

GENDER IN FOCUS

April 2022 | Volume 6



Dear readers,

Welcome to the first edition of Gender in Focus in 2022! We hope the New Year brings you good health and happiness, and we get to witness some positive developments in the gender space.

Aligned to the International Women's Day 2022 theme "*Gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow*", we join the community to honour the milestones and progress made on the long road to gender equality, and recommit ourselves to working harder towards this goal. However, we also acknowledge that progress has been slow, uneven and in some cases, many women and girls face newer and more complex challenges. Given this slow and uneven progress, we continue to aspire for change, and we pay tribute to the countless women around the world who are creating an impact.

Keeping in view our commitment to furthering evidence and research to advance women's economic empowerment, *Gender in Focus* presents a teaser of the work that IWWAGE is involved in, to address some of the identified challenges and in capturing best practices. In this issue, we include insights from the field-based study on information flows and the role of technology within Self-Help Groups in Chhattisgarh, and excerpts from a study undertaken to understand the barriers to women's career advancement in the manufacturing sector. In February 2022, we released a report to highlight the trends in women's work and livelihoods that were observed in 2021. Prepared in collaboration with The Quantum Hub (TQH), the report summarises succinctly, the impact that the pandemic has had on Indian women and their lives. In addition, in this issue, we provide snapshots of webinars conducted around the theme of COVID-19 and its impacts on women in different domains, and share new announcements and updates on our latest media coverage.

We hope that you enjoy reading this issue and welcome your comments. You can write to us at: communications@iwwage.org

With best wishes,



Sharon Buteau,
Executive Director, LEAD at Krea University

Women in work: How India fared in 2021

A data story of women's livelihoods and work in the year of COVID-19

Women and girls across the world have been disproportionately affected by subsequent waves of the pandemic and its unintended impact on the economy and their livelihoods. Even before the onset of COVID-19, India's female workforce was largely invisible, underpaid and under-protected even though it constitutes the largest segment of the informal workforce, and remains the worst-hit.

Against this backdrop, IWWAGE and The Quantum Hub, a policy research and communication firm, authored a report drawing from various studies and data sources to look at the key trends and policy developments that contributed to shape and define the lives of women across India in 2021. The report highlights various developments, both policy-focused and programmatic, that defined work for women in India in 2021, while also providing a forward-looking perspective on the future of work for a self-reliant India with a focus on new-age skills, entrepreneurship, and the rise of non-traditional livelihoods.

Two in every five women have been affected by the unnatural development of the dual workload of domestic care work and paid work as a result of the pandemic-induced

According to CMIE data, as of the quarter ending March 2021, women only accounted for 41.8 million of the 399.7 million jobs in India.

lockdowns. A Dalberg study found that during and after the first lockdown, 61% of working men remained employed and 7% lost employment and did not return to work. Comparatively, for women, only 19% remained employed and 47% suffered a permanent job loss during the lockdown, not returning to work even by the end of 2020.

The report also highlights that the status of women in corporate leadership roles is comparatively better in India with 39% of women being part of senior management against the global average of 31%. However, glass ceilings in the corporate sector and the burden of unpaid work continue to affect women from reaching those levels.

Further, the report comments on the condition of women workers in public health (their work hours increased while

remuneration decreased), and the challenges of women entrepreneurs in terms of recovery (around 60% of women business owners felt high levels of stress due to the impact of COVID-19 on their business and high levels of income instability).

The report examines the violence against women in relation to its impact on women's workforce participation and reveals that while the all-India FLFPR saw an 8 percentage point decline, the overall rate of crime against women and girls more than tripled to 57.9% between 2011-12 and 2017-18.

Factors that enable women's participation in the labour force

According to the report, the increasing participation of women in the labour force necessitates the dismantling of structural barriers that restrict their economic mobility and improve their access to assets, finance, rights, entitlements and information.

- Land ownership: NFHS V data suggests that there has been a slight increase in women's land ownership to 43.3% in 2019-21.
- Bank account ownership: As per NFHS V, there has been a rapid increase in bank account ownership and usage from 53% in 2015-16 to 78.6% in 2019-21.
- Education: As per ASER's 2021 (Rural) report, more girls than boys continued to be enrolled in government schools.
- Access to the internet: NFHS V data noted that the percentage of women who have ever used the internet was around 64% compared with 85% of men.
- Mobile phone ownership: According to The Mobile Gender Gap Report 2021, an estimated 67% of women own a mobile phone in India. Of these, 30% are mobile internet users.
- In terms of vaccine administration as of December 2021, the report observes that women make up 48.5% of the total recipients of vaccines as per data from CoWIN.

Future of work

The disruption caused by the pandemic notwithstanding, the report shines a light on the developments in certain industries, for example, the service, e-commerce, and manufacturing industries, which underwent rapid digitisation. The nature of jobs has also evolved rapidly with opportunities in the gig economy and hybrid working models but this is largely restricted to the white-collar segment.

This report also highlights that women are endeavouring to independently upskill themselves in order to enhance their employability and to mitigate the resulting uncertainty. As of January 2021, of the 99.31 lakh candidates who had been trained/oriented under the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) scheme, 41% were women. Moreover, of the total candidates who reported being placed, 52% were women. The report also informs of the various ongoing efforts to encourage women to adopt non-traditional livelihoods (NTLs) by investing in enablers and reducing barriers, including gender norms, that women face when looking for jobs in these sectors.

In the care economy, 47% of women (compared to 43% of men) reported an increase in household chores and 41% of women (compared to 37% of men) reported an increase in unpaid care work.

Existing measures to reduce barriers to women's work and inclusive workplace policies are also explored in the report.

Recommendations

- Investments in the care economy by expanding the frontline health workforce to create 3 million jobs.

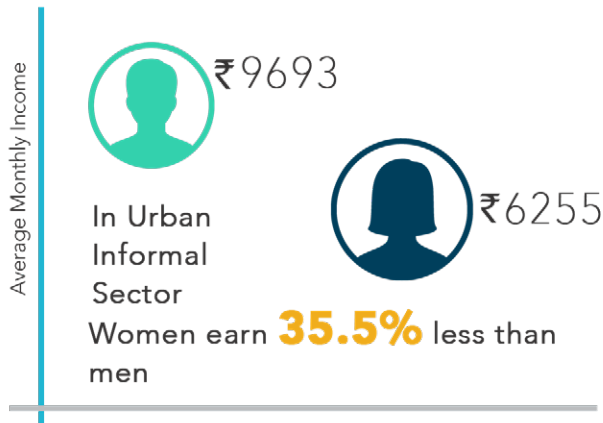
- Expansion of sectors and an increase in the stipends offered to female apprentices under the National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS).
- Expansion of private-sector procurement by incentivising them through tax breaks and subsidies to directly procure from women's enterprises.
- Increase in the mandate for public procurement from women-owned MSMEs
- in Public Procurement Policy (2018) from the current 3%.
- Extension of the cash transfer scheme to supplement household income where women have lost their jobs.
- Creation of gender-equitable workplaces, such as the creation of creches and flexible work policies, in the private sector by incentivising them through tax holidays.

[READ THE REPORT HERE](#)

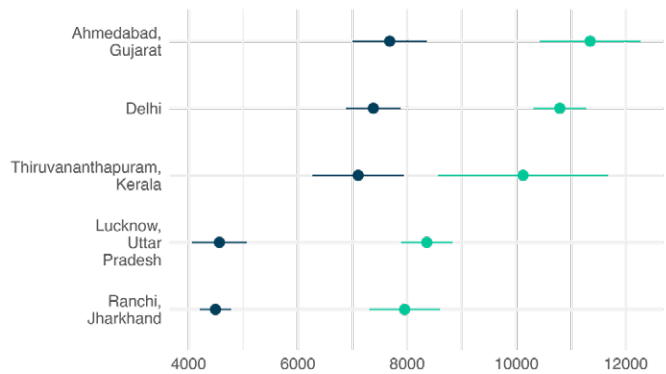


Closing the gap

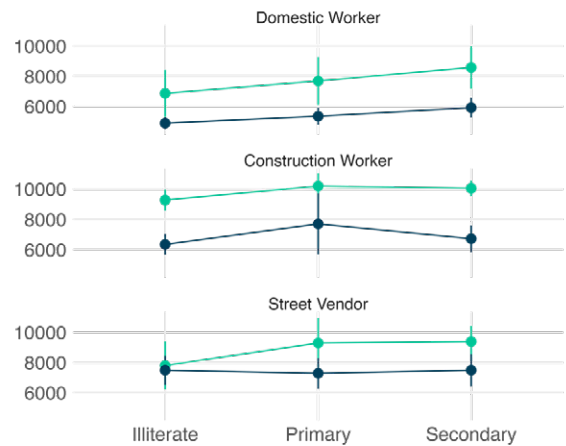
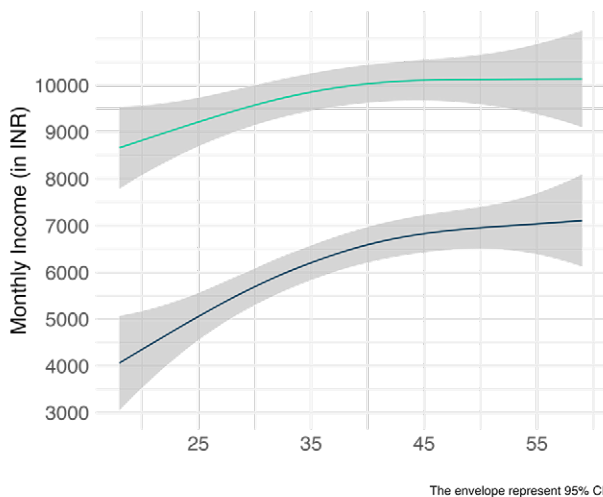
Gender gap in urban informal work*



Women earn less than Men across States



The gap exists across age, across educational attainment levels, and persists in all types of informal work



The gap is also reflected in the difference in vulnerability of male and female led households. Across the first COVID-19 lockdown, households with female urban workers as the primary income earners saw a significantly larger drop in median income than their male counterparts.

* Preliminary findings from the study conducted by SEWA and IWWAGE between October 2020 and February 2021, in five cities - Lucknow (Uttar Pradesh), Ahmedabad (Gujarat), Thiruvananthapuram (Kerala), Ranchi (Jharkhand), and Delhi.



Voices from the field

Understanding the role of technology and how information flows within Self-Help Groups in Chhattisgarh

Exploring the potential for digital technologies to facilitate women's access and participation

The focus on women's economic collectives and the causal impact of the digital training measured as part of our study in Chhattisgarh helps to understand the intra-group dynamics in terms of interactions and information flows among group members, and the role of group leaders. In addition to this, it is useful to understand the potential of digital technologies in facilitating women's access and participation in productive activities: their role in encouraging the acquisition of new knowledge, entrepreneurial initiatives, and potentially improve their bargaining power.

IWWAGE has collaborated with the Inclusion Economics India Centre at Krea University to leverage a digital business training intervention administered to women (digital business training) who are part of Self-Help Groups.

The training includes improvements in business skills and guides the participants on the adoption and diffusion of digital technologies (primarily smartphones) for entrepreneurial pursuits and, ultimately, women's empowerment.

From August 2019 till February 2021, the research team conducted several in-field and phone-based surveys with nearly 200 SHGs in the district of Mahasamund in Chhattisgarh, which was identified as the study location in collaboration with Chhattisgarh State Rural Livelihoods Mission "Bihan" (CGSRLM). The primary objective of this preparatory work was to:

1. Assess our study sample's willingness to learn skills: We found that women are very interested in learning business skills and taking up new activities to run a business. The need to reduce their reliance on single sources of income, like agriculture, was commonly expressed across the board, with every SHG woman showing enthusiasm to learn new business skills from production, marketing to sales.
2. Identify a product that sells: We found soap bars to be an easy commodity to produce and sell. The demand for soap never dwindled, and only increased after the COVID-19 pandemic leading to an increased demand for the product.
3. Map social and digital connections: Data from three waves of phone-based remote surveys revealed that of the 133 SHG women, 77% reported no difficulty in staying in touch despite a halt on SHG meetings in the pandemic-induced lockdowns of 2020. The majority of them stayed in touch through in-person interactions, followed by phone calls and a small number through WhatsApp chat.

Our study used a sample of 165 villages across the three selected blocks, comprising 1700 SHG women in 234 target groups in the study villages. We formed 110 small (5-member groups), 69 medium (8 members), and 55 large (12 members) target groups.

Intervention design and digital technology

The preparatory work was followed by designing the intervention for the main RCT. This was based on extensive piloting which involved lessons on how to produce soap in a cost-effective and efficient manner and how to provide the training in an innovative and digitally engaging way. Due to restricted access to smartphones and digital illiteracy in the study villages, we designed an

intervention which included both digital and analogue tools to provide the business training.

Our field scoping efforts revealed that SHG women lack awareness about marketing strategies due to constrained access to information when it comes to selling or marketing a product. This led us to develop two animated smartphone-based digital videos on soap making and marketing in the local dialect with the help of an external vendor.

As part of our intervention design, the two digital tools were shared with our study sample via Bluetooth on smartphones. Through this, we were able to showcase and encourage them to utilise their smartphones in learning new skills hence creating a positive use case for the phones they own or can access within the household.

Survey tools and implementation monitoring

One key objective of this study was to assess the extent of social interactions among training participants and to relate them to individual and group productivity. We anticipate two types of social interactions to take place as the result of the business training:

- i. digital interactions to exchange information and ideas following the business training (e.g., ideas on production techniques, best raw materials to be used, etc.); and
- ii. in-person interactions to produce the soap bars.

We are also measuring training participants' in-person interactions by innovatively employing sensors¹ of social proximity for roughly 36 target groups in our sample of 234 target groups. These sensors rely on radio-frequency identification (RFID) technology to capture information on physical distance among individuals to assess how close group members are with each other (a proxy for one-to-one interactions), and how often they meet or interact. Should the measurements gathered through these sensors look promising, these devices will be used to achieve further indicators of social connectedness that are not affected by the recall bias in surveys we conduct. This, in turn, will be used to assess whether groups with a higher degree of social-connectedness are also more productive.

¹ Over the past few months, we have held conversations with the Institute for Scientific Interchange (ISI) Global Science Foundation (<https://www.isi.it/en/home>), who design and produce these sensors, and are assisting us with piloting them in our context.

The gendered effects of climate change: Production shocks and labour response in agriculture

Exacerbating the gender gaps in the labour market already constrained by social factors

Climate change has not only resulted in a rise in average temperatures, it has also increased the incidence and severity of extreme weather events, such as droughts and floods. Such events are predicted to rise further if climate change continues unabated. However, climate change can potentially exacerbate extant gender differences in labour market outcomes when women's access to off-farm work opportunities are constrained by social factors.

The paper analyses the role of labour markets in mitigating the impact of adverse agricultural production shocks due to droughts. Specifically, the impact of deficient rainfall on an individuals' overall labour force participation, employment on the farm and diversification towards the non-farm sector on both the extensive and intensive margins is examined.

In a context where men are often better placed to take advantage of available coping mechanisms, we assess these labour responses by gender. Our results indicate that the fall in labour force participation in the event of a drought is significantly larger for women relative to men. Women are 7.1% less likely to be employed than men but 82.5% more likely to seek work in a drought year. On the intensive margin, women witness a greater reduction in days of employment in comparison to men by 11%. At the same time, they spend 15.4%

more days seeking work relative to men when faced with a drought shock.

Moreover, while men increase days spent on non-farm work by 12.4% during drought years, there is no significant impact on women's engagement in the non-farm sector. Consequently, women's non-farm workdays relative to men's fall by 10.9% in drought years. Hence, while men diversify to non-

farm sector jobs to cope with droughts, women do not, even as they seek work and their real farm wage earnings (conditional on being employed on the farm) fall by 29%. We find that the lack of substitution towards the non-farm sector in response to a drought by women is due to their restricted mobility.

Not surprisingly, our analysis shows that women who are younger, married and with young children are not only less likely to substitute their

labour to the non-farm sector, they are also less likely to migrate relative to men with the same characteristics.

In the context of developing countries where women are generally less mobile and less likely to search widely for work (Heath & Mobarak, 2015; Andrabi et al., 2013), men may be better placed to cope with productivity shocks in agriculture and diversify into sectors less subject to weather shocks. But evidence on gender differences in labour response for smoothing the risk emanating

Among all economic sectors, agriculture is likely to face the greatest brunt of increasing rainfall uncertainty since more than 75% of the world's cropped area is rain-fed, a huge concern in developing countries where agricultural systems are managed by some of the poorest communities.

from climate shocks is almost absent (with a few exceptions). Therefore, while the existing literature focuses on how households diversify their income sources when farm productivity shrinks, we focus on the gender differences in individual decisions when struck by an adverse productivity shock.

Second, and relatedly, unlike the aggregate geographical data used in previous studies, we underline the potential gender-differentiated impact of climatic shocks, such as droughts utilizing novel individual-level panel data over eight agro-climatic zones collected on a monthly frequency. This helps us to account for seasonal impacts that are relevant for the agricultural sector.

Further, our analysis uncovers the underlying mechanisms that can explain the lower likelihood of women moving towards less risky, non-farm sector jobs, relative to men through detailed data on the nature of

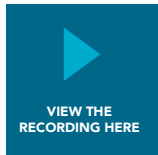
Our findings can be explained by social costs emanating from rigid gender norms that place a higher burden on women as well as on women's sexual 'purity' that inhibit their access to alternative sources of employment beyond their immediate vicinity.

employment, place of work and migration. Our data allow us to investigate coping mechanisms from farm income losses through engagement in migrant work, and the extent to which men and women are able to access non-farm sources of employment. Our research, thus, speaks to the literature on migration by highlighting the role of seasonal migration as a coping mechanism and potentially addresses the long-term impact of climate change on gender equality.

We also find suggestive evidence that public employment programmes that provide work close to home, such as the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) in India, not only mitigate production risks in agriculture in the short-run but also stem gender disparities in employment opportunities. Our findings can be explained by social costs emanating from gender norms that constrain women's access to non-farm work opportunities.

[READ THE PAPER HERE](#)





Gender responsive economic recovery and bouncing back better

As India continues to gain momentum in its economic recovery and resumes business activities, particularly after the impact of the second wave, a just and equitable economic recovery plan is needed—one that is also gender-responsive. Governments and organisations across the globe are rethinking existing systems and ways of working in order to build forward better by adopting sustainable and transformative policies that are gender-just. These measures include prioritising investments in the care economy; generating equitable jobs and livelihoods; and accelerating systemic changes to reduce environmental degradation and catalyse a gender-equitable recovery.

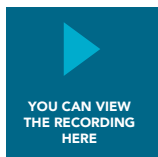
More women lost jobs in India during the pandemic than men. A UN report has quantified the post-pandemic unemployment among women at 47% and men at 7%. It has affected the women workforce participation, particularly in the rural areas and urban slums.

Women have been battling traditional mindsets and for long have been considered free domestic workers in their homes. The economic deprivation brought on by the pandemic has forced a relook at policies and enablers for women, who make up half our productive human resource. How can we encourage women back into the workforce, remove the gap year bias and reintegrate them with the mainstream? How do we upskill them and harness their established strengths?

IWWAGE and *Indian Express* came together for the first *Thinc Gender* webinar to discuss suggestions for a macroeconomic recovery for India in a COVID and post-COVID context with a specific focus on putting women and girls at the centre of the economic recovery. The event opened with a keynote address by Rajiv Chandrashekhar, Minister of State for Electronics & Information Technology (IT), and Skill Development & Entrepreneurship. The panellists included Manish Sabharwal from TeamLease, Renana Jhabvala from SEWA and Avani Kapur from CPR. The closing remarks were provided by Sona Mitra, Principal Economist, IWWAGE.

Rajiv Chandrashekhar, Minister of State for Electronics & Information Technology (IT), stressed on the need of digitisation and reskilling as two important ways to mainstream women in the workforce. Government of India's New Education Policy, skill programmes and DESH stack portal by MSDE has created new avenues in digital space, which is even more relevant in the COVID-19 context. Renana Jhabvala pointed out the issue of invisibility of women in official numbers, which ends up impacting governmental support. Citing the example of women farmers, she mentioned that women who work on family farm are not counted as farmers, resulting in under-represented figures. Talking about the new work avenues, Manish Sabharwal states that work from home is opening up new opportunities for women, but the issue remains not with regard to job creation but more about decent wages and formalisation of labour. Avni Kapur, while talking about the need of cash transfers to support recovery after the onset of pandemic, said that a universal and targeted system of cash transfer is needed to support the front line workers during the pandemic.

[READ THE COVERAGE HERE](#)



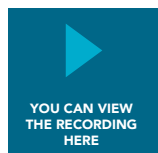
What is keeping women from going to work? Understanding violence and female labour supply

The 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence is an annual international campaign that kicks off on 25th November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and continues until 10th December, Human Rights Day. In this context, IWWAGE hosted a webinar on how safety concerns of women outside the home in India are likely to play an important role in their participation in economic activities.

In India, the labour force participation rate of women remained stagnant for almost two decades. Since then, even though the economy has more than doubled in size, the overall number of women in jobs has declined by ten million. Recent estimates suggest that women in India are less likely to be employed than in other G20 countries, next only to Saudi Arabia. Research has well established that with the expansion of women's economic opportunities and increased participation of women in the labour market, women as well as their households, society as a whole, and economies prosper. The IMF estimates that gender parity in the workforce could increase India's GDP by as much as 27%.

Women's labour force participation rate can be attributed to multiple factors like availability of childcare, occupational segregations, sociocultural barriers, social identities, concerns around safety and mobility, and many other reasons. Violence against women and girls (VAWG) is one of the most widespread, and devastating human rights violations that are mostly under-reported due to the stigma and shame surrounding it. Fear of public spaces following media coverage of sexual assaults can deter women from venturing out for work as it creates stress and anxiety, and thus acts as a barrier to their equal participation in and contribution to society. While the union and state governments have announced measures to prevent violence against women and girls, stronger mechanisms and policy measures are needed to actively prevent, respond and take remedial actions. Evidence suggests that violence due to several household-level stressors, such as loss of income, unemployment, and food shortage, may lead to long-term harmful impacts that will further perpetuate barriers to women's economic empowerment in India and inhibit their ability to participate actively in the labour force.

In this webinar, [IWWAGE released a working paper](#) on the rising crime rate and declining female labour force participation rate in India. The paper presents a state-level analysis of how the lack of safety, due to the increasing rate of crime against women, acts as a barrier to work for women and girls, and can be associated with the sharp decline in female labour force participation rate. The panellists included; Dr. Amita Pitre, Lead Specialist, Gender Justice with Oxfam India, Dr. Kalpana Viswanath, co-founder and CEO of Safetipin, Neelanjana Gupta, researcher at IWWAGE, Poonam Kathuria, Director SWATI, Prof. Ritu Dewan, Vice President of the Indian Society of Labour Economics, Vice President of the Indian Society of Agricultural Economics, Visiting Professor at the Institute of Human Development, Co-Founder-Co-convenor of the Feminist Policy Collective, and Swarna Rajagopalan, founding trustee of [The Prajnya Trust](#). The panel addressed several dimensions linked to gender-based violence and the impact that it can have on labour supply and economic productivity in the short and long-term.



Gender Samvaad: Promotion of household-level food and nutrition security through women's collectives

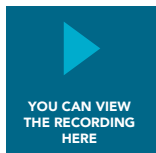
The Department of Rural Development, Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD), Government of India celebrated its Iconic Week under Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav from 7th – 13th March 2022 during the week of International Women's Day. The Iconic Week's theme to celebrate the contribution of rural women in India was '**Naye Bharat ki Naari**' with the official hashtag **#NayeBharatkiNaari**.

Gender Samvaad was one of the celebration event as part of this iconic week. Gender Samvaad is a national virtual platform of DAY-NRLM used to generate greater awareness on DAY-NRLM's interventions across the country. It is also an opportunity to share and learn best practices amongst the States Rural Livelihoods Missions and hear voices from SRLM cadres and SHG women. Two such events have been organised in April 2021 and July 2021. This third event in the series was held on 11 March 2022 on issues around food & nutrition security and initiatives undertaken by the State Rural Livelihoods Missions and SHG members. Over 3000 State Mission staff and Self-Help Group (SHG) members logged in from 34 states to attend this third edition of 'Gender Samvaad'

The objectives of the event were:

1. To inform participants about the benefits of nutrition-sensitive agriculture and nutrition garden in supplementing availability of diverse food groups at household level,
2. To reinforce the significance of gender sensitive approaches while conveying nutrition messages to promote equity among men and women in consumption of food at home,
3. Experience sharing between SRLMs on various learnings and challenges faced during implementation.

The event started with the Joint Secretary MoRD, Smt. Nita Kejrewal welcoming all the dignitaries from Niti Aayog, MoWCD, and National Commission for Women, all the participating SRLMs, the CEO's, staff and cadre from states and all other partners attending the event. Shri Nagendra Nath Sinha, Secretary, MoRD addressed the participants and highlighted the potential of women collectives to support behaviour change and access to services. Dr Vinod Kumar Paul, Member, NITI Aayog, also attended the event and shared his thoughts on the ways in which SHGs can work with specific target groups across the life cycle for better health and nutrition status. Smt. Meeta Rajivlochan, Member Secretary, National Commission for Women touched on the very important areas of the rights and entitlements of women with regard to nutrition and health and the role of Government institutions in ensuring women's food security. Shri Dhrijesh Tiwari, Statistical Advisor, Ministry of Women and Child Development spoke about the various initiatives undertaken by the Ministry for women and child nutrition. He focussed on Anganwadi services, Poshan Abhiyaan, Scheme for Adolescent Girls and PMMVY, touching on the components and objectives of each. To share some evidence on role of women collectives in facilitating household food security, Dr. Kalyani Raghunathan from IFPRI shared learnings from two impact evaluations in rural India - The JEEViKA-Multisectoral Convergence Pilot in Bihar and The Nutrition Intensification model implemented by NGO PRADAN in four states. Event also brought voices from the field and representation from SRLMs, Bihar, Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra. The event enabled National and State Rural Livelihoods Missions (SRLM) to listen to voices from SHG women and for SRLMs to share and learn from best practices. The event was streamed live at YouTube and in addition to the 3000 direct participants; there have been about 1600 views on you tube.



Hybrid and remote work models and women's participation in the economy

COVID-19 has fundamentally altered the nature of work across the world. A July 2020 [McKinsey study](#) found that female job loss rates due to COVID-19 have been about 1.8 times higher than male job loss rates globally. Meanwhile, an [ILO report](#) from July 2021 forecasted that by the end of the year, there would be 13 million fewer women at work globally, while men's employment will begin to recover to 2019 levels.

Despite this grim outlook, working models are evolving, and there are reports of new opportunities emerging. In India, owing to preventative lockdowns, remote and hybrid work opportunities have increased, with a recent [NASSCOM survey](#) reporting that around 70% of organisations are looking at hybrid work models even beyond the pandemic.

To know more about this concerning fall in women's participation in the economy and to understand what policy measures and solutions can be used to make emerging modes of remote and hybrid working models work for women, IWWAGE and Zoom, along with *HerStory*, hosted a learning roundtable discussion on the topic 'Hybrid & Remote Work Models and Women's Participation in the Economy'.

The panel comprised Rituparna Chakraborty, Co-founder and EVP at TeamLease Services Ltd; Sona Mitra, Principal Economist, IWWAGE; Angela D'Souza, Program Manager, ITI Ecosystems and Youth Programs at Quest Alliance; Salonie Muralidhara Hiriyur, Senior Coordinator at SEWA Cooperative Federation; and Iravati Damle, Director, Government Affairs at Zoom Video Communications, Inc. The panellists spoke about the cross-sectoral, structural constraints women entering the workforce face today and how hybrid working models could provide a solution to alleviate these barriers.

COVERAGE BY YOUR STORY



National workshop on developing immersion sites and strengthening institutional mechanisms for gender integration

With the renewed focus on creating institutional mechanism for women's collectives to claim rights and entitlements and strengthen women's identity as citizens, a three-day National Workshop was organised by DAY NRLM with support from IWWAGE on "Strengthening Institutional Mechanism and Development of immersion sites for Gender integration". Kudumbashree organised the event at Thrissur district in Kerala from 15th to 17th March 2022.

The workshop showcased different gender transformative models piloted/ adopted in 4 states - Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha and Madhya Pradesh along with Kudumbashree's institutional architecture for cross-learning. These models

showcase the cycle of interventions necessary to build these spaces for women to not only act as a grievance redressal mechanism but also to ensure that women's differential needs and priorities get recognised in development planning.

Field visit was planned with delegates on the second day in Thrissur district. The different institutional models visited include Gender Resource Centers, Snehitha, and Gender help desk to learn about gender initiatives being implemented by Kudumbashree. On the third day, group discussions and presentations were organised based on the field interactions and learnings. States presented plans for the way forward post the National Workshop. All the states presented their plan for immersion sites and strategies for gender initiatives and integration.

The workshop was inaugurated by Ms. Nita Kejrewal, Joint Secretary, DAY NRLM, MoRD, and was also attended by Smt. P.I. Sreevidya I.A.S. Executive Director, Kudumbashree, Shri. S.M Vijayanand, Former Chief Secretary of Kerala and over 70 delegates from 19 states and three Union Territories. Rest of the States and UTs participated virtually.



Breaking the glass-ceiling for women in manufacturing sector

Understanding the barriers to women's career advancement in the manufacturing sector

Historically women have formed much of the labour force in large garment manufacturing units in India. The docility of women, their lack of resistance to being laid off, smaller probability of becoming members of a labour union or participating in strikes make them the preferred choice for the labour force.

Liberalisation in the 1980s further expanded women's participation in the organised formal manufacturing sector, although there was no significant impact on their representation in managerial roles.

However, these studies suffer from sample size issues and ignore the demand-side perspective.

The purpose of this study was to examine the reasons for the under-representation of women at entry-level managerial positions and how they can break this glass ceiling. The focus was on career advancement, not only from the point of view of inequalities or discrimination in the job market, but also because as developing economies undergo structural changes, women will have to be hired for managerial roles in garment factories as men move away to more lucrative sectors.

The under-representation of women in managerial roles in the manufacturing sector is often explained as a consequence of supply-side constraints or outside labour market discrimination.

It is worth thinking about the fact that 10–20% of the male workforce occupies 90% of the managerial positions in garment manufacturing units in developing countries.

(Naeem and Woodruff (2014))

Fig 1: Intermediate managers' opinions regarding skewed gender distribution at the supervisory level

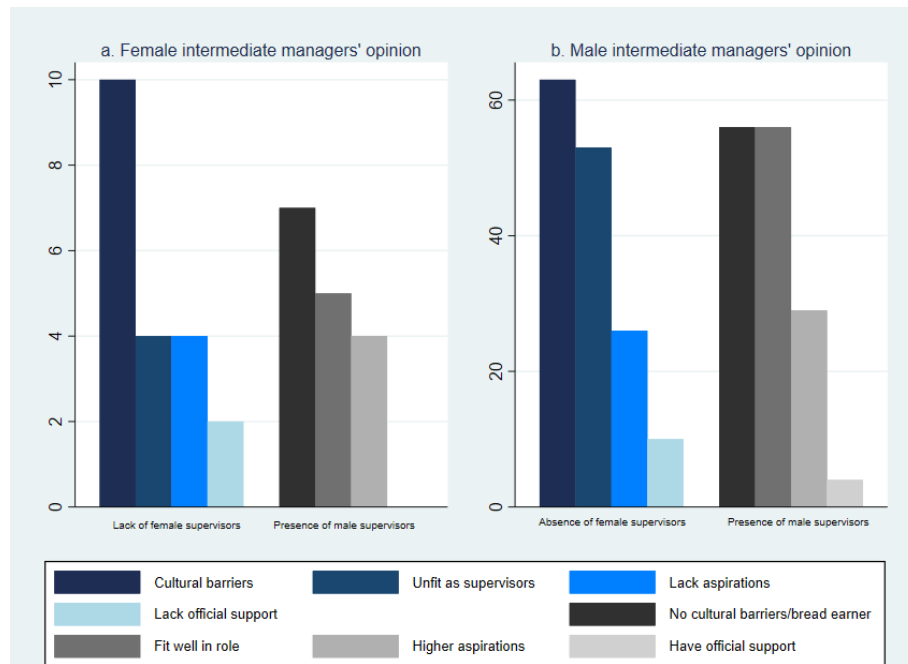


Figure 1 summarises intermediate managers' opinions on skewed gender representation at the supervisory levels, often denoting that cultural barriers like mobility restrictions and household responsibilities may shape women's aspirations or impede them from staying late at factories; thus making them unfit as a choice for supervisory roles.

On the other hand, men do not face such barriers despite social pressure to be the breadwinner. This may have led to a better investment in their education and health since childhood, leading them to have higher aspirations. Indeed, some studies have termed these socio-economic factors as discrimination outside the labour market to explain unequal outcomes. (Chakravarty, 2004)

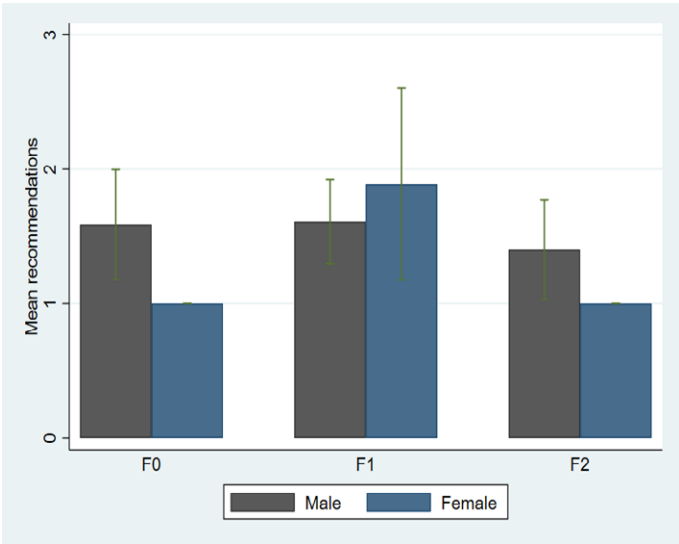
Most of the reasons in Figure 1 are related to the supply-side constraints. However, training programmes aimed at overcoming supply-side constraints have failed to increase female representation at the managerial level. An extensive experimental study of Bangladesh garment

factories by Naeem and Woodruff (2014) found that female trainees (for supervisory roles) were half as likely as men to be hired as supervisors despite doing better in training skill tests and staying longer at factories.

For a moment, consider the demand-side perspective, i.e., why/how firms overwhelmingly hire women for blue-collar levels and men for supervisory positions. Historically, the lower cost of hiring women made them the preferred choice for the workforce, and the social dominance of men of exerting pressure and disciplining workers made men the preferred choice for monitoring positions (Chakravarty, 2014). Although men are also hired at lower-skilled jobs, they are more likely to be promoted to higher ranks in a shorter time frame. It is a well-known fact that promotions and recruitments to these managerial positions occur through in-house referral programmes, where men are likely to have persistent advantages, as suggested by workplace related literature.

As the first of its kind, this study attempts to diagnose if existing workplace ties are instrumental for career mobility in a blue-collar job setting and its implications for women's career advancement in developing countries.

Fig 2: Number of times a worker got recommendation as first choice for a supervisory promotion



Note: 76% (i.e., 78/102) of intermediate managers gave referrals for supervisory roles. Of the recommended workers (without gender prompting), 36% were females, 64% were males.

F0 = Faridabad factory with no female intermediate managers

F1= Faridabad factory with 15% female intermediate managers

F2 = Bangalore factory with 12.5% female intermediate managers.

Source: Factory Supervisors’ Survey, September 2020-December 2020.

Figure 2 shows that women are less likely to be referred. Men are more likely to be the first choice for supervisory roles and receive referrals from multiple intermediate managers.

The scope of this study extends beyond garment manufacturing or India as many

export-oriented industries (sectors) in developing countries employ women at low-paying and low-skilled jobs with little or no avenues for career growth. The study offers insights into workplace settings with a history of dominance of a particular group at positions of power and the prevalence of informal channels for accessing information.



Technical assistance to DAY-NRLM for gender integration

Gender integration for increased gender-responsiveness in planning, implementation and monitoring

Gender integration has been a focus for DAY-NRLM since 2016. SWAYAM, the technical partnership between DAY-NRLM and IWWAGE, is geared towards developing approaches to strengthen the system for increased gender-responsiveness in planning, budgeting, implementation and monitoring. The advisory for gender integration in DAY-NRLM released by the Ministry of Rural Development on 9 December 2021, is addressed to the SRLMs, and outlines a two-pronged approach for promoting gender integration within the Mission –

(a) within its multiple verticals (i.e., Institution Building/Capacity Building, Social Inclusion, Financial Inclusion, Livelihoods (Farm and Non-farm), Human Resources, convergence and partnerships and FNHW); and

(b) developing institutional mechanisms and interventions on issues such as prevention of gender-based violence, access to rights and entitlements, control over assets, prevention of early marriages, and retention of children in schools.

In addition, the advisory contains a template for SRLMs to develop context-relevant Gender Operational Strategies (GOS). The template enables states and UTs to identify key areas for interventions by analyzing existing ground realities and background research. The GOS which is for a period of three years is a critical document for the state/UTs to focus on thematic areas that continue to impact

the lives of the women and girls in living a just and equitable life. The template details steps, processes and strategies as references for SRLMs and serves as a strategy for gender integration within their Missions, as well as at the community-level.

On 10th February 2022, IWWAGE, in partnership with DAY-NRLM, conducted a virtual consultation and learning workshop with Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) and different implementation partners working on different verticals of DAY-NRLM, to ideate and develop strategies for mainstreaming gender across India in the context of the above Advisory. The objective of the workshop was to assist relevant stakeholders understand DAY-NRLM's advisory on gender integration and to deliberate on different approaches, strategies and measurement indicators across the various verticals of NRLM.

The advisory serves as a detailed guide for gender integration strategies within the various verticals of the DAY-NRLM and provides indicators to monitor the progress of the initiatives undertaken to achieve the said goals.

The workshop was attended by participants from relevant verticals of BMGF as well as a multitude of implementation partners, such as 3ie, C3, PRADAN, PCI, MicroSave, TRIF, etc. After the NMMU and IWWAGE teams presented the approaches for gender integration outlined in the advisory in detail, the gathering was divided into break rooms around four areas: a. institution building and social inclusion; b. financial inclusion; c. livelihoods; and d. MIS and MLE, to brainstorm on the following:

- i. current challenges for gender integration,
 - ii. current strategies and interventions for gender integration, and
 - iii. future approaches for gender integration.
- Post the brainstorming session, each group

presented the current challenges and interventions as well as possible strategies for gender integration within each focus area. The learnings from the workshop are being developed into a vertical-wise strategy note to be shared with DAY-NRLM to further strengthen their gender integration strategy.





A systematic measure of gender norms across South Asia: Analysis and measurement tool

The lack of consistent measurement of gender and other social norms limits the ability of researchers and policy stakeholders to compare estimates on the impact of international development interventions on gender norms. This gap jeopardizes the ability of policymakers to apply lessons learned in programming and policies to improve female labour force participation (FLFP) and the effectiveness of other programmes that require a strong understanding of gender norms to achieve effective programming.

To address this, IWWAGE, in partnership with American Institute of Research (AIR) is collaborating to implement a research program on “A Systematic Measure of Gender Norms Across South Asia: Analysis and Measurement Tool”. Under this programme, IWWAGE and AIR will develop and pilot a gender and social norms instrument that will capture (a) the different dimensions of social norms; (b) their interaction with proximal social norms; and (c) other determinants of observed behaviours in the South Asian context.



Indian Express partnership

More women lost jobs in India during the pandemic than men. A UN report has quantified the post-pandemic joblessness among women at 47% and men at 7%. This has affected the women in the workforce, particularly in the rural areas and urban slums. To bring to the forefront the issues relating to gender which has been exacerbated at the onset of the pandemic, IWWAGE and Indian Express have come together for the first Thinc Gender webinar series.

This series of webinars will include solutions-oriented discussions and showcase policy enablers for governance through dialogues between some of the brightest minds across academia, industry, civil society

and, of course, the government. The first edition of the webinar series, titled ‘Gender-responsive economic recovery and bouncing back better’ was held on 16th February 2022, featured a keynote address by Rajeesh Chandrasekhar, Union Minister for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship and Minister of State in the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.

The next two webinars will focus on addressing the future of work for women, looking at employment opportunities in new sectors, self-employment, entrepreneurship and non-traditional livelihoods, and on women empowerment collectives.

Podcast

IndiaSpend partnership

IWWAGE and IndiaSpend have come together for a phase II partnership to examine and analyse issues around women's empowerment and strengthen the narrative that will encourage and allow for equal participation of women in economic activity. IndiaSpend will be developing evidence based and data driven stories to spot trends that uncover the lives of real people, simplifying complex issues and bring to the fore the facts behind issues of national and public interest.

This partnership was kickstarted with the launch of a podcast series called Mind the

Gender Gap, on 8 March, International Women's Day. The series of six episodes will be conversations with key sector experts and policymakers examining the barriers to women's employment and solutions and recommendations to get more women into workforce and help bounce back better. In the first episode, Sharon Buteau, Executive Director, LEAD at Krea University helped unpack women's workforce participation, and talked about the gendered impact of the pandemic. The series is hosted by Sunaina Kumar.

[LISTEN TO THE PODCAST HERE](#)

Resources

Policy experts disappointed by budget's silence on women and marginalised sections

This year's Union Budget will not be known for its schemes for women or marginalised sections. It has ignored the existing lacunae in the system and further reduced expenditure in this regard, said leading economic policy experts at an online panel discussion organised by the Department of Women's Studies, Bharathidasan University. The gender budget this year has further shrunk with its share in the expenditure declining from 4.4% to 4.3% for financial year 2023.

Covering the panel discussion titled *Gender, the Marginalised and Union Budget 2022-2023*, **The Hindu** reported the academics expressing their disappointment at the shrinking of investment in crucial areas, such as employment generation and education, and brings out expert perspectives on Union Budget 2022. Experts shared their thoughts on how special measures for women are missing from GOI's economic responses to the pandemic in India at a time when women require the policy support the most.

[COVERAGE BY THE HINDU](#)

Unpaid care need to be addressed in Union Budget 2022

The Union Budget 2022 is of distinct importance due to the economic slowdown owing to the pandemic, and as the countdown started there were expectations from all sections. To tackle the negative impact of the pandemic, the Government of India (GOI) is currently emphasising on economic recovery, but the recovery plan itself lacks a gender lens. The pandemic, which led to the economic slowdown exposed the pre-existing fault-lines and hit some sections harder than others. The existing body of evidence suggests that it further worsened the existing inequalities for women, disproportionately affected women's

economic and productive lives, increased the burden of unpaid care, and left them exposed to acute adversities with inadequate financial security.

In this situation, it is high time that economic policies address the unequal division of labour in unpaid care responsibilities. The Union Budget 2022 needs to have gone beyond mere allocations to women and should have addressed issues like unpaid care that have been worsened by the pandemic. In this context, **Business World** outlines proposals to ensure that women do not get left behind and like others, their expectations are met, too.

COVERAGE BY BUSINESS WORLD

India must put women and girls at the centre of its economic recovery plans

A recent report by *The Quantum Hub* (TQH) and the Initiative for What Works to Advance Women and Girls in the Economy (IWWAGE) at LEAD, has identified solutions and suggestions for a gender-responsive, inclusive, and a just economic recovery for India in the COVID-19 context. At a crucial time when women in the labour force, concentrated in the informal sector, suffered heavy livelihood and income losses, and were forced to drop out of the labour market, primarily due to their increased unpaid domestic care responsibilities, the paper analyses the state of gender budgeting in India, particular allocations made towards

women and girls in the Union Budget 2021-22.

The paper states that India still spends only a small fraction of its budget on programs targeting nearly half its population, with allocations remaining below 6% of the total expenditure since India adopted the practice of gender budgeting in 2005. **Your Story** discusses the severe and disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdowns on vulnerable and marginal groups, specifically girls and women, and emphasises the need for a just and equitable economic recovery plan that is also gender-responsive.

COVERAGE BY YOUR STORY

States with higher crime rates likely to have lower female labour force participation

The year 2021 continued to be a year of response, recovery and resilience. Even as recovery seemed to be on the horizon, a brutal second wave of COVID-19 brought about a new set of challenges. Now as India is recovering from the aftermath of Omicron, the country needs a recovery that is gender-responsive and equitable. In order to achieve this, we need social safety nets that are better designed and inclusive; reduce the gendered divide in access to technology and design hybrid working solutions; reduce and redistribute care work and invest in strengthening the care economy; while ensuring effective and scalable policies and solutions by collecting robust, sex disaggregated data. The IWWAGE report

stitches together and maps the efforts that are underway to bring women back to work and prepare women and girls for the future of work.

The Economic Times reported that the IWWAGE-TQH report looks at how women have fared in terms of employment and work across various sectors compared to men, and what the future of work could hold for women. The report highlights the different developments, both policy-focused and programmatic, that have defined work for women in India in 2021, while also providing a forward-looking perspective on the future of work for a self-reliant India with a focus on new-age skills, entrepreneurship, and the rise of non-traditional livelihoods.

COVERAGE BY THE ECONOMIC TIMES

Budget must include gender-equitable measures

To enable a gender-responsive economic recovery, the government can consider incentivising the private sector to undertake gender-equitable measures at workplaces in Budget 2022, according to a research paper by (TQH) and IWWAGE at LEAD. In line with the observations from the first year of the pandemic, women and girls were impacted disproportionately — with structural barriers to equality adding an additional layer of disadvantage to the health crisis. Governments and organisations across the globe are rethinking existing systems and ways of working in order to build

forward better by adopting sustainable and transformative policies that are gender-just.

Corporations can be offered tax holidays or other incentives if they have undertaken measures such as the provision of onsite childcare, flexible work schedules, etc., says the report. **New Indian Express** observes that women were more likely to lose jobs and not return to work in the pandemic year of 2020, and why the central and/or state governments could consider gender responsive measures to ensure a just and equitable recovery that is based on a rights based model.

COVERAGE BY THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

How do you pave the way for women's participation in the era of hybrid & remote work?

Women accounted for 23% of job losses between March 2020 and March 2021 despite making up only 10% of the total available jobs, according to the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE). Over the years, the female labour force participation rate (FLFPR) in India has shown a steady decline with the pandemic further compounding the problem. However, one of the major effects of the pandemic has been a rise in remote and hybrid working models, which have gained mass acceptance as workplaces and businesses went online over the course of the pandemic. As economies across the globe prepare for the future of work and adjust to the new normal, it is important to

bring in a diversity lens to the dialogue to foster workplace equity and inclusion, while informing the agenda to advance women's economic empowerment.

To help shape policies for an inclusive future of work, IWWAGE and Zoom held a roundtable themed *Hybrid & Remote Work Models and Women's Participation in the Economy* on 20 December 2021. **Her Story** shares learnings from the field and perspectives from speakers to understand the impact remote work has had on women engaged in diverse sectors and forms of employment, and how we can enable flexible working solutions for them.

COVERAGE BY HER STORY

Crimes against women keep them out of the job market

India's female labour force participation rate (FLFPR) is a puzzling feature of our economy. Though output more than doubled and the number of working-age women grew by a quarter over the last two decades, the number of women in jobs declined by 10 million. Global indices and gender empowerment measures also paint a dismal picture. The 2021 Global Gender Gap Index revealed that India ranks 140th of 156 countries, compared to its 98th position in 2006. India's FLFPR (24.5% in 2018-19) has been declining and is well below the global average of 45%. So what is keeping women away from the labour market and can we address these constraints?

The scenarios of women in education and employment over the past two decades are paradoxical. As more women pursue higher education, there are expectations that they will enter the job market. However, this is a contradiction and merits attention and greater analysis. Our declining FLFPR, which fell from 31.2% in 2011-12 to 24.5% in 2018-19, can be attributed to restrictive gender and social norms. **Mint** covers the IWWAGE research to understand why lack of safety affects the participation of women in the labour market, and suggests a framework that can be a critical element in framing policies and interventions to stop crimes against women and girls.

COVERAGE BY MINT

COVERAGE BY HINDUSTAN TIMES

Pandemic put more pressure on Indian women already at the margins

While women around the world have been hit harder by job losses than have men during the pandemic, the impact on women in India has been particularly severe. Even before the pandemic, women made up only about 20% of India's labour force – far below the global average and lower than is the case in such South Asian countries as Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. Many of them work in India's vast informal sector. Now there are fears that this space will shrink further, particularly for women from poorer households. A report by the Centre of Sustainable Employment at Azim Premji University this year mentioned that more women and younger workers lost jobs during the stringent lockdown in 2021,

and that even after jobs recovered, fewer women were able to return to the workforce. While women are picking up work again, many have had to turn to lower-paid and less secure employment. From a little over 30% in 2011, their share in the workforce fell to about 20% in 2019.

VOA News looks at the wake-up call of shrinking opportunities for women and suggests policy interventions to spur the expansion of labour-intensive sectors such as garment manufacturing, where women have more opportunities to consolidate not just the economic but also the social position of women in a country where they have struggled to break free of patriarchal norms.

COVERAGE BY THE VOA NEWS

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.

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