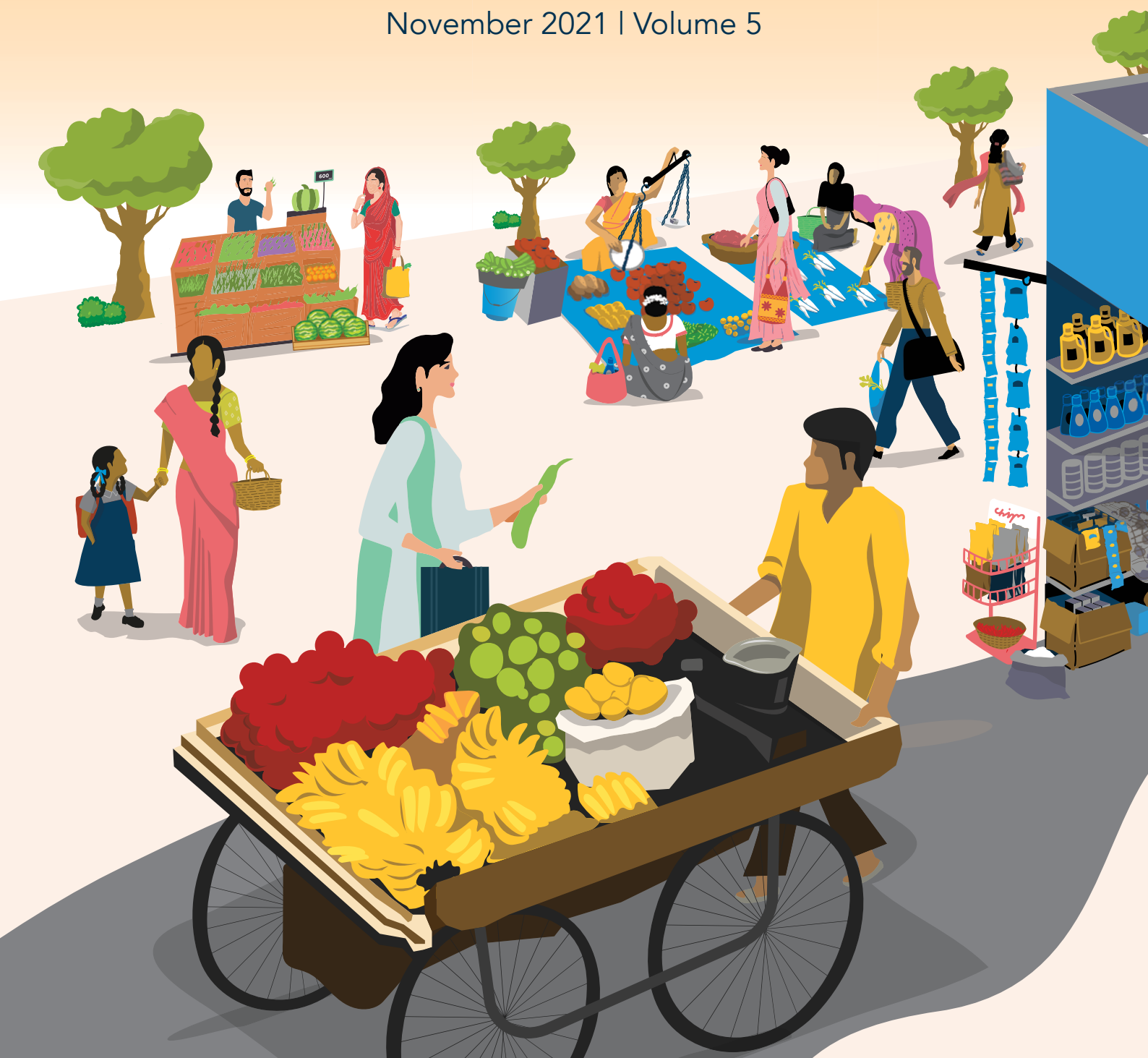


November 2021 | Volume 5



Dear readers,

Welcome to the last edition of Gender in Focus for 2021. As we approach the end of the second wave of the pandemic and while many of us are still recovering from its aftermath, we hope and wish for better times in this festive season.

As I look back at a remarkably successful year, I feel proud about what we have learnt and achieved at IWWAGE. I am delighted to share that our Twitter following is now over a 1000, which reflects your encouragement and appreciation. I look forward to your ongoing support and encouragement to take this mission ahead.

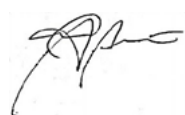
I am happy to share with you a summary of our evidence, research, news, events, and updates for a greater insight into our work. The current edition focuses on our latest study on how the lack of safety, attributed to increasing rate of crime against women and girls, acts as a barrier to women's participation in the workforce. This edition also showcases recommendations for a macroeconomic recovery for India in a COVID and post-COVID context with a specific focus on women as a key constituent of this recovery; the impact of sexual harassment on labour market outcomes; and the impact of the COVID crisis on the gendered dimensions of employment and mental health among urban informal-sector workers.

I am also happy to announce our collaboration with the Inclusion Economics India Centre at LEAD (formerly EPoD India) aimed at generating evidence to unlock the gender-transformative potential of mobile technology. This, we hope, will help enormously in shifting gender norms and reshaping the way SHGs communicate with their groups and peers. We have also developed an advocacy partnership with the Delhi Government as part of the Saheli Samanvay Kendra Scheme to provide advisory to shape their proposed schemes to encourage women entrepreneurship.

I hope that you enjoy reading this issue of the newsletter and find it informative.

I look forward to continuing our engagement with you in the new year and many more years to come.

With best wishes,



Sharon Buteau,
Executive Director, LEAD at Krea University

Increasing crimes against women and declining female labour force participation rate

Violence against women and girls as a barrier to their participation in workforce

The sharp decline in female labour force participation rate (FLFPR) from 31.2 per cent (ESU 2011-12) to 23.3 per cent (PLFS 2017-18) can be attributed to factors such as childcare, occupational segregations, infrastructure, safety and mobility, and social identities. Violence against women and girls—a characteristic of their safety in society—is a barrier to their equal participation in and contribution to society. There are multiple ways in which violence is experienced by women, several contexts in which it occurs, and thus, its costs and consequences are widespread.

IWWAGE has undertaken a state-level analysis of how lack of safety—attributed by an increasing rate of crimes against women and girls (CaW&G)—acts as a barrier to women's participation in the workforce. The study uses data from EUS 2011-12 and PLFS 2017-18 for FLFPR; and rates of CaW&G focusing on rape, kidnapping and abduction, and sexual harassment and molestation from NCRB's annual Crime in India statistics reports for 2011 and 2017. The analysis was conducted for the years 2011-12 and 2017-18.

While all-India FLFPR saw an 8 percentage point decline, the overall rate of crime against women and girls more than tripled to 57.9 per cent between 2011-12 and 2017-18.

Our earlier [blog](#) summarised whether violence inflicted on women and girls by the opposite gender had a correlation with their desire to be economically independent. The most popular theory is the backlash hypothesis, which suggests that asserting control and authority, often as resistance to the increased power of women, is the prime reason for violence.

In this study, we attempt to adapt Heisi's framework to better understand the factors that perpetrate extreme and unchecked violence against women and girls, and how these crimes act as a barrier to women's participation in the labour force. It suggests that violence against women and girls is

manifested at four different levels¹: individual, domestic, community and society. We have limited the scope of our working paper to the two broader levels of society and community, where, typically, perpetrators are strangers and not in domestic settings. In the immediate community, factors such as high levels of inequality (poverty and unemployment), easy availability of drugs and alcohol, and poor infrastructure lead to greater incidences of crime. In society, the blatant practices of caste hierarchies, patriarchal norms, discriminatory laws in property ownership, low level of female employment and education, lack of enforcement of laws to prevent gender-based violence and discrimination have 'normalised' incidents of violence against women and girls. The working paper shares recommendations of how to integrate women in education and formal employment, and suggests a SAFETY (Services, Attitudes, Focus on community, Empowerment of women, Transport and other infrastructure, Youth interventions) framework to capture measures that can bring about social change.

The most popular theory is the backlash hypothesis, which suggests that asserting control and authority, often as resistance to the increased power of women, is the prime reason for violence.

Key findings between 2011-12 and 2017-18:

- While the all-India FLFPR saw an 8 percentage point decline, the overall rate of CaW&G more than tripled to 57.9 per cent between this period. States like Himachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Chhattisgarh and Sikkim show consistency over time, maintaining a high FLFPR and a low rate of crime in comparison with other states and UTs. Similarly, while the crime rate in Assam and Delhi has remained extremely high, and increased by as much as four times, their FLFPR has been very low.
- At the all-India level, there is a low but negative correlation between the FLFPR and overall crime rate (see Fig. 1), and a moderately negative correlation between the FLFPR and kidnapping & abduction. These results emphasise the issue of a general lack of safety of women and the role it plays in influencing women's willingness and ability to step out to work.
- Unexpected results for crimes of rape, molestation and sexual harassment: there is a positive correlation between rates of crime and FLFPR, possibly due to the gross underreporting of these crimes, either due to the lack of understanding of the law by the victim or due to fear or shame. Hence, the correlation coefficient is not as expected. Further, it is also true that these crimes are harder to report given the abstract concept behind which 'act' constitutes as rape, molestation or sexual harassment.
- A closer look at states with the lowest FLFPRs during the said time period (Bihar, Delhi, Assam and Tripura) strengthens the argument that crime rate is indeed strongly associated with women's participation in the workforce.
- Bihar had the lowest FLFPR across India for both years as its FLFPR fell from 8.7 to 4.1 per cent. Its overall crime rate for CaW&G approximately tripled during this time. When the rate for Kidnapping & Abduction (K&A) incidents sharply increased from 2.9 to 12.11 per cent, the rate of rape increased to 1.2 per cent.
- Tripura experienced the greatest fall in FLFPR between these years with women's workforce participation rate falling by over 24 percentage points to 12.5 per cent, and a crime rate as high as 51.2 per cent (2017).
- In the time period observed, the FLFPR for Delhi declined only marginally from 14.8 to 14.3 per cent. However, its overall crime rate rose by more than four times

¹ Heise, Lori L. "Violence against women: An integrated, ecological framework." Violence against women 4.3 (1998): 262-290.

- In the case of Assam, while the FLFPR declined by 5 percentage points, its overall crime rate for CaW&G quadrupled. The rates of K&A and molestation stood high at 34.65 per cent and 22.2 per cent, respectively, while the rate of rape almost doubled, and the rate of sexual harassment saw a slight rise from 0 to 0.07 per cent.

Female LFP Rate and Crime Rate - 2011

This scatter plot displays the relationship between the Female Labor Force Participation Rate (FLFPR) on the Y-axis (ranging from 10 to 60) and the Rate of Crime on the X-axis (ranging from 0 to 40) for the year 2011. The data points represent various Indian states and union territories. The plot shows a general negative correlation, indicating that states with higher FLFPR tend to have lower crime rates. States like Sikkim and Himachal Pradesh are outliers with high FLFPR and low crime rates. States like Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan have high FLFPR and high crime rates. States like Bihar have low FLFPR and low crime rates.

State/UT	Rate of Crime (X)	FLFPR (Y)
Sikkim	10	62
Himachal Pradesh	15	62
Meghalaya	10	55
Chhattisgarh	18	55
Mizoram	18	48
Andhra Pradesh	35	45
Rajasthan	30	42
Nagaland	5	40
Tamil Nadu	10	38
Manipur	8	35
Uttarakhand	12	35
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	15	35
Goa	12	35
Karnataka	18	32
Gujarat	15	30
Odisha	25	32
Jammu & Kashmir	28	32
Madhya Pradesh	25	30
Kerala	35	32
Tripura	38	35
Punjab	12	25
Chandigarh	15	18
Haryana	22	20
West Bengal	32	25
Assam	38	18
Delhi UT	32	15
Lakshadweep	2	22
Daman & Diu	5	12
D&N Haveli	8	22
Puducherry	10	25
Bihar	10	10

Female LFP Rate and Crime Rate - 2017

This scatter plot displays the relationship between the Female Labor Force Participation Rate (FLFPR) on the Y-axis (ranging from 0 to 50) and the Rate of Crime on the X-axis (ranging from 0 to 150) for the year 2017. The data points represent various Indian states and union territories. The plot shows a general negative correlation, indicating that states with higher FLFPR tend to have lower crime rates. States like Meghalaya and Himachal Pradesh are outliers with high FLFPR and low crime rates. States like Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan have high FLFPR and high crime rates. States like Bihar have low FLFPR and low crime rates.

State/UT	Rate of Crime (X)	FLFPR (Y)
Meghalaya	45	50
Himachal Pradesh	40	48
Chhattisgarh	60	48
Sikkim	55	42
Andhra Pradesh	75	42
D&N Haveli	15	38
Tamil Nadu	20	32
Goa	45	30
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	50	32
Mizoram	55	30
Madhya Pradesh	80	30
Telangana	90	30
Manipur	25	22
Daman & Diu	30	22
Karnataka	45	25
Kerala	55	25
Chandigarh	55	25
Rajasthan	75	25
West Bengal	65	20
Odisha	90	20
Gujarat	40	20
Lakshadweep	10	18
Nagaland	10	18
Puducherry	15	18
Uttar Pradesh	50	18
Uttarakhand	40	15
Arunachal Pradesh	55	15
Tripura	55	12
Bihar	20	5
Haryana	85	15
Delhi UT	130	15
Assam	140	12

5

The gendered crisis: livelihoods and mental well-being in India during COVID-19

Impact of the pandemic on the gendered dimensions of employment and mental health among urban informal sector workers

With its population of 1.3 billion, of which a vast number includes self-employed informal-sector workers and daily wage earners who lack access to social security measures, India is facing significant policy challenges, both humanitarian and economic, in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis. Many of these workers have faced job and income losses, and food shortages, and require direct support in terms of cash and food. It is also becoming increasingly apparent that significant mental health concerns have arisen as a result of the crisis. The nationwide lockdown due to the economic uncertainty and the social distancing measures put in place to control the spread of the epidemic have also put pressure on the social fabric and feeling of community connectedness.

The paper, *The Gendered Crisis: Livelihoods and Mental Well-Being in India during*

COVID-19, studies the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the gendered dimensions of employment and mental health among urban informal-sector workers in India. This paper aims to provide direct evidence on the impact of the pandemic on some of the most vulnerable segments of the population in overcrowded, urban centres. In particular, it estimates the immediate and near-term impact of the crisis on the livelihoods and mental health of urban, primarily informal-sector workers in India with a focus on gender differences. Data is derived from two rounds of surveys: a pre-pandemic

The gendered pattern in pandemic-induced mental stress is partly explained by men's employment losses, which affected wives more than husbands.

survey in May 2019 of over 1,600 women and their husbands living in households in urban clusters of Delhi; and a follow-up post-pandemic phone survey around the peak of the health crisis in April and May 2020.

First, we find that men's employment declined by 84 percentage points post-pandemic relative to pre-pandemic, while their monthly earnings fell by 89 per cent relative to the baseline mean. In contrast, women did not experience any significant impact on employment post the pandemic, as reported by their husbands. Second, we document very high levels of pandemic-induced mental stress, with wives reporting greater stress than husbands. Third, this gendered pattern in pandemic-induced mental stress is partly explained by men's employment losses, which affected wives more than husbands. In contrast, staying employed during the pandemic is associated with worse mental health for women and their (unemployed) husbands. Fourth, pre-existing social networks are associated with higher mental stress for women relative to men, possibly due to the 'home-based' nature of women's networks.

The positive association for women between pre-pandemic network size and post-pandemic mental stress appears to be entirely driven by the 'home-bound' nature of their networks.

The study also reveals that the positive association for women between pre-pandemic network size and post-pandemic mental stress appears to be entirely driven by the 'home-bound' nature of their networks. While for men, having an additional 'home-friend' is associated with

0.088 standard deviation lower mental stress; for women, it is associated with an additional 0.035 standard deviation higher reported mental stress. In addition, women who owned mobile phones and

enjoyed greater phone interaction with their home-friends prior to the pandemic report higher post pandemic mental stress, while it was the opposite for men. In contrast, having 'work-friends' is associated with lower reported levels of mental stress for both men and women, although neither is statistically significant. The preferred interpretation of these findings is that women, irrespective of their loss of connection with their social network due to social distancing, experienced greater levels of stress the larger the size of their home-bound networks. This result points to the 'stress-contagion' role rather than the 'stress-buffering' role of the home-bound social networks for women, but not men. This could be driven by their 'home-bound' friends as opposed to their 'workplace' friends. One might have expected the latter to provide some non-redundant information about jobs, while home-bound friends either cause contagion in stress levels or require more intensive caregiving by women, but not by men. It may also be due to the highly integrated nature of home-bound friends, who may be spreading anxiety among each other.

The main contributions of the paper are an addition to the emerging global literature on the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on economic well-being with evidence of its implications for the employment and earnings of the poor, urban, informal-sector workers in India with special attention to the gendered dimension of the crisis. More importantly, the paper provides one of the first analyses of the mental health consequences and gender differences of the COVID-19 pandemic in the context of a developing country like India, with further focus on analysing the roles of post-pandemic employment losses and social networks in mediating these effects. Taken together, these findings contribute to our understanding of the processes needed for the response, recovery, and the building of resilience against such a devastating and widespread problem among vulnerable groups.

READ THE PAPER HERE



Interventions under SWAYAM, an IWWAGE - NRLM initiative

Integrating gender into all aspects of NRLM to achieve social development and financial empowerment

The strategy of the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) is to build capacities of sensitive support structures that implement its mission and this includes its staff and cadres. Cadres refer to institutions of the poor or community-based organisations, i.e., SHGs and their federations, including their leaders, professional staff, community professionals, community resource persons, community animators and other service providers, such as customer service providers in banks. Building capacities, especially those of the community facilitators, is integral to the success of the NRLM strategy, since over time, as articulated by NRLM, “the programme for the poor becomes the programme by the poor and of the poor”.

The trainings include gender concepts, integration of gender in the NRLM institutional mechanisms, gender planning and integration in planning, with the aim of enabling the SMMUs to integrate gender into all aspects of the NRLM and achieve the goals of social development and financial empowerment.

Deendayal Antayodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM), as it progresses with time, has made significant efforts in mainstreaming gender sensitisation and social action by appropriately including this component in its framework,

systems, institutions and capacity building processes. SRLMs are being capacitated to promote the discussion of gender issues at the SHG and federation levels.

To initiate the implementation of gender interventions, several rounds of trainings for SRLM staff, national and community resource persons have been conducted. 21 SRLMs were guided on preparing state-specific gender strategies. All SRLMs were also provided with technical support by national resource persons to develop gender

training modules to be used to roll out gender empowerment programmes.

Approximately 1,148 persons (SMMU, DMMU, BMMU) have already been trained in the states of Nagaland, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir, Haryana, Assam, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Manipur, Meghalaya, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh, West Bengal, Gujarat, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Goa. Around 1199 BRPs/CRPs/Master Trainers/BLTs have also been trained by the SRLMs. The training includes gender concepts, integration of gender in the NRLM institutional mechanisms, gender planning and integration in planning. This training aims to enable SMMUs to integrate gender into all aspects of the NRLM and achieve the goals of social development and financial empowerment. Apart from this, state-level trainings have been imparted in 13 states for the conceptual understanding of gender issues, integration of gender in DAY-NRLM and the development of operational strategies.

Presently, gender interventions have been upscaled to 20 states—Assam, Odisha, Rajasthan, Tripura, Manipur, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Punjab, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Bihar. Ten states have developed state-specific gender strategies with a focus on the enrolment and retention of children in schools, prevention of early marriages, asset creation in the names of women, prevention of violence against women and children, access to rights and entitlements, and focus on food and nutrition through a gender lens. They have also formed and trained state-level gender core groups to provide guidance and direction to the state on a continuous basis.

Around 7 SRLMs have formed 21,389 and trained 17,990 Village Organisation Social Action Committees. To initiate the gender agenda and enquiry at the SHG level, around 10 SRLMs have already initiated

the promotion and training of gender point persons at the SHG level. To tackle gender issues/cases, Jharkhand has formed 1,009 and MP has formed 208 gender forums at the Gram Panchayat level. The SRLMs have also initiated a training of CLF social action committees (SAC) and so far trained 266 CLF SACs.

A unique way of shaping gender mainstreaming pathways in the states is the preparation of a gender operational strategy. For this, a range of issues have been identified based on primary and secondary data sources along with the challenges women confront in their everyday lives. The range of intervention areas identified include the following:

- » gender mainstreaming in food, nutrition, health and sanitation;
- » promotion of education, prevention of dropouts and retention of students;
- » strengthening of gender structures, gender committees and awareness of gender at all levels;
- » increased access to land and property rights and control over common property resources;
- » ensuring the inclusion of vulnerable women (destitutes, trafficked survivors, transgenders, single women/widows, etc.);
- » inclusion of PWD and the elderly;
- » prevention of violence against women including human trafficking;
- » convergence for rights and entitlements; and
- » awareness on menstrual hygiene, etc.

The VO and CLFs address the issues of witch hunting, human trafficking, education, low literacy, health, nutrition, sanitation, wage disparity, efforts to include the disabled and elderly into SHGs, immunisation drives, pensions for the elderly, school inspections, monitoring of mid-day meals, checking on illegal sale of alcohol and assisting anganwadi workers in the distribution of food to children.

A gender responsive economic recovery for India in the COVID-19 context

Recommendations for a gender-responsive, inclusive and just economic recovery

The severe and disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the most vulnerable and marginalised groups, including women and girls in India, has been discussed in much detail.² Women have faced massive job and income losses with slow revival. They have also witnessed an increase in unpaid care work and have been forced to exit the labour force in large numbers.³ As per government estimates, the female labour force participation rate was about 16 per cent in the months of April-June 2020, right after the pandemic induced lockdown was imposed in India. This implies that less than 1 in 5 women aged 15 or older had a job or were looking for jobs. The State of Working India Report 2021 suggests that about 47 per cent of women suffered a permanent job loss till December 2020, while the corresponding figure for men was only 7 per cent.⁴ While the Government of India and the state governments undertook some measures to respond to this crisis in the early months of the pandemic,⁵ targeted measures for gender responsive outcomes need to be at the centre of the economic revival efforts in India.

IWWAGE and The Quantum Hub have developed a paper that identifies

solutions and recommendations for a gender-responsive, inclusive and just economic recovery for India in the COVID-19 context. The recommendations presented in this paper have been informed by a series of expert consultations and roundtable discussions on various topics that are highlighted in the analysis. These consultations were facilitated by Sattva Consulting between August and September 2021. We engaged with experts from academia, enterprises, donor organisations, philanthropies, non-profit organisations, public sector organisations, civil society groups, as well as with independent experts to build on our existing recommendations and add their insights.

This paper lays out suggestions for a macroeconomic recovery for India in a COVID and post-COVID context with a specific focus on making women a key constituent of this recovery. The authors of the paper have identified short-, medium- and long-term measures in the areas of monetary and fiscal policy, and also explored innovative financing options to address the challenges of reduced fiscal space in financing these various measures. Such measures, if implemented effectively, can expand and

The State of Working India Report 2021 suggests that about 47 per cent of women suffered a permanent job loss till December 2020, while the corresponding figure for men was only 7 per cent.

² How did India's Women Enterprises Fare during the COVID-19 Lockdown?, Bargotra et al., 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/4ejk7zsj>

³ It is time to address COVID-19's disproportionate impact on India's women, Nikore et al, Asian Development Blog, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/25uaj378>

⁴ State of Working India Report 2021, Azim Premji University, May 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/p6me5sn7>

⁵ Direct cash transfers from April-June 2020.

improve the opportunities for work and livelihoods available to women and thus, enhance the resources for reducing gender inequality.

The paper offers various solutions for bolstering India's economic recovery that is gender responsive and inclusive of the myriad needs of women and girls. This includes strengthening and expanding procurement practices for women owned and led enterprises; expanding the types of livelihoods and employment opportunities, with a focus on creating enabling mechanisms for gender-

Allocations towards the gender budget have remained below 5 per cent of total expenditure since India adopted the practice of gender budgeting in 2005. While it did touch 6 per cent in the revised estimates of 2020-21, India still spends a small fraction of its budget on programmes targeting nearly half its population.

responsive skilling; securing the rights, social security and ensuring decent working conditions for women workers; investing in the care economy; strengthening our gender-disaggregated data architecture, and finally, innovative financing solutions to meet the fiscal demand for these measures. We aim to share these recommendations with key policymakers and stakeholders to inform the discourse and decision prior to the preparation of the Union Budget 2022-23.

Paper will be published soon on our website.



VIEW THE
RECORDING HERE

Building back together: childcare - a key to recovery for women workers

COVID-19 brought to the fore an unprecedented public health and humanitarian crisis. In India, it has had a severe impact on informal economy workers, and a disproportionate effect on the widely prevalent gender inequality in the labour market, as well as on the growth and well-being of children, especially those below 6 years, who are the most vulnerable. The pandemic exposed the global childcare crisis as creches and kindergartens closed to contain the spread of the virus. The majority of childcare work shifted to women at home, which threatened women workers' employment and livelihoods.

The webinar, Building back together: childcare key to recovery for women workers organised by the Child Care Campaign for India on 15 September 2021 highlighted how the absence of childcare facilities in India and around the world impacted the lives of both workers and their children. Through a panel discussion, women workers, activists and sector experts put forward key demands relating to women informal workers – childcare, and well-being and health needs for the growth and development of their young children. The webinar brought together various actors in the child-care sector across labour and women's rights movements and the early childhood development community. Speakers included Amanda Devercelli (World Bank), Kanika Kingra (IWWAGE), Marieke Koning (ITUC), Mirai Chatterjee (SEWA), Monika Banerjee (ISST), Rachel Moussié (WIEGO), Shalini Sinha (WIEGO), Sumitra Mishra (Mobile Creches). Webinar also brought together voices of women carrying the burden of care, represented by Aline Souza, waste picker from Brazil; Annie Diouf, street vendor from Senegal; and Parveen Banu Shaikh, home-based worker from India.

Photo credit Rashmi Chaudhary for WIEGO.

15 SEP, 2021
6-8pm (IST)

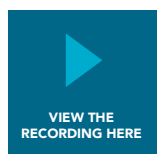
Building Back Together

Childcare an important step on the road
to recovery for women workers

Panelists
Sumitra Mishra, Mobile Creches | Kanika Kingra, IWWAGE | Shalini Sinha, WIEGO
Monika Banerjee, ISST | Rachel Moussié, WIEGO
Marieke Koning, ITUC | Mirai Chatterjee, SEWA | Amanda Devercelli, World Bank

Panel 1 Multi-layered and continuing impact of COVID-19 on women workers
Panel 2 Women workers in their own voices: Carrying the burden of care
Panel 3 Building back together: The way forward





Launch of the Care Principles and Care Barometer








Unequal distribution of unpaid and underpaid care work between women and men has long been a major driver of gender inequality in Asia—a situation that has been worsened by the COVID-19 crisis. To help address this and realign priorities and policies to ensure that women's paid, unpaid, and underpaid care work is recognised, reduced and redistributed, Oxfam, in consultation and collaboration with allies and collaborators, has been working to develop a suite of tools for advocacy and mainstreaming care work. Care Principles and the Care Barometer - the first in the series of such tools was launched on 14 September 2021 through a video presentation.


Care Principles are 28 principles that serve as guiding principles for governments, wide ranging institutions and the private sector to enable them to contribute towards addressing women's unequal paid and underpaid care work. The Care Barometer is a tool to assess and implement the care principles, which provides a checklist with three measures of progress. The checklist consists of simple, self-guided questions and indicators that allow officials in an institution to check possible violation. The three measures of progress consist of the integration of paid, unpaid and underpaid care work via a red light, amber light and a green light that allow self-assessment and open up the process for civil society to assess the care responsiveness of an institution. The launch session focused on the relevance of the Care Principles. Session 2 was about responding to the Care Principles and the Barometer, where key stakeholders shared their thoughts on the suite of tools and on the way forward for building a caring economy.

Launch

CARE PRINCIPLES AND CARE BAROMETER

14th Sept, Tues | 15:00-16:30 Bangkok time

 LILIAN MERCADO Oxfam International Regional Director Asia & Director, Strategy & Feminist Futures	 YAMINI MISHRA Amnesty International Regional Director, East, South East Asia & Pacific Regional Office & South Asia Regional Office	 SONA MITRA Initiative for What Works to Advance Women & Girls in the Economy Principal Economist	 SUBHALAKSHMI NANDI Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Gender Equality Policy & Advocacy Senior Program Officer
 KATJA FREIWALD WeEmpowerAsia, UN Women Regional Office for Asia & the Pacific Regional Program Manager	 AYA MATSURA International Labour Organization (ILO) South Asia Gender Specialist	 MYRTLE WITBOOI International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF) President	

**OXFAM**

Women's awareness of sexual harassment and labour market preferences

Understanding the role of sexual harassment on the job in women's labour market choices

While India has witnessed rapid economic growth, expanding education levels and falling fertility rates for women, female labour force participation has remained low and is consistently declining. Both the supply and demand side factors are considered important factors for this. One such factor is the lack of growth in female-friendly jobs or jobs which traditionally employ a high proportion of women. Thus, it is important for policymakers to understand whether some jobs not traditionally chosen by women

can be made more desirable for them. The safety of women is claimed to be an important driver of women's labour market participation. From public transport or within workplaces, safety is crucial to improve women's labour force participation in Asia. However, given measurement issues and lack of data, the relationship between the two is understudied.

UN Women's study shows that 92 per cent of women surveyed in Delhi have suffered from either sexual, visual or verbal harassment.

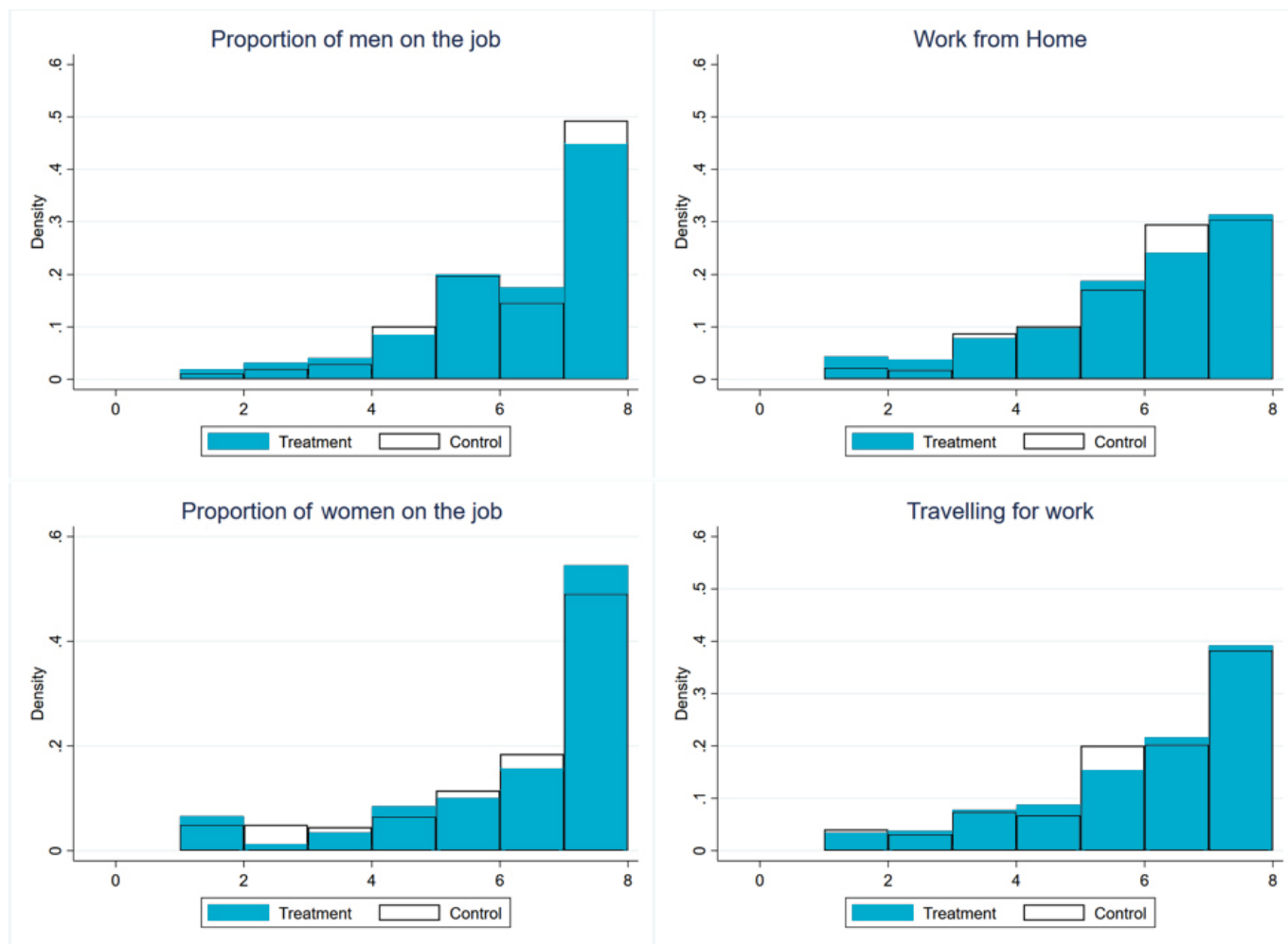
Sexual harassment connected to interacting with men on the job or otherwise plays a role in women's labour market choices as a cost to female labour force participation in India. This project tests whether sexual harassment awareness training can act as a potential economic and social empowerment tool for women to improve their labour market outcomes. The main research question of the paper was to test how higher sexual harassment awareness affects women's labour market aspirations and preferences, in particular, how raising awareness about sexual harassment and redressal mechanisms, and sexual harassment trainings can affect their preferences for jobs.

As part of the IWWAGE summer school fellowship, a study was conducted to look into the awareness of sexual harassment and labour market preferences. The study analyses the impact of sexual harassment on labour market outcomes, including productivity, absenteeism and turnover, besides other psychological and health outcomes. A randomised controlled trial (RCT) was implemented with college students in Delhi to understand the effects of a sexual harassment awareness intervention with

women on their hypothetical job choices and aspirations. The awareness intervention provided information on the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act (2013), principles to detect sexual harassment and also, the legal redressal procedure for sexual harassment.

the intervention. In particular, women are less likely to accept job offers to work in male majority teams. Evidence on the fall in women's romantic relationships with all men inside or outside their peer groups indicates that the treatment made women avoid men even more. The null effects of the treatment on women's overall labour market

Fig 2: The figure gives the frequency distribution of ranking given to different characteristics of the jobs. The x-axis for each graph is the ranking which varies from 1 to 8. The lower the rank, the more important that job characteristic is for women. The blue histograms are for treated women and white for control women.



Sexual harassment has come to the forefront of policy debates since the #MeToo movement started. With one of the highest rates of crimes against women, India does not fare well on other parameters of women's agency. The rate of women's labour force participation in India has not only remained low but is also seen to be falling. Results show that women's perception of sexual harassment increases in the short run after the training, but these effects do not persist in the medium run. It affects their preference over the gender composition of jobs significantly even four months after

experience, search efforts and aspirations cannot be rejected. It can therefore, be inferred that women might under-detect sexual harassment in their environment, and that increasing their awareness might make them avoid male majority jobs contributing to occupational segregation between men and women. Finally, the study finds that the treatment increases women's demand for gender-balanced jobs relative to male-dominated jobs. However, the demand for these jobs reduces by 21 per cent when the relative wages for male-dominated jobs increases by 100 per cent, indicating a sticky demand.

[READ THE PAPER HERE](#)



Employment guaranteed? Social protection during a pandemic

Role of social safety nets to build back better

The COVID-19 pandemic has been an unprecedented health and economic shock to the world economy. Most major economies are in recession and unemployment has peaked, demanding a response from policymakers to ensure a sustainable economic recovery. Social safety nets, somewhat neglected policy tools, such as employment guarantees, unemployment insurance and Universal Basic Income (UBI) are once again being debated. Furthermore, ongoing research on the pandemic suggests that economic impacts differ across demographic groups, but there is limited evidence on both the role played by social safety nets on stemming labour market disruptions as well as their impact across population groups, which may well vary depending on the design of the programmes.

For instance, unlike a UBI that would not distinguish between working and dependent populations, employment guarantees provide support during labour market shocks to the workforce, potentially impacting productivity and bolstering demand by enhancing incomes. In addition, the benefits of employment guarantee schemes may differ by worker characteristics, depending on the nature of work offered and the skills required.

The study measures the impact of the pandemic induced shutdown in India. The dynamic effects on individual employment

status during the period April-August 2020, Phase 1 of stringent mobility restrictions (April-May), with gradual easing in Phase 2 (June-July) and full relaxation in Phase 3 (August), is assessed. The study also examines the role of the nation-wide Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MG-NREGA), the world's largest employment guarantee programme initiated in 2006 and bolstered following the pandemic, in cushioning job losses overall and as the stringency of the restrictions eased during April-August 2020. To address the endogeneity of employment generated under the programme during the pandemic, historical data on employment generation under MG-NREGA in a district over five years (2014-18) is used to measure the capacity of the state to provide social protection under the scheme during this crisis.

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MG-NREGA) mandates the provision of 100 days of manual work on publicly funded projects (e.g. rural infrastructures such as irrigation canals and roads) to rural households in India. The Act envisions a rights-based approach - rural adults can demand work at a mandated minimum wage.

The findings have important policy implications. First, it shows that employment guarantees can play a role in shielding job losses and aiding recovery from a negative economic shock. Second, the results highlight the relevance of the design of the employment guarantees in contributing towards their effectiveness. While rural areas and women—the less skilled and less mobile—benefited disproportionately from the low-wage, unskilled employment under MG-NREGA, such social protection eluded urban areas. Thus, the nature of work and required skills determine relative benefits by demographic groups. Finally,

our research contributes to the emerging literature on the relevance of state capacity in the development process (Muralidharan et al., 2016) by indicating that state capacity to utilise public funds might be a critical determinant of the government's ability to respond quickly to economic crises.

The paper analyses the extent to which an employment guarantee programme was able to stem employment loss in India during the COVID-19 crisis. Using individual-level panel data and accounting for seasonal trends in employment, individual and regional heterogeneity, the findings suggest that districts with higher pre-pandemic capacity

to generate public works employment under MG-NREGA were able to cushion job losses significantly in rural areas and more so, for rural women. However, the findings also show that there is no spillover effect on urban employment, thus highlighting the need for complementary policies in urban areas. It is interesting to know that rural women who were less likely to be mobile and/or had childcare responsibilities gained more from the programme, suggesting that the nature of guaranteed jobs can be a critical determinant of which demographic groups benefit from such social protection.

[READ THE PAPER HERE](#)



Hold the Phone: IWWAGE collaborates with Inclusion Economics India (EPoD)

Generating evidence to unlock the gender-transformative potential of mobile technology

IWWAGE has collaborated with Inclusion Economics India (formerly EPoD India) to deploy a health information service to support and incentivise SHG women in Chhattisgarh to use their mobile devices. The idea is to contribute to the shifting gender norms and reshaping the way they communicate with their groups and peers.

The project uses two tools to study the ways in which women engage with their smartphones. The first is a basic mobile phone training that covers the tasks women must master to start engaging with their phones and is designed with a limited-literacy audience in mind. The trainings aim to build women's enthusiasm for phones and are conducted in small groups in female-dominated spaces with ample opportunity for hands-on practice. Women also receive simple, picture-based handouts that they can take home for further independent practice.

The second tool is an innovative health information service called Mor Awaaz meaning My Voice in Chhattisgarhi. This service incentivises women to use their mobile devices with the objective of becoming more familiar with them and

reshape the way they communicate with their groups and peers. Mor Awaaz sends information to women about good health practices and government services via "push" phone calls on a weekly basis. About 10,786 women have been receiving these messages, which are intended to encourage them to use their phones more frequently, while also collecting information from them on the delivery of services via "pull" calls. This intervention has enabled us to gather rich data through a survey conducted on 1,696 married women in the state eligible for SKY⁶ phones, and have revealed the following insights:

- Supervised use of mobile phones continues to be thought of as more appropriate than unsupervised use regardless of women's marital status. This suggests that women may continue to face resistance to using phones without restriction.
- A positive correlation exists between SHG membership and increased acceptance of supervised use, which suggests that women who are part of the SHG networks may make bigger strides in phone use over time.

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⁶ In 2018, as part of an effort to address this digital divide, the state government of Chhattisgarh led an initiative to provide free smartphones to millions of women across the state under a programme called Sanchar Kranti Yojana (SKY).

- Literate women and women from wealthier households are more likely to positively update norms around unsupervised use of mobile phones. In other words, women who face lower economic barriers (women who are more literate and from wealthier backgrounds) are liberalised to a greater extent compared to their less educated, poorer counterparts.

The intervention was crucial as the COVID-19 pandemic may have increased the existing divides in terms of mobile phone usage and ownership among SHG women. The Mor Awaaz service is useful in understanding not only the role of training in phone engagement, but also the role that the phone-based information service meant to create in shifting norms and uptake.





Working with the Government of Delhi NCT to expand women's livelihood opportunities

The Initiative for What Works to Advance Women and Girls in the Economy (IWWAGE) at LEAD formalised a partnership with the Delhi Skills and Entrepreneurship University (DSEU) in September 2021 to support the design of the *Samridhi* component of the Delhi Saheli Samanvay Kendra scheme that was launched in April 2021.

The socio-economic empowerment of women was an important focus area in the 2021-2022 Delhi Budget. Under the umbrella of the government's social security and welfare measures, the deputy chief minister announced the Saheli Samanvay Kendra (SSK) Scheme in the Budget speech. Under the scheme, Anganwadi Hubs (clusters of anganwadi centres) are to be set up in various parts of Delhi to act as local incubation

centres for incubating women-led and owned enterprises.

The partnership between IWWAGE and DSEU will focus on applying ground level insights and evidence driven insights based on LEAD's decade-long experience of conducting action research in the MSME sector to help inform decisions and the design of the livelihood generation aspect of the scheme. IWWAGE is supporting the Delhi Government in informing the design of the scheme by conducting qualitative research surveys with women across Delhi, and also drawing insights from key government functionaries that will be responsible for implementing the scheme and developing the plans for the fellowship model, a critical component of the scheme.



IWWAGE to enter into a partnership with Indian School of Public Policy for lecture series

IWWAGE will partner with the Indian School of Public Policy (ISPP) to design and deliver a series of lectures focused on women's economic empowerment and gender equality. The lecture series will draw not only on IWWAGE and LEAD's own policy and research areas, but also on the insights from the research conducted by IWWAGE's partners. Incubated by India's leading public policy think tank, Centre for Civil Society (CCS) in 2019, ISPP has been built by the world's leading policy-makers, experts and influencers.

As part of its curriculum, ISPP has reached out to various organisations to deliver a series of lectures on various thematic areas. IWWAGE will deliver

introductory lectures to the scholars at ISPP until December 2021 on various topics. IWWAGE's Dr Sona Mitra and Kanika Jha Kingra conducted an introductory lecture on 20 October 2021 to highlight several critical areas that are intrinsic to achieving women's economic empowerment. Topics included labour market outcomes and participation for women; unpaid work and its impact on women's work; women's entrepreneurship; social protection; gender responsive budgeting and financing; social identities and labour market choices; gender and health; women's collectives, and the policy landscape on women's economic empowerment in India.



Female labour force participation survey

IWWAGE is conducting a survey to assess the status of women's labour force participation in India. The survey aims to dive deeper into existing supply side barriers to women's work, identify gaps in the labour market that dissuade female participation, assess the rate of female labour force participation through enhanced survey instruments and in the process, inform the debate on the measure of women's work in India. The latter will be attempted by assessing how female labour force participation rates change when the process of data collection, including the survey

tool as well as enumerator training, is altered.

To achieve these objectives, IWWAGE plans to conduct a multi-state large-scale physical survey covering the states of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Karnataka, Jharkhand and Delhi. Approximately 5000 women and 1000 men will be interviewed over the next couple of months. The pilot was concluded on 14 October 2021 and the main survey will start from 8 November 2021, with the study expected to close by 31 August 2022.



Madhya Pradesh and Odisha scale up

IWWAGE's programme Strengthening Women's institutions for Agency and Empowerment (SWAYAM) was piloted in four states across the country. The programme integrates gender perspectives within the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM) institutional structure. As the pilot phase comes to an end, two of the four states, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha have decided to scale up the SWAYAM programme in partnership with the State Rural Livelihoods Mission (SRLM). In Madhya Pradesh, SWAYAM is being scaled up from one district to 17 districts and in Odisha, from 2 districts to 20 districts.

As this scale-up phase commences, it is important to integrate within it a robust monitoring and evaluation


framework to understand how gender programming is being taken forward by the states and how effective SWAYAM interventions are in a different context. As the research partner for SWAYAM, IWWAGE is putting in place multiple research pieces to evaluate the scale-up programmes. These include a quantitative survey evaluation, ongoing process documentation and a cost effective study at the end of the project cycle. IWWAGE has launched the first of these evaluation pieces, the survey evaluation for both states. This primarily focuses on the following domains: increase in knowledge, empowerment, control over income and assets, women's perceptions regarding social norms, and institutional access.



Pilot evaluation: qualitative study focused on gender based violence

A major component of IWWAGE's programme Strengthening Women's institutions for Agency and Empowerment (SWAYAM) is to reduce instances of Gender Based Violence (GBV) in intervention areas. It aims to reduce GBV through gender training to women, building perspective and knowledge and increasing women's access to institutions such as Gender Resource Centres that have the capacity to address women's issues, including those of violence.

As violence is a complex and nuanced subject, IWWAGE is conducting qualitative in depth interviews in all four SWAYAM states (Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha) to understand the extent of perceptions towards GBV, that women hold have evolved during the time of intervention and what mechanisms have led to reduced GBV in intervention areas. This study was launched in mid-October 2021 and data collection is ongoing.



Feasibility analysis for a gender responsive basic income in Nepal

The challenges faced by women in Nepal are myriad, including low uptake of education and health services, high incidence rates of gender-based violence, and a significant burden of unpaid agricultural and domestic care work. This is fuelled by a societal setup that traditionally limits the role of women to caregivers with little to no bargaining power. Overall, Nepal ranks 106 out of 156 countries on the Global Gender Gap Report 2021 published by the World Economic Forum, indicating a need to focus on and proactively address gender equality across various spheres.

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent nationwide lockdown further intensified the inequalities faced by women in Nepal. The influx of returning migrants and the setback to the major industries of tourism, manufacturing and construction activities have made work opportunities for women scarce. The high levels of engagement of women in low paying informal activities, a sector which has been disproportionately impacted by the lockdown, has pushed several households, especially women-headed households into acute poverty.

As a policy response to address the existing gender-based inequalities in Nepal and provide support to

the socio-economic response measures to COVID-19, the UN Resident Coordinator's Office in Nepal in collaboration with ILO, UNDP and UN Women, has partnered with the Initiative for What Works to Advance Women and Girls in the Economy (IWWAGE) to undertake a study to assess the feasibility of a Gender Responsive Basic Income (BI) in Nepal. To conduct this feasibility assessment, IWWAGE has entered into a partnership with two international experts—Dr. Guy Standing and Dr. Sarath Davala, —who will guide the comprehensive mixed methods work plan. The primary objectives of this feasibility study are:

- To review the existing social protection policies and schemes provided to women in Nepal as well as key cash transfer programmes;
- To identify gender-pertinent gaps in the present social protection systems and cash transfer programmes in Nepal; and
- To analyse the benefits and challenges (political, economic, fiscal, and administrative) of implementing a BI for women in Nepal.

Resources



Does access liberalise gender norms around phone use for rural women?

Despite the expansion of mobile phone availability and network connectivity in India, deep-rooted gender norms continue to shape the access and use of mobile technologies by girls and women. As part of an effort to address this digital divide, the Chhattisgarh state government led an initiative in 2018, to provide free smartphones to millions of women across the state. This presented a unique opportunity for us to study how

norms governing phone use change when phones are provided directly to women. The programme, called Sanchar Kranti Yojana (SKY), is part of a [larger project](#) for SHGs in Chhattisgarh and is a collaboration with the Chhattisgarh State Rural Livelihood Mission (CGSRLM), which is funded by a grant from the Initiative for What Works to Advance Women and Girls in the Economy (IWWAGE).

[READ MORE HERE](#)

What we've learned about women's work during the pandemic

The pandemic has thrown into high relief the all-pervasive, systemic and entrenched realities that prevent women from earning a living, and has devalued women's work, both paid and unpaid. In the past one year, IWWAGE and IndiaSpend have attempted to understand the ground realities of the pandemic through a series of stories and interviews. Through this, they have also examined the policy, political and socio-economic interventions that can create the

conditions for women to participate more fully in the economy, as also to exercise their rights, agency and volition. The stories reflect the lived experiences of women's lives and work during the pandemic. The concluding story under women@work series revisits the insights and perspectives gleaned from the research and evidence on how the pandemic has decimated women's workforce participation, which has thereby widened gender inequalities.

STORY BY INDIASPEND

Intersecting identities have significant effects on women's participation in labour force, says study

"The intersection between gender and social identities, such as caste and tribe, indicate that Dalit women, disadvantaged on account of caste, poverty, and patriarchy, are the worst-off in terms of material indicators, as well as on autonomy and mobility indicators," according to the paper, titled [Intersecting Identities, Livelihoods and Affirmative Action: How Social Identity Affects Economic Opportunity for Women in India](#) authored by Ashwini Deshpande, Professor of Economics at Ashoka University. This paper presents a

landscape assessment of the current state of gender inequality in the economic sphere in India, which is a key facet of overall inequality. Male-female gaps are significant in many dimensions, but the contours of these gaps are shaped by the overlap of gender with other social identities, such as caste, religion or tribal identities. Thus, women from stigmatised and marginalised groups are disadvantaged along two dimensions and have to battle the double stigma of this intersectionality.

COVERAGE BY NEWSCLICK

60% domestic workers were not paid in lockdown, faced poverty, debt, hunger

The lockdowns hit India's informal sector hard, threatening the nearly 419 million informal workers that comprise 90 per cent of all workers in India, pushing the vulnerable deeper into crisis. The community of domestic workers remained hard-hit, and registered delayed and low levels of economic recovery even in 2021. Increasing fears of transmission and lockdown rules deprived them of wages and employment. Since few domestic workers are registered

with the labour department or unions, there are hardly any laws regulating their wages, working hours or workspace. All this increased their vulnerability to indebtedness, poverty and harassment. IndiaSpend story looks at the impact of both the national, and later, state lockdowns during the first and second waves of the pandemic that offset decades of hard-won progress made by the domestic worker community in terms of gainful employment and steady incomes.

STORY BY INDIASPEND

Not enough paid opportunities for women in new normal

In its 75th year of independence, India has more women enrolling in schools, colleges and universities, even as the number of women joining the workforce is on the decline. The COVID-19 pandemic has only accelerated this pace with women, more than men, losing their jobs over the past year. Among them, many might never find their way back to work again. The only silver lining has been that women in white collar jobs in

service sectors like technology, consulting and BFSI were not hit. But barring these segments, a large number of women are seen to be dropping out of the workforce due to mental and physical health reasons. The burden of domestic responsibilities thrust upon them by COVID-19 is also a reason. This Times of India article looks at the sectors and possible reasons for women dropping out of the workforce.

ARTICLE BY TIMES OF INDIA

Reemploying India: how can we create the jobs millions of Indians need?

COVID-19 caused chaos in India's job market: rampant unemployment, changes in existing jobs, salary cuts, closure of offices, and diminished-to-no economic opportunities for daily wage and informal sector workers. Women left the workforce without any plans of coming back – in view of the lack of quality employment, they chose to invest in housework and childcare instead of working in low remunerative job roles with bad working conditions. In the

April-June 2020 data released in March this year, unemployment increased to 20.9 per cent, from 8.9 per cent during April-June 2019. Numbers for June-September 2020 released earlier this month indicate unemployment at 13.3 per cent, up from 8.4 per cent in June-September 2019. An article by Forbes India looks at need of urgent policy attention, reforms and recommendations for creating sustainable, quality employment opportunities.

ARTICLE BY FORBES

Rural women's mental health must be prioritised

Besides creating chaos in the job market, COVID-19 has also created vulnerabilities for women and their health needs, aggravating already existing inequalities. Loss of livelihood, food insecurity and more household work, all due to the pandemic and subsequent lockdown, have created a mental health crisis among rural women. Often, during extreme public health emergencies, such as pandemics, mental health concerns are deprioritised. The limited resources that are available are directed towards the prevention, containment and treatment of

the disease. The mental health crisis that gradually unfolded in India's hinterland during the pandemic has received little to no attention in the media or in public discourse. As we recover and rebuild our economies, there is an urgent need to keep the most vulnerable at the centre of our efforts and build back more equal. An article published in IDR Online looks at the need to address systemic vulnerabilities as part of the larger response to mental health concerns arising due to the pandemic.

ARTICLE BY IDR

How urban job guarantee schemes can provide livelihood, equal opportunities to women

During the countrywide lockdown and the first wave of COVID-19 in April-June 2020, 26.6 per cent of workers in urban India, and 40 per cent of urban women, worked less than 36 hours a week. Since the onset of the pandemic and multiple lockdowns across the country, millions of people have been rendered jobless, have lost their savings and experienced reduced incomes and a fall in the quality of jobs. While the job loss has shifted to men during the second wave, the first wave saw disproportionate

job loss among women in urban areas. Under the circumstances, has the time come for an urban employment guarantee scheme that can offer social security to the urban poor, particularly women? In this story, IndiaSpend investigates how urban employment guarantee schemes specifically targeted at women can address the needs of the unskilled unemployed and educated unemployed, and how a well-designed scheme could be used as an opportunity to promote better facilities for women workers.

STORY BY INDIASPEND

BLOOMBERG QUINT

BUSINESS STANDARD

What determines women's labour force participation in India?

Women's participation in India's labour force has been steadily declining since 1993-94. India also has one of the lowest female labour force participation rates among developing countries. Despite decades of policies and programmes aimed at addressing this issue, the figure has remained consistently low. Their participation has been declining despite rising Gross Domestic Product (GDP), increasing educational attainment, rising household incomes, and declining fertility. Utilising household-level data of Periodic

Labour Force Surveys (PLFS) (covering the years 2017-18 and 2018-19), and NSSO's Employment-Unemployment Surveys (EUS) (various rounds completed in 1993-94, 1999-00, 2004-5, 2009-10, 2011-12), the IWWAGE study provides systematic evidence on the country's gender gaps in employment and labour market outcomes. Since multiple factors influence their decision to undertake paid market work, this paper tries to unpack the critical aspects of low female labour force participation in rural and urban India.

COVERAGE BY THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Rural women's collectives struggle to survive even as they help manage COVID fallout

Women's self-help groups (SHG) across India have been playing a crucial role in managing the fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic. Promoted under the central [Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihood Mission](#) (DAY-NRLM) and launched in 2011, these SHGs empower women by providing them with easy access to credit. However, in the last one year, they have gone beyond this role to do community work with funding from governments and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), including tasks normally performed by health activists. Nearly 76 million women in rural India took up self-

help initiatives that proved instrumental in managing the food insecurity and healthcare challenges posed by the pandemic. Since March 2020, and as per the July 2021 data from the DAY-NRLM dashboard, these groups have manufactured nearly 170 million masks, 500,000 pieces of protective equipment and 500,000 litres of sanitiser. Through community kitchens, they also served more than half a million cooked meals to people from vulnerable communities. IndiaSpend writes on the critical role of SHGs in providing resilience for households during the pandemic.

STORY BY INDIASPEND

Global childcare crisis and the road for post-COVID-19 recovery and resilience

A year into the pandemic and we are no longer just worrying about progress on women's equality coming to a standstill. We are now seeing the possibility of such progress being reversed. The devastating impact that COVID-19 has had on women's livelihoods cannot be overstated. Globally, women tend to work in low-paying jobs and in the informal sector—precarious employment that has been upended by lockdowns and COVID-19 restrictions. Adding another layer to this burden, women's unpaid care work is soaring, and must be addressed within our COVID-19 recovery plans both to advance gender equality and because it

makes fiscal sense. In addition to reducing the undue burden of care, affordable and quality childcare frees up mothers to participate in the labour force and creates decent jobs for women in the childcare sector. [This evidence review on the global childcare crisis](#) was produced in partnership with the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), the Growth and Economic Opportunities for Women (GrOW) East Africa initiative, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, FemDev and the Initiative for What Works to Advance Women and Girls in the Economy (IWWAGE), an initiative of LEAD at Krea University.

COVERAGE BY THE HINDUSTAN TIMES



Women's economic empowerment in India

Earlier this year, Center for Global Development (CGD) launched a new initiative to research the gendered impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and make evidence-based recommendations to promote an inclusive recovery. The CGD research has highlighted three key areas of needed action: cash (making sure social protection and stop-gap financing programs reach and benefit women and girls), care (reducing and redistributing unpaid care work), and data

(evaluating programs' impacts on women and girls and strengthening data systems). In this episode of the CGD podcast, Soumya Kapoor Mehta, talks about the barriers that prevent women from participating and advancing in the workforce, the roles of local and international actors, and how Indian states are piloting promising policy models to be replicated and scaled, while also throwing light on how cash, care, and data have factored into IWWAGE's work in India.

[LISTEN TO CGD PODCAST](#)

Why does India have such low rates of women in the workforce?

The COVID-19 pandemic caused not only a health emergency in the country, but also led to mass economic distress with the loss of jobs and livelihoods. India already one of the lowest rates of women in the workforce, and the pandemic worsened this situation — it forced women into jobs that paid lower rates than pre-pandemic and it added significantly to their domestic work burden — with schools remaining closed, women were forced to stay at home to care for children. In the April-June 2020 quarter, during the lockdown, the percentage of women in the labour force was only 15.5 per cent. But this problem has persisted for years — despite

increasing educational levels among women and decreasing fertility levels, India continues to have not as many women in the workforce as even our neighbouring countries. What are some of the reasons behind this? How is a country's economy impacted when 50 per cent of its population is left out of economic activity? How can policies be changed in order to encourage more women into the workforce? Sona Mitra, Principal Economist IWWAGE speaks to The Hindu podcast on why despite increasing educational and decreasing fertility levels, India continues to have not as many women in the workforce as even our neighbouring countries.

[LISTEN TO IN FOCUS PODCAST](#)

The Indian women labour force

What do the low women labour force participation rates in India indicate? How has COVID-19 impacted women labour in India? What can the Indian state, society and markets do to correct the gender gap? These are some questions we discuss in this Puliyaabaazi podcast with Dr Ashwini

Deshpande, Professor of Economics and Founding Director of Centre for Economic Data and Analysis at Ashoka University. The podcast addresses the role of intersectionality and how social identity impacts gender inequality in India.

LISTEN TO PULIYABAAZI PODCAST

If you are unable to access any document, please visit our resource section at www.iwwage.org



IWWAGE is an initiative of LEAD at Krea University. LEAD is a part of IFMR Society with strategic oversight from Krea University.

M-6, 2nd Floor, Hauz Khas, New Delhi – 110 016, India

