a head office in and originating from the region. There have been national brands and cluster initiatives which have got global recognition, like Tiruppur hosiery, Erode and Karur textiles, Salem textiles, engineering and trade and Coimbatore's vast range of products and services. We believe in the spirit that is prevalent in the air we breathe! Further, apart from these, women face volatility in their personal and professional life cycles due to some traumatic event or the other, such as divorce, discrimination due to pregnancy, the health of their better halves, economic constraints, etc. Skilling and nurturing entrepreneurial talents make them brave and determined to go through the cycle and shift horizon."

With this conviction, the college worked on getting the parents of female students to visit the college. They were invited to speak with local entrepreneurs and angel investors at the campus. It educated them on how they and the institution could support their female children to effectively become entrepreneurs. The aspirants' funding needs for starting their ventures was taken care of by investors, government agencies, banks and also a few start-ups.

A parent of a student of the current batch mentioned: "Women are now breaking their confinement within the limits of their homes and coming forward for their education. Mere education alone does not play a significant role in either development or upliftment. And there are many reasons for women to enter entrepreneurial ventures in a predominantly male-dominated society. Entrepreneurship among women is an important avenue for the current scenario, through which women can overcome their subordination within the family and the society as a whole. I have not been able to pursue my dream of becoming an entrepreneur. I want my daughter to be independent and successful. I welcome this programme and wish the very best, not only for my daughter but also for the many who use this opportunity."

Since the initiation of the Women Entrepreneurship Forum (WEF), students' activities include discussions on innovative ideas, entrepreneurship and social enterprise. Out of 410 female students from different batches, 59 students came forward to shape themselves to become entrepreneurs. Notably, four women students were shortlisted in the top 15 among 500 contestants at the Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore, in 2017.

Ms Sivaranjini mentions: "An Entrepreneurship Development Cell (EDC) of the technical branch was set up with each department participating in the programme. Integrated innovation is possible among the students from each department. Thus, there is cross-pollination and breeding of ideas for fructification. The students and the staff involve themselves efficiently and respond virtually in frequent meetings, discussions and short programmes on their innovative projects that would become products."

WEF educates, energises and empowers female students, encouraging them to become successful women entrepreneurs. WEF aims to have a minimum of five women entrepreneurs from each stream before 2018. One of the faculty members stated: "Our plan for the future is to create an expanded platform. that should help our students to shape themselves to become empowered entrepreneurs. Our alumni who have become successful entrepreneurs have to become mentors to guide, with their skills, experience and insight, to our budding entrepreneurs. Our management is planning an exclusive Business Incubator at our campus for female students."

Apart from this, the college has some “good” and “must do” initiatives. One of them is the Anti-Ragging Committee (ARC). The ARC is in place for effective prevention of ragging and Principal Dr. K Tamizharasu heads it. Effective measures and guidelines have been put in place. Students can complain to the principal or the committee members if seniors or colleagues inside or outside the campus indulge in any ragging activity. Heads of departments are members of the committee. The college has taken various precautions as per AICTE norms to prevent ragging and ensure a 100% no-ragging campus. Anti-ragging campaigns and awareness programmes are regularly conducted.

## Impact of the programme and initiatives

After the initiation of the WEF in August 2016, the campus is an ambient entrepreneurial ecosystem with regular entrepreneurship programmes. It is evident that the students discuss innovation, entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship with wide interest in the campus. One can believe that the novel ideas of at least some of them would certainly impact society and also their socio-economic status.

Professor Mabujohn mentions: “Notably, four of our female students were shortlisted in the top 15 among 500 contestants, for their “Concept of Entrepreneurship” in the title Breedy Poultry in Yuva Start Challenge 2017 at the Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore, on 10 March 2017. I reiterate the number, four out of 15, at IIM, Bangalore! Two women teaching staff members cum mentors motivated guided and accompanied them for the event presentation. We are delighted over the initiative of the forum to nurture so quickly young successful women entrepreneurs from our institution.”

There is a process in place for monitoring the WEF initiative. One of the professors in the cell mentions: “All the entrepreneurial programmes being conducted for our female students are evaluated and reviewed by the top management. Meetings are held twice a month with all the coordinators and student members. The product idea’s efficiency, effectiveness and impact upon the society are all discussed and evaluated with mentors and tied up organisations. There is a constant monitoring on the constraints on their goal to become entrepreneurs. The process, therefore, enables WEF to maintain a consistent understanding of how the ecosystem portfolio level is functioning: what overall impacts are being achieved, what strategic directions need adjustment, and what further support may be necessary. The result will be continued programmatic direction, efficiency, effectiveness, overall impact and the dissemination of results of the activities of the forum.”

## Perception of types of intervention

JKKN College has “must do initiatives” like adoption recommendations towards women employees and students; “good to have initiatives” like the WEF encourage more students to participate. “Top initiatives” aim to produce a minimum of five entrepreneurs, which would overall help in reaching gender parity. This will change the socio-economic status of women. It is an excellent vision and mission for changing the fabric of education among tier III colleges. This is a differentiator and a bold move facilitating young girls

to become entrepreneurs and it would boost women's freedom and confidence (instead of trying to attract top recruiting brands to the college). The rub-off effect among other students, including boys pursuing courses here, would be phenomenal. Even if they achieve a small proportion of their target, it will be monumental success. The need is high for skill-based entrepreneurial talent. If they can come up with hybrid technological solutions to the common man's problems, they would make history for the region.

The question is: Are they committed and serious? Do they have an implementation team to make it actionable? Is that all grand ambition in paper and spirit only? Suspicious minds can be fertile grounds for scepticism or cynicism! As of now, the management creating a culture of ensuring gender balance and parity is the most significant achievement that bolsters the strategy.

Students, who are the key stakeholders, welcome this. Imagine being in a tier III engineering college to deliver a lecture on career opportunities, especially in the IT sector! One can see girls wearing western dresses, which is unusual, given their customs, and even more rare in boots and suits approaching for job opportunities in the metropolis. One must sympathise with their anxiety and visualise their as well as their parents' dreams and hopes as they spend their hard-earned income and assets, and investing their time in the hope of changing their fortunes for good, once and for all. Among such unusual groups, imagine girls with pride talk about creating jobs for their friends and peers! How can one not see a "New India", full of hopes and dreams, the fuel for becoming a super power? Is this not the answer to questions on how to engage millennial talents, and isn't the "Make in India programme" stated loud and clear? We think so!

## Conclusion

By following their hearts and dreams as has been discussed, this case illuminates hopes of women students not only in this region but also in the rest of India. It requires management commitment to build a framework on which to empower women students and staff. We, as liberal members of this society, must commit to channelling our resources like time, money and energy in a meaningful way to foster the ambition of creating women entrepreneurs of those who go through education at the college.

# Mandala Apparels Pvt Ltd

## Gender parity as a component of growth strategy

### Introduction

India is the largest producer of cotton in the world; it produced 5984 million kg cotton in 2015–16. India is also one of the largest textile exporters, which stood at USD 40 billion in 2015–16. Keeping in line with this trend, the Indian apparel industry has been duly recognised as the largest employment generator, especially for the marginalised, unskilled workers and women in the country. The textile and apparel sector is the second largest employment provider in the country, employing nearly 51 million directly and 68 million indirectly in 2015–16. Every `100 of apparel production generates an income of `30. The textile and apparel sector together contribute 14% to industrial production, 4% to India's gross domestic product (GDP) and constitute 15% of the country's export earnings. Apparel has contributed to a whopping 42% to the textile and apparel export basket of India in 2015–16. It is one of the focus areas of the government, as the sector has huge employment potential.

There are different vintages of textile companies in India, which start from the colonial period. Similarly, the industry throws open opportunities in different parts of the value chain from ginning of cotton to finishing and retailing apparel. You can find apparel factories/plants of companies throughout India: these range from hosiery fabrics in Ludhiana, colourful cottons in Gujarat to the world-famous Tirupur market. Global brands outsource to local manufacturers and suppliers. Within India, national brands as well as boutique stores sell a variety of apparel suited to local tastes, preferences and requirements. Finally, firms in the industry are registered either as corporates, SMEs or firms, vary in size as small, medium and large and differ with respect to number of employees and sales. From designing apparel and cloth manufacture to retailing, women dominate the industry.

### Mandala Apparels Pvt Ltd

We will discuss Mandala Apparels in the business of boutique wear manufacture and retailing located in Puducherry.

The case of Mandala Apparels gives an opportunity to understand the unique and different initiatives built in the backdrop of Puducherry. It all started in 2002 with an

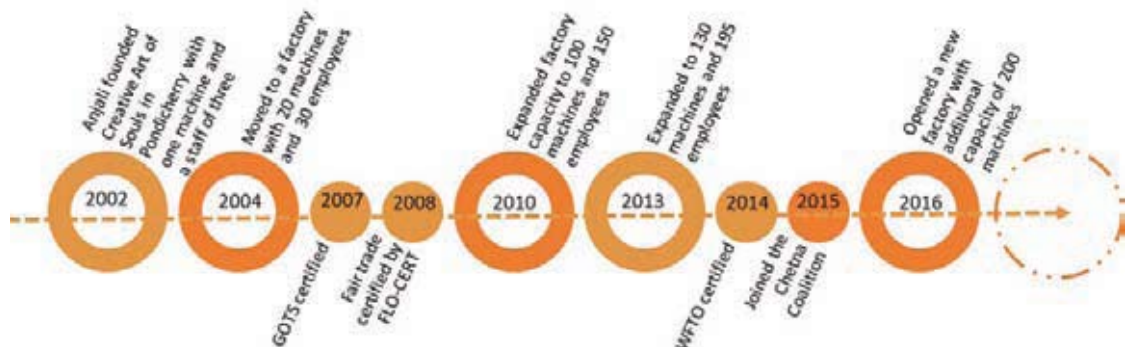
initiative called Creative Art of Souls (C.A.O.S). Anjali Schiavina who is the founder and CEO of the company set it up. The enterprise was renamed Mandala Apparels Private Limited as she moved towards a larger vision of building a sustainable ethical enterprise with her partners.

Mandala signifies the radial balance of a cosmic circle. In a little over a decade, the organization grew to employ over 200. It acquired a reputation for quality and innovation in fabric development and created a niche for itself in organic cotton and fair-trade clothing.

The Mandala Apparels textile factory sits in a small industrial complex in Puducherry, where sewing machines hum and women chatter as they stitch fair-trade clothing. In India, the textile industry is second only to agriculture in providing jobs and about 60% of its employees are women.

Over the years, focus was strong on creating a reliable, transparent and accountable supply chain. Mandala Apparels manufactures organic, fair-trade apparels and accessories using sustainable fibres. Their collaboration with different stakeholders enabled them to achieve a magnitude having positive impact on the community, the economy and the environment.

They are certified by Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS) for standard organic fibre, ecological and social criteria since 2007. Mandala was recognised for practice and promotion of all fair-trade principles in 2008 by FLOCERT, a global certification and verification body for fair-trade products. Mandala implemented 10 principles for fair-trade in 2014, certified by WFTO. From 2015, they also committed to buy cotton directly from the cotton producers.



## Gender parity practices

Naturally, the apparel industry is a safe bet for women to work in. Many women choose to work in cloth conversion and apparel making. Women also work as supervisors and floor managers in textile factories. This field is dominated by women in areas like design initiatives, product visualisation and branding. Puducherry, not a cotton or garment hub, still has the right workforce for this nature of enterprise. Gender parity initiatives are still considered important for several reasons:

1. Unique items require specialised labour.
2. Structure of the supply chain network and agents play a significant role in determining deployment of women in these areas, if they are different from run-of-the-mill types.

3. Regulatory bodies ensure that women are not exploited and subjected to poor, unsafe and perilous conditions. Fashion industry has been under scrutiny after a textile factory collapse in Bangladesh, which killed more than 1000 workers in 2013. The disaster alarmed consumers who were previously unaware of widespread worker abuses in developing countries. The Rana Plaza disaster was a critical wake-up call for the industry and has led to reforms. Employee health, safety and engagement are now discussed in locales where they were previously ignored.

## Gender initiatives at Mandala

MandalaApparels train women to become employable under the IL & FS Skill Development Corporation, which makes them at par with industry standards. Mandala has partnered with Total Aligned Organisation, Women on Wings, Chetna Organic and Hand in Hand to become a leader in the organic, sustainable fibre and fair-trade fashion industry.

Mandala Apparels partnered with Women on Wings in 2015, which aims to create a million jobs for women in India. Their people partner, namely Chetna Organic, works with over 35,000 small and marginal farmers to increase sustainability and profitability of farmers and the organization. Hand in Hand is an NGO with a dedicated mission to social and economic empowerment of women. Mandala partners with Hand in Hand women recruits for training and employment.

A 2014 study by the Freedom Fund and the C&A Foundation reports that at least 100,000 girls and women working in the South Indian textile industry were exploited with low wages, forced overtime and face verbal and sexual abuse.

It is increasingly recognised that women and livelihood strategies work well together. Mandala has tried to bring this into practice. Mandala is a fair-trade clothing manufacturer. Fair trade is an alternative approach to conventional trade and is based on a partnership between producers and consumers. When farmers can sell on fair-trade terms, it provides them with a better deal and improved terms of trade. This allows them the opportunity to improve their lives and plan for their future. Fair-trade offers consumers a powerful way to reduce poverty through their everyday shopping.

But following fair-trade practices means that Mandala faces serious challenges, as it needs to be able to scale up to compete with the goliaths of fashion. Fair-trade operations incur higher costs immediately but improved productivity takes years to develop. They believe the answer lies in gradual growth and ensuring that employees are treated well and benefit directly from the company's success, which will improve employee retention. About 80% of the workers are women. Their business started in 2002 with just one tailor. The founder had the conviction and an emotional urge to set about the important task of educating and engaging fashion workers and empowering women.

The company has a personnel improvement programme, offering workshops on health, wellness and environmental issues. For instance, last fall Mandala hosted a three-hour session on waste management. The factory stopped production in the afternoon so all the employees could learn techniques to reduce the amount of trash in the factory and at home from Raja Manikamoorthy, a local environmentalist. Another initiative was to use 15 workers trained in wellness and health to conduct sessions for their colleagues.

The company often hires women who have no previous employment experience. During their first eight weeks, they are given basic skills training led by various non-governmental organisations. The new hires are trained for one of the various jobs available: sewing, cutting, packing or quality control. Depending on an individual's performance, she can advance to different roles, and eventually, to management. The starting monthly salary for an unskilled worker is the region's legal minimum wage of INR 9500 (which is presently the minimum wages in Puducherry). The company offers a retirement plan and health insurance.

## Benefits and scope of such initiatives

Mandala and a growing number of other textile factories in India are part of a new wave of enlightened operations that offer wages and benefits that exceed fair-trade standards to create a community in which their workers can thrive in business and in life. The vision is not purely idealistic. Its architects believe employee engagement is likely to result in a more motivated workforce and better employee retention. Their workers also likely to become more productive, with benefits ultimately showing up on a company's bottomline.

Research by Dr Nick Lin-Hi, interim Professor of Business and Ethics at the University of Vechta in Germany, suggests that companies that are publicly concerned about communities, workers and the environment have more committed employees, higher job-satisfaction ratings and more motivated employees. He also found that money is less important than working conditions, so much that even a salary increase of 10% is not as motivating to employees as a good working environment. Mandala and other like-minded Indian manufacturers are creating a positive feedback loop where the support of their workers in turn bolsters the businesses' profits, which in turn allows the companies to sustain more employees.

Ezhilarasi is a worker in charge of prepping collar tags for shirts. Now 40 years old, she came to the factory seven years ago. She likes her job. It has allowed her to pay for putting two children through college. She is also eligible for retirement and health benefits. She says: "I want to at least complete 10 years here at the factory, it has been good for me. And God willing, I would like to stay as long as I could till my age and energy permit!"

Mandala's CEO, Anjali Schiavina, says that her costs are marginally higher than a typical factory's expenses and organic cotton costs about 10 to 20% more than conventional cotton. Despite the increased costs, the company has been profitable.

Three different bodies certify the company: Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS), FLOCERT (a global certifier for Fairtrade International, or FLO) and, most recently, the World Fair Trade Organization (WFTO) for endeavours employing local artisans. These fees as much as USD 15,000 a year are enough to hire 10 more entry-level seamstresses! Yet they're a necessity. While the companies supply chain is mindful of people and the planet, the certifications provide transparency and credibility with the customers.

By improving workers' lives outside the factory's walls, they have broken down cultural barriers, such as objection of husbands and in-laws to women working. In such family systems, company policies helped to keep a steady workforce, reducing employee absenteeism from 14% to 11%. Women are encouraged to learn social views. For example: a video clip of a cow's stomach that had to be cleaned because

it was filled with plastic, made a strong impact. After that, workers abandoned plastic bags and returned to old-fashioned jute or canvas bags for their shopping. Our worker Ezhilarasi, for instance, says she then educated her friends and neighbours, who also now avoid plastic.

Most recently, the company worked with a group of tribal people in the Sittilingi Valley who embroidered fabric in a unique, beautiful style and helped them to revive the art. Drought had forced farmers to migrate to cities and take on low-wage jobs. Health and social problems come up with people migrating. Families have to separate. The working conditions in the cities are generally worse compared to clean tribal village living, causing them to get more sick and desperate to find a way to make more money without having to leave their communities.

More than 50 women in the valley are employed and earn incomes ranging between INR 4000 to 5000, or USD 60 to 80, a month which gives a decent living by the standards of the region. The women have named their group “Porgai,” which means, “pride” in their dialect. The programme is in its early years; the company supplies the women with organic cotton on which to stitch their designs. Mela Artisans, a US-based company that sources artisan-made products from India, commissioned a line of embroidered pillows to sell on its site.

## Learning from the initiatives

Mandala is in a business wherein the social welfare of the community and environment plays a key role in its ability to acquire new customers. This can be done by means of globally recognised measures made known through certification and in displaying the right CSR (corporate social responsibility) need for helping sustain the environment. They have met one aspect of helping the women, but they have forgotten about the men. They can have programmes and training for men also to help them find suitable jobs!

Mandala Apparels have applied concept of value creation and value appropriation. Stakeholders across the value chain create value by handling their processes or function towards a product or service. However, when the quantum of reward for their value creation is to be arrived at, many times it is observed that market disruptions for value created to value appropriation may not have been fair. The fair-trade practice ensures that value appropriation matches value creation and balances inputs with outputs, ensuring a normal profit for all players in a supply network.

Another related interesting concept deployed by the firm includes ethical supply chain and responsible procurement. Once again, this across-the-supply network concept implements policies and programmes for ensuring traceability, safety, sustainability and abolition/non-engagement of child labour.

## Conclusion

The new business models help women get trained and encourage them to take on new challenging roles. Rural women and under-privileged women are given opportunities to have a work–life balance, security, financial independence and other perks as well. The business is thriving with the current model. It also helps looking at the high potential

of generating more employment for which the Government of India has extended several benefits to this sector. It is estimated that the apparel sector generates 56–84 jobs per USD 0.15 million investment, as compared to an all-industry average of six jobs generated per USD 0.15 million investment. Following fair-trade practices can only help all stakeholders. Investors can also benefit from the market access arrangements of India with countries like Japan, South Korea, Chile and countries of ASEAN.

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# Meenakshi Mission Hospital and Research Centre

Promoting gender parity

## Introduction

Meenakshi Mission Hospital and Research Centre (MMHRC, SR Trust), Madurai, delivers world-class treatment and care at an affordable cost. With over 800 beds, MMHRC expanded into a multi-specialty hospital. It extends the traditional Indian hospitality to international patients, combining it with cutting-edge technology, clinical excellence with care and compassion to deliver quality healthcare to all patients. It took up social responsibility and pioneered several charity initiatives.

SR Trust is a non-profit organisation registered under the Indian Trust Act (9 May, 1985). It was Mr Lal Beer, an American Christian Missionary, who taught Dr N Sethuraman (Founder, SR Trust) the importance of ethics, ideals and values that moulds a person to be better. This morale has been taken a step further towards the glory of the hospital by Dr S Gurushankar (Chairman, MMHRC) through his very much bigger vision and mission. MMHRC has fostered an environment in which every person is motivated to continually enhance the efficiency and effectiveness in the management of healthcare services. This beacon of light guides MMHRC even today.

## Initiatives

MMHRC is promoting equal employment opportunities for all wherever there is scope. To remove gender bias barriers and to ensure full and equal participation of women in the workplace, the hospital has started the Meenakshi Women's Welfare Scheme in 2000 to protect, treat and give equal employment opportunity for its women employees by providing and introducing various welfare schemes.

Apart from the general beneficiary policies that are given by the hospital management to the employees, MMHRC initiated the following measures to encourage women workforce:

- Meenakshi Welfare Fund – Every women employee contributes INR 10 per month towards the Welfare Fund. The management also contributes equally to the contribution made by the employees. The cumulative amount collected is distributed among women employees who require financial support, as a welfare loan, which is deducted from their salary in 10 equal instalments.

- Crèche facility for employee's children – The children are provided nutritious food, biscuits and Milk free of cost. This facility enables the women employees to work without worrying about their kids, creating a positive workspace.
- Free medical treatment and annual health check-up for all women employees
- Free mammogram tests.
- A token increment in salary per month is provided for marriage. Further, free treatment and medical expenses for the first baby and a token increment on childbirth and free gifts.
- Training is given for professional development through soft and technical skills.
- Educational allowance given for two children every year.
- INR 10,000 per female employees and 1 kg sweet for festivals including Diwali for Hindu employees, Ramzan for Muslim employees and Christmas for Christian employees.
- Free accommodation for female employees within the hospital premises
- Fifty per cent concession for women employees dependent for medical and surgical treatment in the hospital
- More than 90% of women employees benefit through free meals scheme.

Meenakshi Mission implemented the following policies for protection of women employees:

- A Woman Employee Grievance Redressal Policy
- A Sexual Harassment Policy
- A Policy on Prevention of Violence against Women at the Workplace
- Grievance Redress Box placed in each floor

The institution encloses “Must do” and “Good to do” initiatives as part of its action to improve gender parity at the workplace.

## Challenges

Meenakshi Mission faced a number of challenges while implementing its gender parity and equal opportunity initiatives. The challenges within (internal) the organisation include:

- Development of gender policy: The first challenge was to write a gender policy. as many women are employed in such institutions. Stakeholders took time to get conscious about creating a policy document and implementing the same.
- Elimination of all forms of discrimination against women: This is again easier said than done. An institution like this has female students, researchers, interns, patients, staff and doctors. It is important to make every stakeholder understand the need to respect women and provide the space they deserve. Systematically, committee and task forces were to be initiated for action, and seriousness at the ground level was to be demonstrated.
- Gender budget and resource allocation: This is again another mystifying area where stakeholders in top management may like the idea but find it difficult to prioritise fund allocation. According to them, everyone must naturally welcome such a policy. Promoting a change or cultural intervention, unless driven by statute, requires effort to get allocation.

- Improving inter and intra networks for building this policy: Finally, the challenge was to connect and obtain inter-group and intra-department support to make this initiative work.

The challenges that emanated outside the organisation include:

- Educating the unskilled workforce regarding the rotational duties: There was a human resource issue with respect to rotation of duties. Other than nursing and duty doctors, many other departments do not generally appreciate rotational duties. Rotation could be either by department or by function in support. Human resources feel insecure and confronted and do not opt to work with the institution. This is more common among women employees as they are bound by tradition and responsibilities at home. Gender parity and equal opportunity would need to break this logjam.
- Misinterpretation and misunderstanding of policies and work pattern: Further, there was a widespread misinterpretation of policies and work patterns of the institution. This was more due to inability to strike chords with stakeholders, especially on workforce supply conditions.
- Wrong perception of unskilled workers towards the hospital industry: Finally, there is a wrong perception on the quality and sensitivity demanded among unskilled workers by stakeholders. The nature of industry requires patients and other women stakeholders be treated with respect. Doing so with an unskilled workforce is assumed to be the same as “pampering.” Culturally, they respect women, but confuse parity initiatives as a privilege extended to women!

## Steps taken to overcome the challenges

Management consciously took efforts to overcome these obstacles.

- Hiring more women employees: This improved confidence among the women employees, as their share went up in the total workforce. It reinforced the management’s commitment.
- By providing facilities and perks that help overcome domestic barricades: This is warranted because of the need to take care of domestic issues and compensate for the sacrifices made.
- Do not have a gender bias in certain roles: Identify certain roles where gender bias is not required. For example, both men and women in developed nations commonly handle nursing duties, but in a country like India, this concept is just picking up.
- Groom women into leadership roles: This policy helps to motivate women to be competitive and counter the domination of men in lead roles. Women now are becoming more ambitious to prove themselves, and it is not just for augmenting family income.
- Rewarding and recognising good women employees irrespective of grade: This is a motivational approach, and taking it across all levels in the institution establishes the principle of equity.
- Foster an inclusive, friendly and interactive culture: Any positive cultural change initiated is likely to yield a long-term impact.
- Having a strong anti-sexual harassment cell: This is required to show that the initiative is not just on paper but is implemented truly in action too.

## Impact

The initiatives taken to address these issues have a positive impact within the organisation. They include empowerment of women at the workplace; a deep sense of belongingness; increased organisational trust among woman employees; increased level of work satisfaction to 95% and increased organisational commitment among women employees. These are assessed in focus group discussions and selective interaction among the stakeholders.

The initiatives taken to address issues relating to stakeholders outside (external sources) the organisation have positive impact. These include:

- Previously, the institution received applications seeking employment only after placing advertisements in national dailies. It now receives walk-in employment applications. The hospital has not placed any employment related advertisement over the past three years. The savings on advertisement budget is being used more productively for a progressive change.
- Employees who resigned are encouraged to rejoin.
- The institution was honoured with World Healthy Work Place Award in the year 2014.
- External customer (patients and attenders) satisfaction level increased from 80% to 95%.
- Further, the hospital has conducted an employee satisfaction survey on the Meenakshi Women's Welfare Scheme in the year 2016, with around 900 women, of which 875 voted that they had benefited from the initiative, and 25 voted saying it could be improved. Most of the woman employees use the crèche facility.

## Benefit analysis

Hospital is a service industry. Women form an integral part of the workforce as well as among markets in the hospital business. Retaining women in the workforce and promoting them to leadership positions will help hospital thrive, as they have a good understanding of the market.

The women employees are providing their services by treating a patient with utmost care and with much patience. The effect of a discerning patient care leads the satisfaction among patients. Satisfied patients have been recommending their relatives to undergo treatment at the hospital. The satisfaction percentage of the patients visiting the hospital has been increased from 75% in 2013 to 83% in 2016. The institution has given an additional increment sum of INR 1000 per month, and we also have given additional allowance sum of INR 1000 per month in 2016 to all our female employees for their dedication in work which thereby has been playing a major role in the hospital's revenue.

Most importantly, average women employee attrition rate decreased per month from 2.75% in 2015 to 2% in 2016 and even more compared to earlier years, resulting in more stable staff strength.

The overall gender ratio among employees in the last year was above 70 per cent, and recruitment has also been made at the same ratio. It shows adequate effort is on to maintain the ratio, and possibly, one would expect the ratio to be biased favourably towards women. The average age of women in the institution is 26 years. This shows

that more youth are employed and the bottom of the pyramid has more women. There is a churn in this group. The gender ratio among middle and senior leadership role is about 70% and at a similar level for frontline roles.

## Conclusion

After implementation of Meenakshi women's gender parity and equal opportunity, there is generally a great degree of self-confidence and sense of independence among women employees. The initiatives are across a wide spectrum of stakeholders. A select team works relentlessly on improving the cultural trait of respecting and giving equal opportunities to women. From the level of trustees to the beginning level, everyone was addressed of the need, which is paying off. Since there are a number of hospitals and other service providers like hotels which are in this tier I non-metro, they can work on cultural features to ensure sustained growth.

# Sri Ramakrishna Engineering College

To adapt to a buyer's market through social relevance

## Introduction

Sri Ramakrishna Engineering College (SREC), Coimbatore, established in 1994 by SNR Sons Charitable Trust, is one of the 17 institutions managed by the trust. SREC is an autonomous institution that offers nine undergraduate programmes in various disciplines.

SNR Sons Charitable Trust has a track record of four and half decades in education and medical services. Seventeen institutions comprising engineering, polytechnic, arts and science, dental and paramedical colleges in addition to higher secondary schools are managed by the trust, catering to 15,000 students mentored by 3000 faculty members. The trust has been successfully operating a 750-bedded multi-specialty hospital since 1975, with multiple specialisations in oncology, neurology, cardiology and others.

It is natural that SREC would gain from the combined experience of the managing trustees and the processes commonly practised in these institutions. It does take for granted the journey towards achieving institutional excellence and gender parity. Though there could be advantages in cumulative learning, how well a new institution makes use of it is to be seen by studying and understanding individual cases.

## Gender parity initiatives

In 2013, Women Empowerment Cell (WEC) was established. WEC is an initiative that strives to motivate equal participation of benefactors. The institution currently has 1731 women students, 40% of the total. Out of the 321 teaching faculty, 46% are women, with 53% functioning as heads of various departments. Among the administrative staff, 75 out of 100 are women.

The constitution of women in overall distribution motivated the WEC initiative. The activities of WEC broadly focus on two different dimensions:

**Gender sensitisation:** various programmes are held for both male and female students for creating improved awareness of equality between the sexes and interest in mutual respect.

**Women empowerment:** To eliminate constraints, to encourage participation, to realise education for all.

The initiative was taken in the village of Idigarai, located near the institution. The challenge was mainly to make the women folk accept the point that they are equal to men in every aspect of life and to empower them. To uplift the women in rural areas, various awareness programmes were held through WEC on gender equity, necessity for primary education, financial freedom and self-resilience.

The key here to be noted is that the gender parity initiative is not institute-centric, but rather focuses on the immediate society in which the institute is operating. This differs from the normal approach of firms to address gender parity as an intra-focused, inward-looking strategy. Most of the times, such an inward-focused initiative could be self-propelled for synchronisation with business strategy. This means more women's participation, or gender equality, which would improve productivity and sustainability and reduce human resource cost, apart from other benefits. Apart from its core competency area, SREC is taking up gender parity initiatives to drive social structure changes, as part of the institute's CSR activity. Students who go through the SREC programme are ingrained better in respecting women and can be champions of driving gender equality spirits in a few decades.

## Challenges

In implementing its programmes, SREC faced challenges on gathering rural women under a single forum. The women population could not accept the fact that they should be empowered through education, including certain basic knowledge on technology, banking and finance. In order to take the technologies to rural people, workshops and seminars are conducted on computers for everyday life and also on microfinancing for self-help groups (SHGs) and rural school students.

The members of WEC consolidated the challenges faced in implementation and worked out a systematic plan for addressing those problems. To overcome the gender inequality problem in the society, they conducted counselling programmes in association with Nair Service Society (NSS) in Idigarai, Mankarai and Sengalipalayam to expose the strength of women, the opportunities available and the importance of education for the upcoming generations. Some workshops and seminars were conducted with the help of NSS and SHG. These programmes enabled women to exhibit their talents at the institution. This also made them engage and interact among themselves. Awareness programmes on the role and importance of computers in day-to-day life were conducted.

SREC engaged an external agency and conducted a seminar in association with NABARD (National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development) on "Enhancing the Productivity of Small-Scale Women Entrepreneurs and SHG Availing Micro Finances," meant for SHGs to seed their minds with motivation, to take action to go forward and excel with their hand skills and to improve their economic status.

For these purposes and to spread the spirit of gender equality at the institute level, SREC focussed on the following:

On gender sensitisation, a guest lecture on "Role of Men In Empowering Women at Workplace" was presented for male students. Further, an awareness programme for men students on "Interacting with Women at Workplace – 'The Nuances'" and other related seminars were conducted to apprise of ethical norms regarding

gender parity and the importance of mutual respect. These efforts are continued, and the focus is to involve male students as an inclusivity initiative, rather than ignoring them in the programmes for women students!

On women empowerment, a special talk on “Unleashing Women Potential for Nation Building” was organised. Dr Kiran Bedi, currently Lt Governor of Pondicherry, addressed about 1400 women students and 150 women faculty members on the potential of women in building the nation. Similarly, several interactive programmes with prominent personalities were conducted for students: Mrs Andal Priyadharshini, Social Activist, Doordarshan Television Network and several others to help women build up their confidence levels and achieve success in their professional lives. The institution looks at this initiative of power talk by leaders for creating future leaders from their students.

WEC members, in collaboration with the NSS of the institution, conducted several counselling and awareness programmes on latest trends for schools in rural areas and SHG members. In this effort, 25 members of WEC addressed 500 women and 450 rural school students and brought about change.

There are other initiatives that are active in achieving women parity. SREC-IEEE, Women In Engineering (WIE) and CII Indian Women Network (IWN) are actively engaged with WEC in organising programmes for gender equality and professional development, for promoting science and technology of women and other social activities. IEEE-WIE is an international body with 150 members, and CII-IWN has 13 members. This initiative has become active and fruitful through both in-house and outreach activities since 2010. These initiatives give students an opportunity to blend with people who are in accord with a technical interest, issues like empowerment of women and social responsibilities. The initiative serves as a platform to enhance interpersonal and leadership skills. As a token of appreciation of these contributions by IEEE-WIE, the student branch has been the recipient of “Honourable Mention for the 2015 WIE Student Branch Affinity Group of the Year Award” from IEEE. The award includes a subsidy of USD 250 for future WIE Affinity Group activities, a complimentary pass to attend the 2017 WIE International Leadership Conference and financial support of up to USD 1000. The IEEE recognition is more valuable regarding “reach” than commercial.

## Benefits of and responses to the initiatives

The reaction of both students and staff has been positive. The WEC has conducted many seminars and webinars for the betterment of the students and the staff of SREC. Feedback for every activity has been collected, and constructive suggestions have been implemented. After every event, a meeting is convened to discuss the event blow by blow. Criticism is welcomed and future activities are planned.

Many awareness programmes regarding e-transactions were conducted under the banner of “VISAKA-MHRD” to familiarise people with demonetisation. The programmes received a great response from the students and the staff. Asked about

bringing this issue under the gender initiative, the college representative mentioned: “Generally, women at middle and lower echelons of society may not have the privilege to learn from media of such a historical economic issues. They may get swayed by immediate popular opinion and get confused by contradictory views. Our objective was apolitical: to present facts and prepare women to handle the reality. When we address an issue through WEC, it goes to the society in which we work. This was our small contribution of positivity even when adversity was projected. We feel women need to have this in all perspectives of life.”

The awareness programme “Self Defence Course: Wushu” has been welcomed by the students and staff. It has been planned to conduct the self-defence course for girl students at their request. The programme on “Sexual Harassment and Braving Situations” helped girl students in handling adverse situations in and around their homes or offices. Through all such activities, the students and society derived significant benefits, and they felt honoured to be a part of it. Facilitation of women empowerment was improved through lectures, and their physical fitness enhanced through various initiatives provided by WEC.

The members of WEC of SREC include the principal, the faculty convener, faculty coordinators, five members and student coordinators. The council is re-elected every year. All the women students of the institution are members of WEC. Monthly meetings are conducted to discuss activities, budgets and action plans. The department coordinators convey the periodicity of sessions to other student members. Student members of each department are elected annually to create an opportunity for all students to be a part of the working committee by rotation. Reports are regularly communicated to the head of the institution. The half-yearly and yearly reports of the activities conducted by the WEC are routinely submitted to Centre for Empowerment of Women, Anna University, Chennai.

The highlight of the outcome is that both men and women are learning to respect each other, with equal opportunities in all forums. As an illustration, in a class of 60 members, there are two elected representatives – one male and one female. In all professional activities, technical association and clubs, the office bearers are elected, with equal opportunity given to both male and female students. Women students are provided with amenable circumstances in extra-curricular activities like sports and cultural events. As a token of women empowerment and recognition, the institution has instituted two best outgoing student awards – one for boys and one for girls. The career growth opportunities for women students facilitated by the institution are commendable, with women students bagging 218 offers out of a total of 410 offered. This piece of statistics stands as a testimony for the established and proven outcome of women empowerment in the campus.

WEC is also appreciated for social activities in and around the region. Various programmes are being conducted for the rural people. Awareness programmes on cashless transactions were carried out for small vendors and shopkeepers in the area; 450 people were benefited through the programme; and 79 school students and 15 SHGs reaped the fruits of the computer awareness programmes and microfinance programmes organised by WEC. The cell also works with the Ministry of Labour, Government of India, on eradication of child labour through the Project Director, National Child Labour Project.

## The plans being conceived include

- Gender sensitisation: Gender parity programmes for students of the institution.
- Women empowerment: Empowerment programmes for girls presented by prominent personalities. Self-defence courses on WUSHU for girl students of SREC.
- To educate staff of schools in rural areas through Faculty Development Programmes on latest technologies.
- To conduct SHG entrepreneur summit.
- Skill development programmes for school dropouts and rescued child labourers.
- Providing an arena for women who are technically skilled through opportunities for start-ups and promoting their financial status by setting up the proposed Women Technology Park (WTP).

## Our perception of the initiatives

Every college and institution has opportunities and challenges in addressing gender issues. There is the imperative to do this, as these days a large number of women register for higher studies, though still outnumbered by male students. Group heterogeneity is an issue and dedicatedly biasing the gender balance. Management may use a “carrot-and-stick” policy as a routine with “Must do” initiatives that would meet requirements of statutory bodies and fulfil external stakeholders’ requirements. Some may have “Good to do” initiatives considering the socio-economic profile and regional distribution of students, as the intensity of pressure may warrant such a drive. More so, it would help keep the brand value high. A few institutions launch “top initiatives” more on championing change, which supersedes legal, economic and societal needs. Others become compelled to adopt such initiatives or at least a part of these. Society evolves on such champion moves. Here, we have in SREC such a spirit of changing intra-cultural traits by making internal spectrum align with that part of immediate society that has little semblance or chance to become part of the mainstream!

## Conclusion

SREC is an institution that helps students excel in their academics and also builds their character. It helps in achieving rounded development of citizens through the education process and further expect leaders to evolve out of these. At a time when we find the supply of engineering seats being higher than demand and severe competition setting, a new generation of private colleges that do not worry about capacity fill and a likely regress in brand value through placement, is focused on socially relevant activities. This, incidentally, would elevate the brand value and help keep institutions to run at full capacity even in challenging times. These activities have bridged the gap between long-established institutions and a new generation of colleges. Here is a case that one can scale up with diversity initiatives as long as leadership, execution and overall strategic orientation are in place!

# Shri Shankarlal Sundarbai Shasun Jain College for Women

Empowering women through education

## Introduction

It is a widely known fact that women drop out of the education system in India after getting through certain levels like secondary and higher secondary schooling. However, things are positively changing. Urbanisation brings pressure on families to improve earnings and women look for opportunities to augment income. The growth of urban centres, especially of the services sector, offers a number of job opportunities. This increases the pressure for women to attain college education, especially those in the lower middle class, to achieve employment.

Another aspect of development is that today's women want to be independent. They nurture a number of aspirations for themselves and their children. Education has become important. This has led to a demand for building the college system of education across the country. This is particularly true in cities where the population has increased phenomenally, but educational infrastructure, particularly of colleges, is totally inadequate, especially institutions offering arts and science streams. Accessibility is an issue for management, faculty and students. Let's look at a women's college run by the Shasun Group in Chennai. The college is named after the donors' parents, late Shri Shankarlalji and Smt Sundarbaiji.

## Sri Shwetambar Sthanakvasi Jain Educational Society

Sri Shwetambar Sthanakvasi Jain Educational Society (regd. Sri SS Jain Educational Society) was founded in 1937. The society renders yeomen service to the community by providing learning experiences, enabling students to realise their inherent potential. The Society successfully established several educational institutions, including:

1. Mohanmull Chordia Jain Industrial Training Centre (1984), offering effective and purposeful craftsmen training. This is a skill-oriented programme, which prepares students for suitable jobs in industry. Each program enables the participants to acquire specific skills for specific jobs.

2. Sri Agurchand Manmull Jain College (1952) for men started at the Jain Boarding Home premises in T Nagar, Chennai, and shifted to its new campus in Meenambakkam in 1954. The college was upgraded to a co-educational institution in 2003. Today, it is a frontline, top-ranking research and postgraduate institution.
3. Sri Tarachand Galada Jain Vidyalaya, Sri Mangichand Bhandari Jain Higher Secondary School, Sri Amoluck Chand Galada Jain Higher Secondary School and Sri Badalchand Sayarchand Chordia Jain Vidyalaya established were between the 1920s and the 1940s to fulfil the need for Hindi-based education in north and south Chennai by the Jain community philanthropists. Within a few years, the society assumed responsibility by bringing in more donations and taking up direct management of the institutions. By 1961, all these schools had received government recognition to operate as full-fledged educational institutions.

## Sri Shankarlal Sundarbai Shasun Jain College for Women

The Sri Shwetambar Sthanakwasi Jain Educational Society established this in 2005. Sri Shankarlal Sundarbai Shasun Jain College for Women aims to provide quality education to young aspiring women candidates and to equip them to meet the changing needs of society in general and industries in particular. The college provides students a genial atmosphere for academic and creative growth. It is a self-supporting institution committed to the cause of education: general, professional, moral and technical education and research in the science and humanities streams offers world-class standards.

The college seeks to foster inter-disciplinary working within the campus and encourages external collaboration. The college was affiliated to the University of Madras on 18 May 2005. It is working to become a centre of excellence and currently has a student population of about 3000. The college was awarded the ISO 9001:2008 certification and accredited with “A” grade by NAAC (National Assessment and Accreditation Council), the only autonomous body in the country that assesses the quality of educational institutions. The National Institutional Ranking Framework of Ministry of Human Resource Development placed Shri Shankarlal Sundarbai Shasun Jain College for Women in the 59th position among 100 top colleges from all over the country on 3 April 2017.

## Initiatives

The initiative for “women development” at Shasun Jain College for Women is done by promoting and working towards empowerment of women students, at both the professional and personal levels. The focus is on three key aspects – women entrepreneurship, self-defence and personality development – and the management is keen to serve women whose future needs to be bright and secure by imbuing them with the ability to assume leadership roles in society.

The principal of the college mentions: “SEED [Shasun Empowerment and Entrepreneurial Development] is a forum to display innovative ideas and creativity. Shasun

Vending is an enterprising environment that allows and gives confidence to students for setting up short-term stalls. The aim is to develop and support new and future entrepreneurs, thus striving towards building the capacity of entrepreneur, assessing demand opportunity, developing a marketable product, building the right team, raising money and creating value for customer and ventures. This initiative was started with forethought to empower, educate and enrich faculty and students at different levels through diverse programmes designed for them as per their needs.”

The principal further adds: “SHE [Shasun Empowerment cell for Women] promotes self-defence as the core element. To improve women’s levels of awareness in the political, social and economic spheres; to make them economically independent by appropriate professional entrepreneurial education and training to create awareness on health and hygiene; and to make them capable of balancing their multiple roles are the reasons to begin this humble endeavour. It promises to make women value their existence and make them aware of their health, rights... It is an effort to bring a change in the lives of women around us through outreach programmes. The resource centre for differently abled is a ray of hope for students with certain limitations to grow with a positive approach and excel.

SWEEP [Shasun Women Empowerment through Excellent Performance] aims to create leaders and government officials. It regularly conducts training sessions for TNPSC, UPSC, banking recruitment and railways recruitment exams. NET and SET coaching classes are organised for the staff and PG students.”

The college runs another programme called “S.H.A.S.Un,” an initiative to bridge the gap between industry and institution. Girl students benefit immensely from this programme at a level of education where otherwise they would have barely had an opportunity to understand work and life outside their educational system. Apart from these, the college runs a programme called “S.H.A.S.Un – Olympic Medal Quest” to train a select batch of students in archery. This programme was started in 2016 and is envisioned to produce talents that can be recognised in the national and international arenas.

## Challenges

One primary challenge lies in terms of time constraints, wherein it is not always feasible to organise programmes as planned; completion of the syllabus is paramount as per the academic requirements. Organising programmes related to women development is not an easy task. Racing against time, coordinating at short duration, mobilising resources, organising outreach programmes and putting everything together need patience and diligence and is a challenge indeed. Taking the stakeholders into confidence and assuring them of the positive and productive outputs of all the efforts is also not an easy road to walk. These are more severe from the administrative perspective.

There are certain challenges from the student perspective as well, because they constitute a heterogeneous group. They belong to different social, economic and linguistic backgrounds. Some would like to have low hanging fruits, namely get a good meritorious education before going back and being supportive in family businesses. Others adopt aggressive postures to not only excel in education, but also be competitively employable. One of the girls during our discussion mentioned: “My parents run a small

time catering business. They could not pursue a college education during their time. They could best afford this opportunity for me. I have peer pressure in my family, where my elder cousins have done well and have been motivating as well as challenging me. At Shasun, I am looking to complete my graduation and go to a decent Chennai-based management school so that I can make a career for myself. My parents would then find meaning to their dream. I would say my college has provided a platform, but it's for me to use it to the best to launch myself for a secured and competitive professional living." Shasun's faculty members are constantly involved in mapping students' needs and bundling interventions to realise their potential.

## Impact of the programme and initiatives

The staff and students are more health conscious and have equipped themselves with the required knowledge about their legal rights and safety issues. They now focus more on overall personality development, along with ethics and values. A supportive and collaborative ambience exists in the campus to ensure cooperative learning and teamwork. It helps in promoting placement programmes in dream companies through the placement cell of the college. Certificate and value added courses are designed based on the requirements of the industry. The faculty shows interest in taking up professional consultancy.

The students and staff show enthusiastic involvement in every programme conducted. Their staff is happy to be a part of the initiatives that give them a chance to interact, share and learn about themselves and life. It instils energy to discover more about themselves, and now they share a different perspective about life and issues. Students are open in expressing their problems and also feel motivated to do something to develop their innate skills. The students come up with different business ideas, practice their entrepreneurial skills and participate in "earn while you learn" programmes. A feeling of economic independence is very important for self-esteem too. It helps them to come out of their comfort zone, take up some risk and test their potentials. The students are happy in getting practical exposure by interacting with experts from industries, academia, arts and sports. It works for the students who are struggling to get over their fear of rejection at various stages. It makes them confident, strong and ready to face adverse situations. It gives them the guidelines to follow, the directions to go ahead and the foundation to build their bright future. Maximum participation from the students in SEED, SHE, SWEEP, "S.H.A.S.Un – Olympic Medal Quest" and SUMVRDDHI had been very encouraging for the college and inspires more efforts to make the college a dream institution for every woman to come to and flourish. A monitoring process is designed to check the effective implementation of the initiative. Headed by the principal, a team of seven members (senior faculty) is appointed to assure a productive learning process. Every month, each and every aspect is monitored and immediate changes are made if the need arises. Everything is under strict scrutiny to ensure an honest execution of the programmes. These are validated with interactions and site visit records.

## Our perception on types of intervention

The college has shown appreciable emphasis on making students well-rounded in all walks of life that independent women would face. Furthermore, the SEED cell for aspiring entrepreneurship and the SWEEP training sessions for competitive and government entrance exams are a “must have initiative.” S.H.A.S.Un – Olympic Medal Quest has a cell for uncommon sports activities like archery, which is not available in most other colleges’ “good to have initiatives.” The SHE cell for self-defence is the most appreciated programme both by the students and their parents, since modern-day women are meant to be independent, free and feel secure. Their top initiative measure includes classes on self-defence, which ensure they are equipped with the technique to handle all situations. Though members have business lineages, the college is run more like a developmental institution for the immediate society that they have been serving for decades. Making it agnostic of religion and custom is a singularly outstanding part of the service.

## Conclusion

Multiple forums and initiatives make the college stand out from the rest of the institutions, making it a front runner in imparting knowledge. College officials are keen to develop and prepare women to take on the world and win it with ease. The ability to serve those who could otherwise miss college education for want of economic strength and to provide an environment of warmth and staffed with capable faculty and administration members are the unique features of Shasun College.

# Ultramarine & Pigments Limited

A differentiated move in an uncommon horizon

## Introduction

Ultramarine & Pigments Ltd., established in 1960, produces ultramarine blue and synthetic detergents in its manufacturing facilities at Ambattur, Chennai, and Ranipet in North Arcot, Tamil Nadu. The company has its registered office in Chennai. It is the largest manufacturer of ultramarine blue and synthetic detergents. The company also manufactures ultramarine colours, organic and inorganic pigments, metal powders, chemicals and raw material for the paint industry, varnishes, enamels, oils and plastics. The company received the ISO 9002 certification for both laundry and industrial grades of ultramarine blue, not then common among its competitors.

In 1987, the company diversified by setting up a unit to manufacture high-density polyethylene (HDPE) woven sacks. In 1995, the company purchased about 150 acres of land in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, and set up four windmills to generate electricity. It had a strategic fit, as there could be advantages for wheeling of power through the grid. The company also set up a new plant in September 1995, to manufacture synthetic detergent bars/cakes with an installed capacity of 15,000 MTPA. It set up its new plant to produce alkyl benzene sulphonic acid with a capacity of 16,000 MTPA in April 1996. In 1997–98, the company expanded the installed capacity of its Ultramarine Blue plant by 1500 MT. The company amalgamated with Sri Narasimha Plastic Industries Pvt. Ltd. in 1999–2000, which enabled the company to carry out the combined HDPE business more economically and advantageously. Also during that year, the ultramarine blue unit and detergent unit at Ranipet was awarded the ISO 9002 certificate. The IT Enabled Services Division of the company has started functioning at Chennai. During 2000–01, the company received the ISO 14001 certificate for its Blue and Detergent Divisions at Ranipet. The company expanded its installed capacity of HDPE/poly propylene woven fabric during 2003–04 by 180 MT and with this expansion the total capacity rose to 900 MT.

The business growth of the company has been consistent and forward-looking in an industry where competitive forces are volatile due to input prices (linked to crude oil and its derivatives) and conditions of the export market. Earlier, the company was exporting to the Soviet Union. At present, the company exports its products to the United States and Europe. The management needs to be agile and proactive to stay competitive. Men, particularly at the plant level, have traditionally dominated the industry. Moreover, in

this industry, the likelihood is that a firm is closely held and family controlled even if it is listed. In more than 50 years of existence, the company has seen changes at the upper echelons of management. The top management team currently comprises women. Apparently, industry forces and the historical setting of the corporate and contemporary management make the case interesting.

## Initiative

Ultramarine should have been the last place for pushing equal opportunity among men and women, as a factory is likely to prefer men to women. Similarly, front office operations like marketing require substantial travel and networking. Currently, the Vice Chairperson and Managing Director, Ms Indira Sundararajan, and the Joint Managing Director, Mrs Tara Parthasarathy, are focused on bringing “equal opportunity” and improving women’s shares across the firm.

Ms Parthasarthy mentions: “Company has set itself a target to hire and retain women to reach a level of 20 per cent share in the workforce from the current 5 per cent. If we are to improve drastically, it is needed to include hiring, and have appropriate policies to help retain the women we hired. It is imperative for the top management to initiate this human resource strategy. With over 93% male employees, the company was in danger of hearing and seeing a very narrow perspective on our business. The company started a two-pronged approach: reach 20% women, and establish a culture that looked at merit and not genders while evaluating performance.”

When intrigued by the number and extent of changes the firm aspires to, we probed further. Ms Parthasarthy mentions: “Unless we have a challenging goal, it will not receive enough seriousness. Second, we need to see opportunities as and when the scale of retirements is high. Our opportunity to implement this initiative is great because of growth in business as well. Three, traditional areas where women participate more include research and development and support functions. We are opening up some unconventional areas like factory supervisory and above positions and marketing.”

## Challenges

Convincing top management was the easiest part of this initiative, as two of the three executive directors (including the vice chairperson and managing director) are women. Ms Parthasarthy mentions: “The larger problem was convincing the hiring managers and senior executives of the respective departments. They have traditionally seen men working in such positions. To change their mindset, it was necessary to do a hard talk and be persuasive in our approach. We have to ensure that the manner in which we fill positions was rectified for giving equal opportunity to women candidates.”

We discuss here the steps taken to overcome these challenges.

First, the company hired a gender and diversity specialist to socialise the idea of gender parity. This was important because men at different levels of leadership and support levels must hear this from neutral and objective experts so that there is no bias in

management's decision to implement gender diversity and equal opportunities for women. The specialist also briefed people to identify the specific issues that were cropping up in the process of applying this policy. She also conducted training programmes with hiring managers to introduce gender-blind hiring.

Ms Parthasarthy adds: "Simultaneously, we developed a merit-based performance management system that aimed to remove subjectivity from assessment. We instituted metrics, as opposed to whether or not the manager 'liked' the employee in question. This helped remove some of the future bias that would crop up as we started hiring more women, due to either benevolent paternalism or internalised sexism."

Additionally, the company also ensured that top management and the HR team was continuously emphasising the need to hire women. The senior management and HR team discussed, through formal and informal channels, the need for the initiative. Suddenly, across the levels, they saw gender diversity and equal opportunity initiatives being examined and accepted as a reality. This helped increase the number of female candidates being considered for various roles. Further, the company established a team of middle-management-level women employees who would review and recommend more women-friendly policies for the organisation, which would then be considered for implementation by senior management.

At the factory level, there was a natural resistance from male employees initially. This was more so especially since there was a belief that those jobs were meant for men, and as women came in, men would lose their jobs. As time went by and as the company started having more women join and as more training occurred, they came around to accepting the idea of gender parity. Women employees are happy with the increase in their strength, as they see that there is genuine interest in management towards gender diversity and equal opportunity and they like that they are handling more responsibilities, travelling, communicating with the outside world and gaining better exposure.

The company is also working to increase women strength in its marketing/business operations to lead the business and to grow the number of women in middle and senior management roles, as well as increase the number of female employees in operations/maintenance while abiding by the Factories Act. Women employees are now placed in the R&D Department, in Quality Assurance Lab, in Accounts Department, in manufacturing areas as supervisors and in Sales and Marketing Department.

## Benefits of the initiatives

Topline/bottomline business has been growing substantially during the past three years. Revenue for the financial year 2014–15 was INR 143 crores and for the fiscal year 2015–16 it was INR 189 crore. This is more to give an idea of size and opportunity.

The initiatives towards gender parity and equality of opportunity are systematically reviewed. Apart from the team that handles the initiatives, factory managers and business managers are involved in the performance assessment and measurement parts of this intervention. Ms Parthasarthy adds: "The number goal is being monitored by top management through quarterly reviews on gender ratios. HR and the executive directors have sex ratio as part of their key responsibility areas. Management regularly interacts

with staff in both locations to identify gender issues. There is an active community of women employees who feel comfortable talking to the JMD about their concerns in the company. An annual group discussion on various issues is held with only the women in the organisation. Usually, on Women's Day, way the forward is jointly identified with the women and pinpoint what could be done better. There is also a culture of zero-tolerance for differential treatment of male and female employees in various departments, where the women feel comfortable bringing up issues with both HR and JMD. Women workers have become more direct and less timid in their interactions with management and they have started being more upfront about their needs. The male employees have also become more accepting of their female colleagues, with elevated trust levels."

The company plans to achieve women strength of 20% of the employee population shortly, and to grow this number on a yearly basis till we reach 50% in the long term. Women-friendly HR policies in place by 2017 allow pregnancy benefits beyond legal norms, maternity benefits, flexitime and insurance to cover dependents and day care. The average age of the women employees is about 32 years, as of the last financial year 2015–16. The gender ratio among employees whom we recruited in the last fiscal year is about 12%. Gender ratio among middle and senior leadership positions in the last financial year was also around 10%. The promotion rate for men was above 10 per cent while for women it was around 5%. The discrepancy is logical as women workforce is just scaling up within the company. It may be important to note here the attrition rate for men is 10% whereas for women it is less than 5%. It shows that net additions are happening and would increase substantially shortly. What is more heartening is the stickiness of women employees!

Some of the interesting aspects are:

- Exports, which is the largest growing and most profitable segment of business, is led by a senior manager who is a woman and includes a team of one woman and one man.
- A woman, who has been instrumental in improving the systems and processes, also leads QA in one of the factories.
- Further, both the Managing Director and the Joint Managing Director are women and have been driving organisational growth well as the gender parity and equal opportunity initiatives over the past two years, as mentioned earlier.

## Our perceptions

The company is going through a transition period of bringing more women in, not only in leadership and support functions but also in different areas in the business of manufacture and marketing of inorganic chemicals. The top management and the HR team are conscious of bringing in gender diversity and equal opportunities as drivers for growth. Further, instead of running conventional competitive forces for sustainability of business and ensuring stable returns on capital invested, the management and investors are keen to adopt contemporary practices in a traditional business and style of the directorate. Such a bold move is commendable. The success of this company would give confidence to women stakeholders and impetus to charter new avenues of growth.

Under normal circumstances, the cultural change could be evolutionary, and a firm of this nature could be adopting culture neutral policies like staying with the tradition of male dominance in the production environment. In changing through to an aggressive cultural trait like gender parity and equal opportunity, there is a high-implicit statement of leadership towards growth initiatives.

## Conclusion

Ultramarine & Pigments Ltd. is an interesting case such that its success will motivate some players in a traditional sector of manufacturing, which in small and medium scales is typically controlled by one business family. Further, it is championing a change management process not only through gender parity and equal opportunities but also through other contemporary management practices.

There is a subtle change happening across traditional business leadership as new generations evolve especially across companies, which have been in existence for more than 50 years. A few reasons could be: to start with, the pioneers, being first-generation entrepreneurs, stuck to a risk-neutral approach during the initial phase towards management practices like gender parity. Gender parity and equal opportunities were less prevalent in India during the early phase of industrialisation of independent India than they are today! One can see the second generation charging with aggression towards growth in business.

As time rolled on, in the last decade the third generation has started assuming command. Change is visible with more conventionally educated to modern-educated men and women leaders in business. This generation is open and well exposed to contemporary practices. Conscious of being modern and demonstrating evolution in the business arena, it is important to make a mark by choosing the path less travelled in management. It may sound risky and bold. In the global business environment, especially developed in countries, customers see it as a positive statement. We believe Make in India should also have “gender diversity” and “equal opportunity” as clearly stated business objectives, with clear number-driven goals and timelines for the large SME (small and medium-sized enterprise) segment and large firms. Ultramarine leads the lot towards adopting such new approaches.

The companies have adopted initiatives towards gender parity and equal opportunity in a systematic way. We feel that instead of making it ornamental, companies must ingrain the same as a cultural trait. We have looked at different types of companies concerning size, nature of business, location factors, leadership and evolved conditions of industry on workforce engagement practices and so on. However, some common factors emerge from our analysis.

We summarise these here.

## A trigger point and a structured approach

First, there must be a trigger point to adopt and push gender parity and equal opportunity initiative. Either leadership or business conditions or adaptation of best practice from the peer group or just the requirement of setting up an excellent standard to be a competitive differentiator are some of the possible triggers. A motive to change and impact culture should be a serious driver.

Second, a structured approach is required to implement the initiatives. We had observed that the companies and institutions were on change management process when they had to enforce gender parity and equal opportunity. It was not taken up as a routine operation with an ordinary task force, some pious statements and a meager budget. They implement it in a programme mode, with responsibilities properly fixed. We have seen that a structured approach has got a lot of merit. Thus, strategy and structure are two critical pillars.

Third, almost all the institutions showcased their execution. It is not just about strategising; it was also about execution, which is far more critical. There was the need to convince the internal stakeholders. Existing employees, especially men, were not supportive. Men outnumbered women in the workforce, and yet we have found that companies gainfully overcame such adversaries by effective execution of plans and programmes.

Four, leadership commitment stands out in all the cases, in particular among those who have significant “top of the initiatives.” Top management must be actively involved in gender parity and equal opportunity strategy right from the formulation stage, getting the strategic orientation with goals and objectives, linking it to the budget, set rolling the culture and, finally, take corrective actions. They must intervene when targets become challenging, and provisioning must go beyond legal needs.

Thus, we conclude: identifying the trigger for change, structured approach, efficient execution and leadership commitment is crucial for achieving gender parity.

We have seen that equality between the sexes has dismissed the fear of poor performance.

## Levels of maturity in embracing change

There are four levels of maturity in adopting this strategic initiative:

1. Those demanded by statutes and other legal conditions. Let's call it "Core." Everyone needs it. – Level 1.
2. Recognising that this is attractive to win customers, prospective employees and other stakeholders. Being a distinctive gender parity company is a unique selling proposition, and others may imitate these practices such that, over time, they become the new norm. – Level 2.
3. Societal values as could have been seen in some of the MNCs and technology companies. These are "unique" practices, which are contextual to society and the business. Maybe the stiffly competing companies may attempt to do this – Level 3.
4. Finally, setting up a paramount standard and being seen a path-breaking practice, not easy to imitate, stays as a strategic asset. Though one of the companies we probed seems to have got almost there, we believe it is unclear. It has to be something even beyond unique. This level of paramount reach is a strategic asset to a company and stays for a secular period – Level 4.

We are of the view that this is not theoretical. It is still possible if companies approach this like any other strategic intervention and connect gender parity with business. Some of the new-generation banks exceptionally deploy such techniques in the front office and business development dominated by men earlier. Though we could not establish it clearly, women leadership in financial services, including banking, signals a changing pattern. We think women are an important economic force and have the right not just to work, but to demand equal opportunity and equal pay.

According to a recent report by the World Bank, rising income levels and stability in families are disincentivising women from joining the labour force. This is disheartening. The World Bank study has its basis in government data from 2004–05 to 2011–12. As many as 19.6 million women – equivalent to the population of Romania – dropped out of the workforce during this period, of which rural women accounted for 53% ([www.indiaspend.org](http://www.indiaspend.org)). The organised sector, educational institutions and well-managed corporates must demonstrate the will and ability to be fair and equal, realising the pressure the society faces and improve the country's image abroad. The ripple effect on the overall treatment of women would improve when you pursue such initiatives.

## Companies must follow it

Companies must follow it as it happened while "adopting quality movement" with a framework like European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM), Baldrige or "Adoption of Balance Score Card" for strategic orientation and corporate performance. Even these tools can be tweaked to manage gender parity vision and goals. For example, EFQM model enablers like Leadership, Strategy, and Policy, People, Partnership, and

Processes can impact customers, society and the financial performance of a company. One can accurately relate gender parity and equal opportunity initiative fitted in the framework. Alternatively, a strategic, focused organisation may use balanced scorecard approach wherein the vision could be gender quality and strategy could be well crafted and linked to four perspectives, namely financial, customer, internal business processes and learning and development.

Institutions like CII-IWN must lead the initiative if society were to benefit. Championing change is critical in any change management process. We hope there would be more action towards fairness and equality.

**T**he Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) works to create and sustain an environment conducive to the development of India, partnering industry, Government, and civil society, through advisory and consultative processes.

CII is a non-government, not-for-profit, industry-led and industry-managed organization, playing a proactive role in India's development process. Founded in 1895, India's premier business association has over 8,300 members, from the private as well as public sectors, including SMEs and MNCs, and an indirect membership of over 200,000 enterprises from around 250 national and regional sectoral industry bodies.

CII charts change by working closely with Government on policy issues, interfacing with thought leaders, and enhancing efficiency, competitiveness and business opportunities for industry through a range of specialized services and strategic global linkages. It also provides a platform for consensus-building and networking on key issues.

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The CII theme for 2017-18, **India Together: Inclusive. Ahead. Responsible** emphasizes Industry's role in partnering Government to accelerate India's growth and development. The focus will be on key enablers such as job creation; skill development and training; affirmative action; women parity; new models of development; sustainability; corporate social responsibility, governance and transparency.

With 66 offices, including 9 Centres of Excellence, in India, and 10 overseas offices in Australia, Bahrain, China, Egypt, France, Germany, Singapore, South Africa, UK, and USA, as well as institutional partnerships with 344 counterpart organizations in 129 countries, CII serves as a reference point for Indian industry and the international business community.

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#### **ABOUT CII INDIAN WOMEN NETWORK (IWN)**

CII launched the Indian Women Network (IWN) for Career Women in 2013. The Indian Women Network is an engaging and effective networking model for professional women. Currently, IWN is actively engaging with the members in 13 states, 3 zones and 1 Union Territory nationally.

IWN works towards enabling women become better professionals and achievers in their respective fields. Today's business demands require not only core competence but also continuous and comprehensive learning, adapting to worldwide best practices, cater to domestic markets with global standards and competition. IWN recognizes the importance of nurturing women's health and well-being in a holistic manner to bring about a good work-life balance thereby contributing to social inclusiveness, economic growth & development of the country. IWN's services focus on a) Learning & Development b) Health & Well-being c) Policy & Advocacy.

On the whole, IWN is a platform that provides learning and knowledge enhancement programmes, training, skills development, mentorship & networking opportunities. It is an environment of likeminded career women to share experiences, overcome challenges and provide solutions.

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