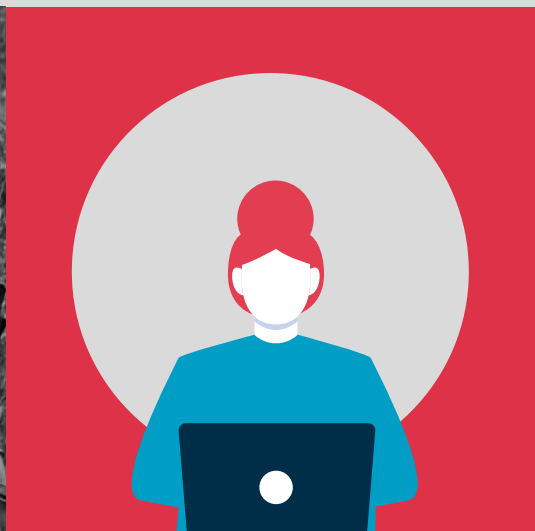
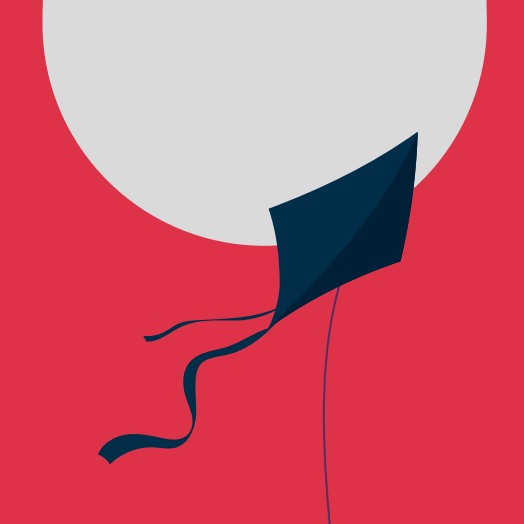


IWWAGE

From Evidence to Action

SHAPING THE FUTURE FOR WOMEN AT WORK



From Evidence to Action

SHAPING THE FUTURE FOR WOMEN AT WORK

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A Solution-oriented Quest for Change



- Sharon Buteau,
LEAD at Krea University

Launched in 2018, IWWAGE joined the women empowerment space which was then ripe with the awareness of the declining labour force participation of women and amply matured conversations around the factors that were contributing towards keeping women away from realizing their full economic potential. Despite the continued dialogue, however, what was missing were actionable insights. IWWAGE was germinated with the core motive to fill that gap and shift the evidence base from “How” to “What Works” to improve women’s participation in the labour force. Aligned to this larger goal of strengthening the agenda of women’s economic empowerment, IWWAGE generates, synthesises and promotes evidence that can enable data-led policy making using a solution-oriented approach.

Interview with Sharon Buteau, LEAD at Krea University

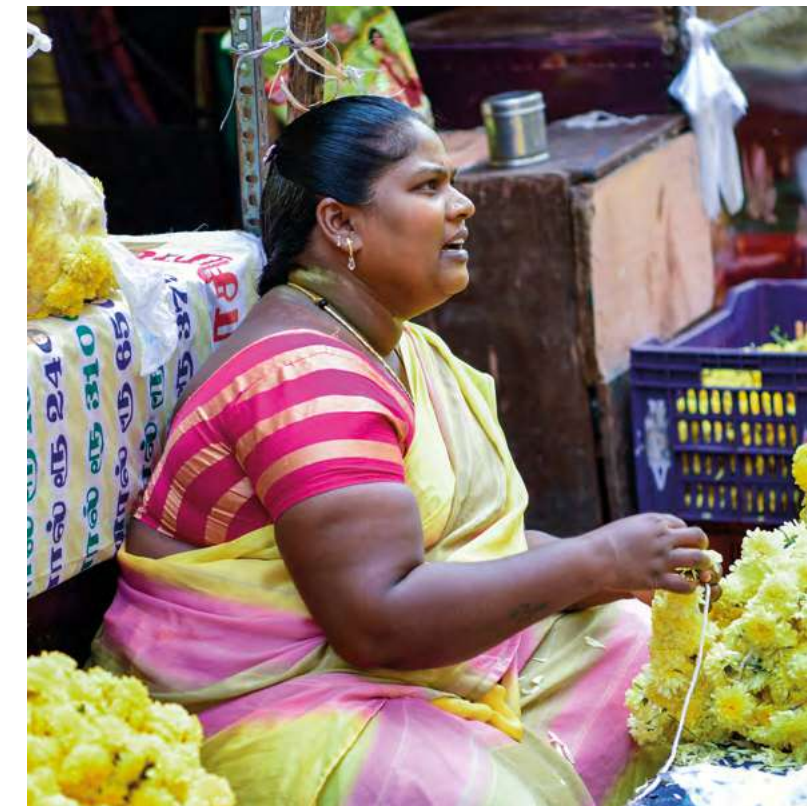
What is the IWWAGE story and how was it conceptualized?

The story of IWWAGE, or the Initiative for What Works to Advance Women and Girls in the Economy, began with recognising the critical need to address gender disparities in economic empowerment. In India, women’s low and declining labour force participation rate is fairly difficult to unpack without locating it within the wider socio-economic context. India faces the complex challenge of jobless growth despite significant progress in the last couple of decades. We know firsthand from LEAD’s work how several intersecting vulnerabilities further compound this challenge for women. Addressing the labour force participation puzzle required deeper analysis, grounded in better gender data, and multidisciplinary and multi-sectoral approaches that could lead us to effective solutions. Our idea was to create a platform that could serve as a first step to bring together various voices that often worked independently to move the needle on gender equity - from feminist policy, technology, civil society, private sector and the financial sector, to name a few. Breaking these silos between strategic partners and actors would allow a holistic approach to understanding, diagnosing as well as testing and scaling solutions that work for women’s economic empowerment.

What makes IWWAGE unique?

What sets IWWAGE apart is its emphasis on integrating deep gender expertise with rigorous gender data to address the complex challenges women face in participating in productive economic activities. Many of the important policies and programs impacting women are often conceived without any gender perspective or a strong understanding of the unique circumstances they face. Hence, by design, they are often excluded. Bringing evidence that combines interconnected gender perspectives is critical - one of IWWAGE’s

unique strengths is its ability to integrate perspectives and voices from grassroots work with theoretical underpinnings of the structural factors and norms that impede progress on gender equity. Furthermore, communicating the evidence to the right stakeholder that can actually take action on it to move the needle is paramount. IWWAGE being an institution embedded in a strong network of partnerships, can make these “right fit” connections and build the evidence, but also continuously shape the dialogue on actionable solutions. Addressing complex challenges require iterative and collaborative reasoning in search of long-term, future-focused solutions that are sustainable.



What strategies has IWWAGE deployed towards its mission?

An important principle that drives IWWAGE's strategy and approach is ensuring that its agenda remains laser-focused on the problem in front of us. In the work around gender, it is easy to be distracted by the many potential areas of work. Being part of the larger IFMR/Krea Ecosystem allows us to be situated within a vibrant research community, where we can share and learn from each other. A core pillar of IWWAGE's approach is also ensuring that we have the right mix of talent that is empowered to work on the various issues. Overall, IWWAGE has deployed several strategies, including conducting research studies, generating evidence-based insights, building capacity through training programs, tracking policy developments for policy engagement and advocacy. Some of the key learnings include the importance of 'gendered' data-driven decision making, the need for contextualized and intersectional approaches that consider the diverse needs and experiences of women.



"IWWAGE was founded with a shared belief in the transformative power of evidence to promote gender equality. While I was at the Gates Foundation, the goal of building and shaping an investment to LEAD at Krea University (IFMR) to incubate IWWAGE was to generate robust evidence and create

a platform that would bridge the gap between research and policy, and foster meaningful collaborations between academia, policymakers, and practitioners towards impact. IWWAGE has really created a wonderful platform for itself and a shelf of outputs and analyses to shape discussions in many areas related to female labourforce participation."

Dr. Yamini Atmavilas, The Udaiti Foundation



"Empowering women is not just a matter of social justice, but also critical to driving economic growth and development. Despite significant progress in recent years, there are still many challenges that prevent women

from fully participating in the workforce and realising their potential. That's why the work at IWWAGE is so important. IWWAGE works towards contributing to the evidence base to improve women's participation in economic activities by addressing barriers to women's work, facilitating women's access to decent work and economic resources, and enhancing women's agency by leveraging the transformative potential of women's empowerment collectives."

Soumya Kapoor Mehta, The World Bank



IWWAGE engages with policymakers, researchers, CSOs and private sector players to advocate and communicate the use of evidence-informed policies leading to capacity enhancement.



Moments and Events





Deepening the Evidence



"What makes IWWAGE unique is that while we are working towards solving a very specific problem of women's labour force participation, we are doing so with a macro perspective of women's empowerment at large. Therefore, we are attempting to build capacity to find answers for the diverse challenges that exist at both the demand and supply side. The aim is to come up with holistic, sustainable and scalable solutions. By collaborating with multiple policy stakeholders, state governments and women empowerment collectives to pilot these solutions and develop proof of concepts for gender transformative interventions"

- Dr. Sona Mitra, IWWAGE

IWWAGE aims to build on existing research and generate new evidence to inform and drive an action agenda for women's economic empowerment. Through its evidence generation, IWWAGE unfolds the enablers and barriers of women's labourforce participation and emphasises advocacy initiatives to advance women's economic empowerment with a strong bias for actions. To deepen the existing evidence, it leads large-scale interventions embedded in existing government initiatives such as gender training for women, setting up gender resource centers and piloting digital innovations to derive bottom-up actionable insights.

Following are some key studies undertaken by IWWAGE thus far, deepening the evidence around enablers, barriers and quality of work for women in India.



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

The historically low female labour force participation rate in India despite moderate economic growth and increased educational outcomes for girls is a grave policy concern. Recent estimates show that India ranks second to Saudi Arabia among G20 countries in terms of women's employment. Gender parity in the labour force could potentially boost India's GDP by 27%, according to the International Monetary Fund. However, the barriers to women's workforce participation, including lack of safety, remain a challenge.

This state-level study examined the association between crimes against women and girls (CaW&G) and the decline in female labour force participation rate (FLFPR) in India, which decreased from 31.2% in 2011 to 23.3% in 2017. States with the lowest FLFPRs, such as Bihar, Delhi, Assam, and Tripura, showed a strong correlation with crime rates against women. Bihar, in particular, had the lowest FLFPR in India and experienced a significant increase in crime against women during the observed period. On the other hand, states with high FLFPRs, such as Chhattisgarh, Sikkim, Himachal Pradesh, and Meghalaya, also witnessed a significant rise in crime against women, despite relatively higher FLFPRs. The study also explored potential reasons for high crime rates against women, including alcoholism among males and their unemployment rate.

The findings suggest a need to adopt a 'SAFETY' framework to prevent crimes against women and girls. This includes earmarking funding for support services, recognizing women's rights and identities, raising awareness, empowering women through ownership interventions and employment policies, improving infrastructure such as safe transport and shelter, and implementing youth interventions for attitudinal and behavioural changes. The study concluded that addressing the issue of safety for women and girls is crucial in promoting their participation in the workforce in India.



Working or Not: What Determines Women's Labour Force Participation in India?

This study adds to the existing body of research on caste and gender discrimination in India by presenting evidence from a household survey conducted in select districts of Karnataka and Rajasthan in February and March 2020. The survey was disrupted due to the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. The survey, also known as the India Working Survey (IWS), is not representative of any specific geography but provides a sufficient estimate of the overall situation. Despite these limitations, the richness of the survey questionnaire and the level of detail it captures about an individual's experience in the labour

market allows us to document meaningful differences by caste and gender.

The study focused on two dimensions of difference, namely educational attainment and responses to a select set of 'sensitive' questions related to discrimination. From every surveyed household, one female and one male were randomly chosen from among all adult members. These individuals were then fielded in the detailed IWS survey. The IWS surveyed a total of 5,655 main respondents, of which 45% were from Karnataka and the remaining 55% from Rajasthan.

The findings reveal significant differences in educational attainment and labour market outcomes based on caste and gender. Majority of respondents in both states work as unpaid family workers, with higher proportions among the General category compared to the SC category. The industrial distribution of employment also varies by caste and gender, with a larger share of SC respondents working in Agriculture and Allied Industries compared to the General category, and a larger share of women working in Agriculture and Allied Industries compared to men.

Occupational distribution also differs by caste and gender, with a higher share of SC respondents working as labourers, which is the least lucrative and skill-intensive occupation, compared to the General category. In terms of precarity of work, a larger share of SC respondents reported experiencing unemployment compared to the General category in both states.

There are also differences in women's decision-making autonomy and household living conditions based on caste and state. In Karnataka, a larger share of working women have access to their own money compared to Rajasthan, and there is not much difference in women's access to money by caste in Karnataka. However, in Rajasthan, women from the General caste category report higher access to money compared to other caste groups. In terms of household living conditions, SC households have a higher share of below poverty line ration card holders compared to General category households in both states, and a higher share of SC households openly defecate compared to General households.

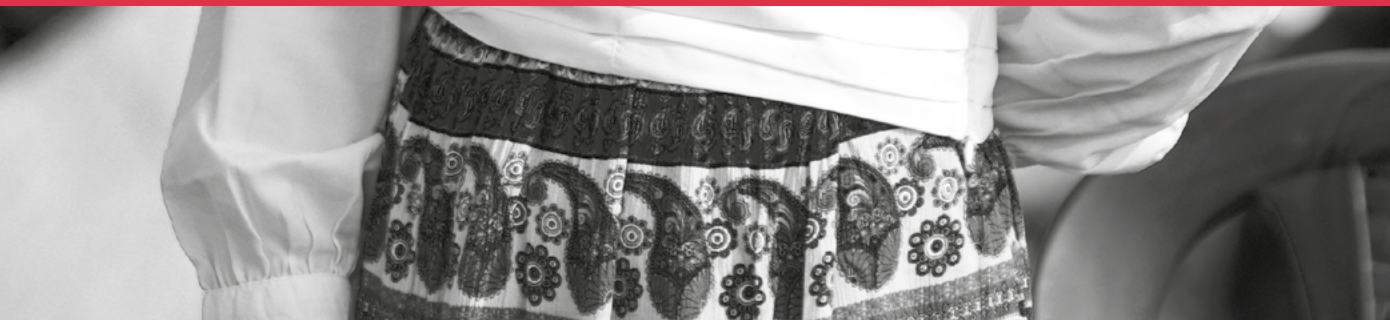


Finally, the study also examines respondents' comfort level with individuals from SC caste in specified roles and their children sharing meals with SC classmates. The findings reveal that a significant proportion of respondents, particularly from the General category, express discomfort with SC individuals in certain roles and their children sharing meals with SC classmates.

In conclusion, our study highlights the existence of significant differences and discrimination based on caste and gender in India, as evidenced by the findings from the IWS survey. These differences have important implications for policy makers and underline the need for targeted interventions to address caste and gender-based disparities in education, employment, and social attitudes.



India's Emerging Gig Economy: The Future of Work for Women



The Asia Foundation

World over, the technology-driven gig economy has been expanding rapidly over the past decade, in which digital platforms connect 'workers' with 'requesters' to facilitate on-demand work. The gig economy has also become a buzzword in India, particularly in the last couple of years, and is attracting millennials by offering alternative employment opportunities. However, literature is scanty when it comes to measuring its impacts on the gendered experiences of gig work or on gig workers. This study supported by the Asia Foundation aims to provide a comprehensive analytical overview of women's engagement in platform work, and presents findings from an in-depth study of women's work in one of India's leading platform companies. It aims to understand the emerging forms of labour practices and the impact of platform engagement on workers' experiences, challenges, and impact on women's empowerment and agency.



We adopted a threefold approach and our findings are based on interviews with workers, platform managers, and other key informants. We find that the gig economy offers women choice of work and flexible work modalities to manage paid and unpaid work, but is largely an urban phenomenon. Women gig workers appreciate the income-generating potential of the gig economy, and are the major beneficiaries of the gig ecosystem. However, we find that these women also encounter numerous challenges with regards to access to social protection, safety, upward mobility, and lack of effective bargaining power. Also, the pervasiveness of automated ratings and review mechanisms is a chief issue in the gig economy. We make specific recommendations and argue that policy makers and platforms have a key role in ensuring access to decent work and social protection for these workers.



Empowering Women: Opportunities, Challenges and a Way Forward

Women comprise nearly half of the world's working population and therefore potentially half of its labour force. Female labour force participation (FLFP) represents a woman's decision to be part of the labour force or part of an economically inactive population. At present, in nearly every country, the female labour force participation rate is lower than that of males. Female labour force participation in South Asia is among the lowest of any developing region in the world.

The low Female Labour Force Participation in India has been a cause of concern for policymakers and researchers alike. Women's unpaid work, a mismatch between their skills and jobs, and household and societal norms that prevent them from entering the labour force are some reasons for the low FLFP. Further, traditional methods of measurement of work often lack inclusive definitions that could capture the range of work performed by women or include means to isolate the informant bias inherent in proxy reporting. IWWAGE conducted a study that unpacked the demand and supply-side factors behind the low FLFP in India, while experimenting with modified ways to measure women's work. The study elaborated on the household and workplace-related factors constraining women's participation, and provided an insight into what works at the level of policies in terms of enabling a higher FLFP.

Aligned with the ethos of IWWAGE, the future research agenda is envisioned to generate new evidence and delve deeper into the gains from its past research to strengthen the agenda of women's economic empowerment. Women's unpaid work, due to its complexity, the inadequate focus on it in the usual labour force surveys, would continue to hold a key place in IWWAGE's future research agenda.

With childcare comprising a significant share of women's unpaid care work, IWWAGE plans to expand its evidence generation in exploring further the interconnections between provisioning of childcare

facilities and women's labourforce participation.

Understanding the skilling ecosystem as an enabler of FLFP and addressing the loopholes in it through evidence generation and policy advocacy would remain one of IWWAGE's research interests in the coming days. In the background of gender-based sectoral and occupational segregation, IWWAGE plans to undertake workforce projection studies for women across sectors and across occupations for the upcoming years with a purpose to provide a baseline scenario with reference to which the employment impact of various policy initiatives/programmes can be assessed in a quantitative manner.

While, these are the few primary focus areas IWWAGE plans to commit itself to in the immediate future, it aspires to broaden its agenda and act as a key agency to promote WEE through an evidence and solution-based approach.



"An ongoing question for IWWAGE was to unpack what was happening - gender and jobless growth in India and similarly, gender and the MSME landscape. Some nuances of barriers and enablers are sector specific, some

are gender specific and when you look at everything from a bird's eye view there is an acute lack of jobs in general, let alone for women. IWWAGE's work has really helped unpack many of the barriers, and doggedly ensure their findings are in the public domain and pushing for new perspectives and decisions."

Dr. Yamini Atmavilas, The Udaiti Foundation





Strengthening Women's Institutions for Agency and Empowerment (SWAYAM)



"SWAYAM focuses on testing and innovation of approaches for creating gender-transformative models through capacity building of DAY-NRLM staff, cadres, institutional mechanisms and developing knowledge pieces. The approach brings a unique combination of field findings and plugging the insights into policy space that leads to making the architecture sustainable."

- Moumita Sarkar, IWWAGE

With over 60 million women mobilized to be part of one of India's largest livelihoods programme, the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM), holds great promise for advancing women's socio-economic empowerment by organizing them into self-help groups (SHGs), its federated structures - Village Organization (VO), Social Action Committee (SAC) at VO level, Cluster Level Federation (CLF), SAC at CLF level and Gender Resource Centre. These platforms are places for strengthening women's citizenship and act as a strong redressal platform to address violation of human rights.

DAY-NRLM believes that gender should be mainstreamed in its framework, systems, institutions and processes. IWWAGE's partnership with DAY-NRLM, through SWAYAM, supports this strategy and institutionalizes gender across all levels of the Mission. The partnership is aimed at ensuring scalability, replicability and usage of the below mentioned strategies.

SWAYAM serves as a technical assistance and learning partner to DAY-NRLM, Ministry of Rural Development, with a three-pronged approach to achieve its objectives. Firstly, it provides technical assistance and capacity building through standardized, evidence-backed modules to staff and cadres on gender concepts and action. It also focuses on establishing functional community-level institutions from village to block level, with a non-negotiable, universal approach to strengthen feminist leadership and promote gender-inclusive development planning. Additionally, SWAYAM helps to forge partnerships between National Mission Monitoring Units (NMMUs) and State Mission Monitoring Units (SMMUs) to develop learning sites that demonstrate the impact of community-level institutions in delivering women's empowerment. SWAYAM also conducts research studies in pilot and scale-up geographies to generate demand-driven evidence, and mainstreams evidence-based monitoring, learning, and evaluation (MLE) to inform policies for gender integration.

OBJECTIVES



Strengthen capacity of staff at all levels in the DAY-NRLM through trainings to work on gender issues



Developing knowledge pieces for standardizing capacity building of staff and cadres

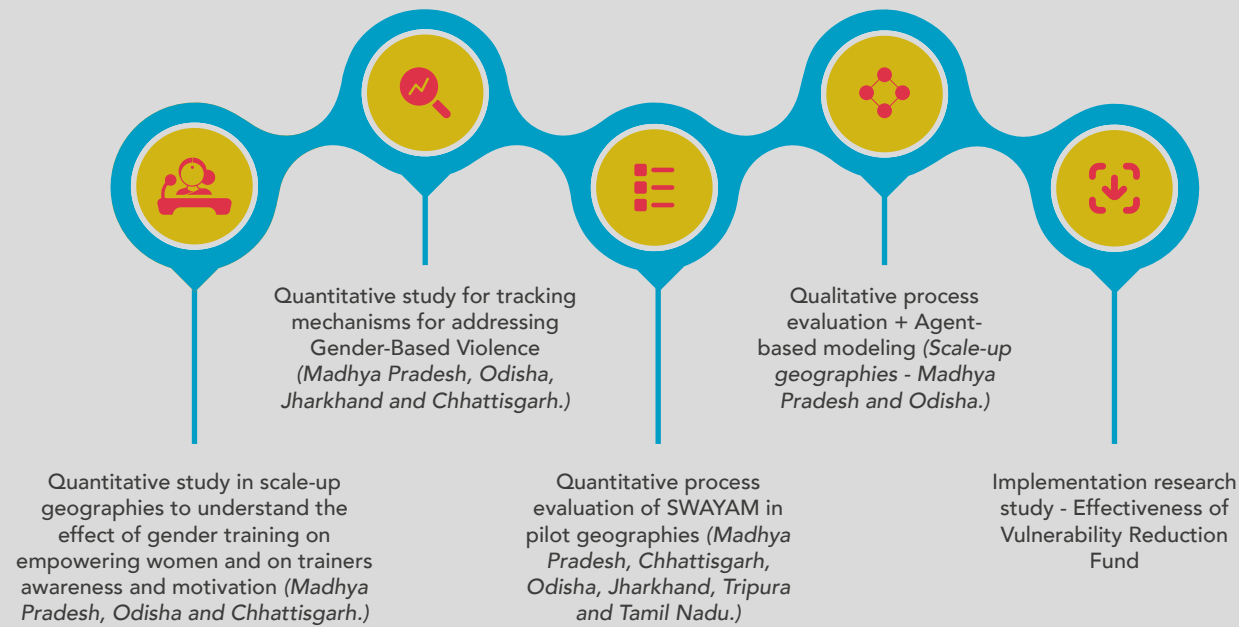


Design and test innovative solutions for delivering the trainings



Design, implement and evaluate the impact of pilot Gender Resource Centres in four states for upscaling

RESEARCH & EVIDENCE

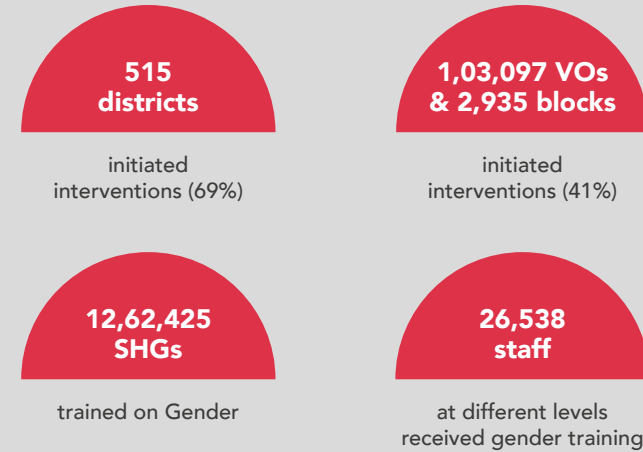


Another critical pillar of SWAYAM support is towards creating a gender-sensitive policy environment within DAY-NRLM through program design and advocacy efforts, including generating and sustaining dialogues among stakeholders on gender integration through interactive mediums.

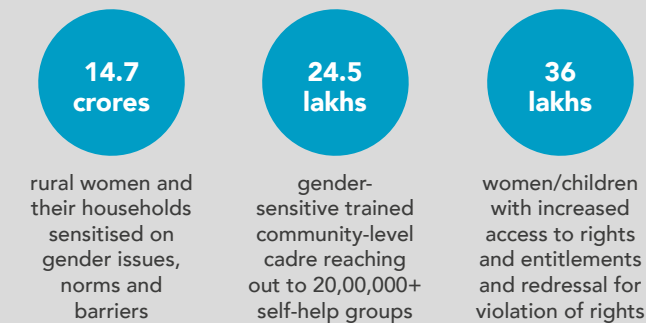
Gender Samvaad or Gender Dialogues are an example of advocacy efforts by SWAYAM. They are a platform to generate critical conversations on gender responsive work being undertaken by the DAY-NRLM at the national and state levels. The samvaads are intended to highlight experiences from gender-focused interventions, share the stories of impact, and bring the large cadre of SHG women,

SRLM representatives and DAY-NRLM officials on one common platform to exchange their ideas and opinions to push the gender agenda. Additionally, the vast SHG cadre across states would also find space to share their experiences, challenges and innovations. The learnings from SWAYAM's pan-India support to NMMU for critical gender interventions such as the gender trainings, gender resource centres, immersion sites, integration with other verticals will feature in the relevant Samvaads. The Gender Samvaad series was launched in April 2021 as part of the ongoing Amrut Mahotsav to celebrate the 75th Anniversary of Indian Independence. Three gender samvaads have been organised thus far, which have seen participation from 3,000+ people across 36 States and Union Territories.

GENDER INTERVENTION REACH - AT A GLANCE



ESTIMATED REACH OF SWAYAM'S INITIATIVES TILL 2025



- Assumptions:
- 30,00,000 SHGs trained on gender*10 women/SHG*4.9 members per rural household = 14,70,00,000
 - 20,00,000 Gender Point Persons (GPPs) + 4,50,000 Community Resource Persons (CRPs) trained = 24,50,000
 - 8,000 Gender Resource Centres (GRCs)*450 individual cases received per GRC/year (average) = 36,00,000





IWWAGE generates evidence through ground research to address barriers and quality of women's work at the household, community, and state level.



Glimpses from the Field



IWWAGE supports to change social norms, gender attitudes and generate public awareness on women's economic empowerment.





"At IWWAGE, the essence of the work we do lies in how the evidence generated through research and on-ground interventions translates into policy making and uptake by the ecosystem at large. In order to action this, we use different mediums such as publications, podcasts and roundtables to inform, involve and engage with stakeholders. We believe that the data and insights generated by IWWAGE, not only contributes to the WEE narrative in India but also results in game-changing outcomes that define the journey towards gender equality in the country. Our goal is to establish the center as the go-to hub for evidence on WEE and female labour force participation for the government, private sector and civil society organizations."

**- Preethi Rao,
LEAD at Krea University**

Building an Ecosystem of Collaboration and Support



IWWAGE undertakes stakeholder engagement on priority policy issues by developing policy briefs, and organizing policy dialogues and large-scale campaigns. These efforts draw from evidence generated through IWWAGE research, learnings gathered through piloting solutions, policy tracking, and gender analysis of public policies and programmes. Stakeholders range from national and state governments, UN agencies, civil society organizations, coalitions, academia, private sector and media.

Our Approach

Evidence is at the center of IWWAGE's Policy, Advocacy and Communication approach. Regular tracking of state, national and global policy developments is undertaken to

inform policy and advocacy priorities. Efforts are directed towards the demystification of large-scale datasets to generate greater demand and uptake of data and evidence to inform the public discourse as well as policy decisions on women's economic empowerment. Tracking and analysis efforts are followed by identification of critical gaps and outreach to relevant government, private or civil society stakeholders for collaboration and technical assistance on key policy issues.

IWWAGE's publications and stakeholder interactions have created opportunities for media engagement and knowledge sharing at high-level events and panel discussions, consolidating IWWAGE's position as one of the thought leaders in the WEE discourse in India.

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS INITIATED TO UNLOCK PATHWAYS OF CHANGE:





Media Partnerships:



IWWAGE partnered with IndiaSpend and Indian Express to highlight issues related to women's empowerment and promote the discourse around gender equality in economic activity. The collaboration with IndiaSpend involved examining and analyzing barriers to women's employment and solutions for increasing women's participation in paid work through evidence-based and data-driven stories as part of the Women@Work 2.0 series.



IWWAGE and Indian Express organized the Thinc Gender webinar series, which featured policy-oriented discussions and showcased governance enablers for gender-responsive economic recovery and better empowerment of women. The webinars focused on the future of work for women, including employment opportunities in new sectors, self-employment, entrepreneurship, and non-traditional livelihoods, as well as women's empowerment collectives.

Fostering Collective Action:



IWWAGE is also part of women-centric collectives with mutually inclusive goals to further its mission. The Feminist Policy Collective (FPC), was formally set up in February 2019 through a national consultation involving stakeholders such as National Foundation for India (NFI), OXFAM, UN Women, IWWAGE, and Society for Health Alternatives (SAHAJ), with IWWAGE serving as the convener and anchor of the Working Group on Women, Work, and Poverty.

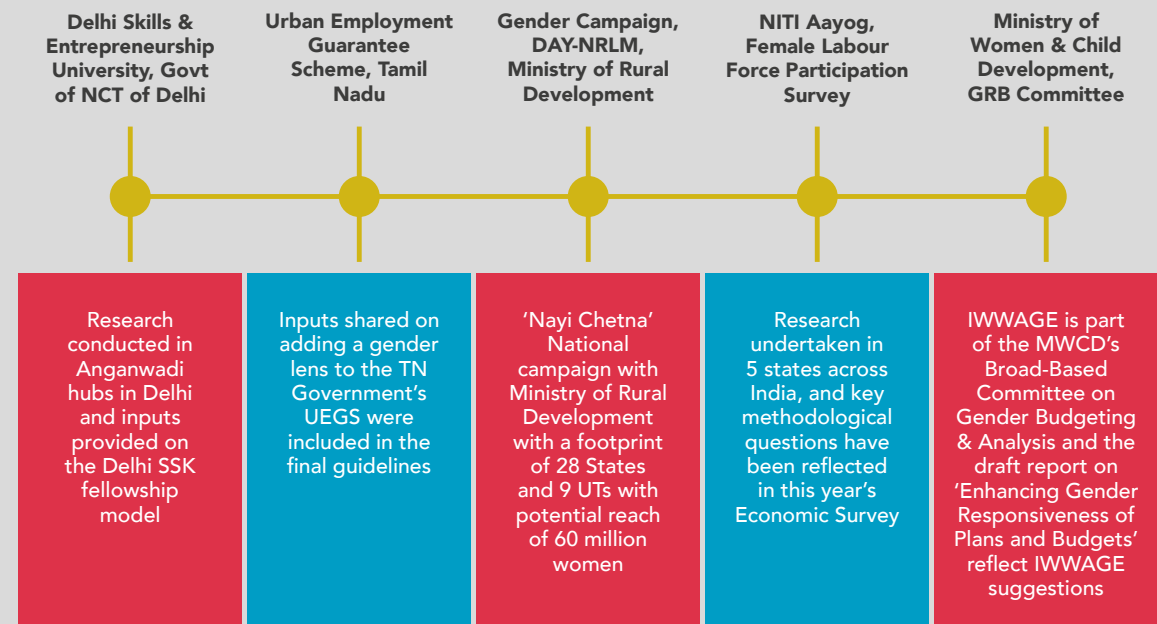


IWWAGE is also an active member of WeProsper, a global coalition that advocates for women's economic empowerment, justice, and rights, and uses research and lived experiences to inform policy change. IWWAGE serves as the co-chair of the Technical Working Group of WeProsper and participates in two other working groups on Generation Equality Forum and Communications, advocating in areas such as care work, gender data, informal economies, decent work, and economic rights.



IWWAGE's engagement with the Asia Feminist Coalition involves knowledge sharing and amplifying the agenda of unpaid and care work, as well as gender budgeting in the Asia region, as a member of the Steering Committee of the network.

POLICY, ADVOCACY AND COMMUNICATION WINS

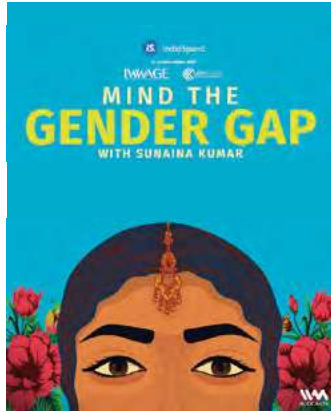


'Women and Work Trends' Report

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of work for women, including employment opportunities in new sectors, self-employment, entrepreneurship, and non-traditional livelihoods, as well as women's empowerment collectives.



Mind the Gender Gap Podcast

Mind the Gender Gap is a podcast series produced by IWWAGE and IndiaSpend. The podcast features diverse and nuanced conversations related to women's economic empowerment in India. Each episode delves into a specific issue and explores different perspectives and experiences. From the gender pay gap and women's participation in the labour force to entrepreneurship and financial inclusion, the podcast covers a wide range of themes and provides valuable insights and analysis. One of the strengths of the podcast is its focus on evidence-based solutions and practical recommendations. Many of the episodes feature researchers and policymakers who share their findings and experiences on what works and what doesn't in enabling women's economic empowerment. The podcast provides a platform for dialogue and learning, and showcases the importance of evidence-based research and collaboration in advancing gender equality.



Women & Future of Work

Launched in November 2022, the 'Women and the Future of Work Series' aims to cast a gender lens on the future of work and analyze different avenues for improving women's participation in the workforce in India. This effort also serves as a means to engage with relevant stakeholders across industry, government, civil society, and media. The series undertakes development of policy briefs and organization of roundtable discussions alongside strategic engagement with policy makers, civil society, academia and media. A roundtable discussion on Work Near Home centers has been held and an associated brief has been published under this series.





Insights from our Valued Partners



Premised on the principles of social and economic empowerment, DAY-NRLM endeavours to strengthen women's identity as citizens with improved access to entitlements and public services. Women's voices are collectivized from village to block level through a well knitted institutional architecture. The gender mainstreaming efforts within DAY-NRLM have been catalysed through SWAYAM interventions which have showcased effective models in the country, positioning women as leaders in crafting development pathways. Highly valued partnerships between SRLMs and SWAYAM CSO Partners have demonstrated scalable approaches like Gender Resource Centres, strengthened institutions with a gender perspective and contributed to system strengthening by standardizing the capacity building process through well-designed knowledge pieces. These have also helped in building an empirical evidence base within the policy spaces for demand-based program planning and implementation.

Nita Kejrewal, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India



Gender Equality is one of the strategic focus areas for the Gates foundation with efforts directed towards breaking down structural barriers to women's equal participation in all spheres of life. IWWAGE is an important partner whose contribution has helped advance the foundation's priorities in India by generating evidence on women's economic power, strengthening institutional capacities for gender-intentional programming, and supporting the DAY-NRLM, the largest livelihoods programme that leverages the strength of women's collectives.

Archana Vyas, Gates Foundation



Happy 5th anniversary to IWWAGE! Congratulations on shining a light on "what works" to advance women's economic power and gender equality. In our early strategy development, the absence of a gender lens in many existing evaluations and the limited evidence on "what works" to promote WEE, was a key driver for supporting in-country research hubs in India and in Kenya. Thanks to IWWAGE for your hard work and contributions for filling in those gaps, for building an impressive portfolio of work centred on impact for women and girls, and for successfully engaging a network of experts and practitioners to deepen collaboration around rigorous evidence and evidence-informed policy solutions.

Diva Dhar, Gates Foundation



SWAYAM is uniquely based on the idea of 'field to lab' approach in enhancing capacity of the demand and supply side to ensure the institutional spaces are enabled to respond to various needs and priorities of women and girls in the community. The combination of governance machinery, practitioners and IWWAGE has offered space for cross-learning and field demonstration that are scalable solutions for achieving results at the ground level. Over the past years, the insightful observations coming from different studies also identifies key areas to be prioritized for policy making. Advocacy platform through Gender Samvaad is an important tool for cross learning and informing policy and implementation through the experiences of the gender champions.

P Usha Rani, DAY-NRLM, Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India



The formation and continuation of the Feminist Policy Collective which was founded in 2019 with the specific purpose of centering on gender-transformative financing within and beyond gender-responsive budgeting would not have been possible without the intense, consistent and unstinting involvement and support of IWWAGE which functions not only as a co-secretariat but also as an inspiring sounding board for extending and interlinking analytical research and advocacy particularly for enhancing gender equality for especially the most marginalised and vulnerable.

Dr. Ritu Dewan, Feminist Policy Collective & Institute for Human Development



Our engagement with IWWAGE began at a time when data and rigorous evidence on women's participation in the gig economy in India was limited. This was a critical evidence gap that IWWAGE helped address and provided actionable recommendations which has since supported our efforts to inform the policy discourse on the rapidly growing platform economy in India. I congratulate IWWAGE on its expansive portfolio of work on women's economic empowerment, and its efforts towards achieving gender equity.

Nandita Baruah, The Asia Foundation



I have been moved by the millions of women who have been silently building their lives and livelihoods, and co-creating a network of gender-responsive community institutions, around the country. These unique efforts are part of India's largest rural livelihoods programme (DAY-NRLM), undertaken in partnership with IWWAGE, CSOs and community groups. Community-led processes are best sustained when women leaders get to meaningfully contribute, in all their diversity, to co-envisioning and shifting structural power relations that are heavily weighted against them. This is no easy task. Alongside building gender-transformative financing, human and technical support systems, there is need for deeper engagement with the process and a commitment to principles of substantive equality.

Suneeta Dhar, Feminist Policy Collective & South Asia Women Foundation - India



IWWAGE played an instrumental role right from the initial stages of the India Working Survey, the findings of which are part of State of Working India 2021 and 2023 reports- whether it was brainstorming on the initial foundation of the exercise or bringing together the initial advisory committee that advises on the survey design and methodology. Additionally, right in the middle of our survey, the pandemic hit us and the way IWWAGE pivoted and accommodated to rethink the survey and still find ways to utilise the resources deployed was incredible. FLFPR continues to be a key discourse for us and IWWAGE has been very important in helping us make the best use of resources to make a valuable contribution here.

Dr. Amit Basole, Azim Premji University



The study on women in public employment conducted by ERF with support from IWWAGE helped throw light on the conditions of work of women frontline workers as well as highlight their contribution to public services, human development and to the economy as a whole. It also contributes to policy recommendations towards increasing female labour force participation rates through expanding public employment.

Dr. Dipa Sinha, Ambedkar University Delhi



Through our work with IWWAGE we aim to understand and address low labour force participation of women in India. The issue of women's engagement in the formal labour market is a complicated one because it is not merely a micro or individual concern, but also pertains to macro or structural factors. How do we move forward and shift the equilibrium in favour of women? We know that piecemeal efforts that address specific aspects of the issue will not help, a more cohesive and comprehensive policy emphasis is required, by engaging with both the demand as well as supply side factors. At the same time, changing regressive gender attitudes and norms which constrain women's participation in the economy, is imperative but a slow process. Along with IWWAGE we hope to work on public policies as well as engage with employers to create an enabling and equitable environment for women in the labor market.

Dr. Farzana Afridi, Indian Statistical Institute

The IWWAGE-Mobile Creches partnership aims to seek solutions for developments in care economy and gender equality in India. We hope to enable evidence-based policies and policy-based evidence towards UN Sustainable Development Goals 1 to 5 and 8 & 10. IWWAGE and Mobile Creches are exploring evidence-based quality childcare models, and costing that can be scaled through public provisioning to accelerate women's economic empowerment and long-term development outcomes for children in India. Our partnership has been mutually rewarding as we step up our efforts for stronger evidence building, knowledge exchange, and public policy engagement in the care economy ecosystem.

Sumitra Mishra, Mobile Creches



IWWAGE was set up with a vision to showcase 'what works' to move the needle on women's economic power by generating evidence, testing scalable solutions, and engaging with relevant stakeholders to increase the momentum towards gender equality in India. Since its inception, IWWAGE has published high quality evidence pieces in partnership with government and reputed academic institutions. Its efforts in making large scale datasets accessible to stakeholders have allowed for broader engagement and data use to drive impact. An important area of work has been with the Ministry of Rural Development, supporting the National Rural Livelihoods Mission and the Nayi Chetna campaign which focused on addressing gender norms.

Saachi Bhalla, Gates Foundation



Is measurement of women's work influenced by which household member provides information and if the questions probe in detail about various activities? Do women face a motherhood penalty? These are a few issues analysed by The India Working Survey which was undertaken in collaboration with IWWAGE. We find that men under-report women's work, while detailed questions on work capture women's employment better. Women face a 'motherhood' penalty, not in the form of withdrawal from work, but, of having to continue in low paid, informal employment. Our research supported by IWWAGE helped to challenge conventional measures and understanding of women's work in India.

Dr. Rosa Abraham, Azim Premji University



Working with IWWAGE has enabled our team at Inclusion Economics India Centre to expand their research to better understand the ways in which digital technology enables or constrains women's economic engagement. IWWAGE's networks help amplify the impact of our research, ensuring insights are shared with decision makers with real influence over women's well-being across much of the country.

Dr. Rohini Pande, Inclusion Economics India Centre



Data collected by the Census, NSSO, PLFS and NFHS is extremely important for evidence-based policy-making, provided it is available in a timely manner, and disaggregated by gender, age and other intersectionalities. For instance, the prevalence of anaemia is higher among women and girls and the gender gaps are starker for specific socio-economic groups and geographies. Where inaccuracies exist, such as for estimates of female labour force participation rate, data collection methods must change. IWWAGE has made steady efforts in demystifying large scale datasets, and is making valuable contributions to the discourse on the measurement of women's work.

Dr. Aasha Kapur Mehta, Institute of Human Development



The evidence from the joint study by IWWAGE-ISST on Women's Entrepreneurship has highlighted the predominantly 'micro' nature of women's involvement. For change in women's labour force participation, multiple constraints on the demand side, such as discrimination, legal disparities, confidence in female credit, and on the supply side, women's confidence about owning, operating and scaling businesses need to be addressed.

Sarojini Ganju Thakur, Institute of Social Studies Trust



The partnership with IWWAGE has been wonderful since the past few years. Our recent work on ECD in 5 tribal districts, Sabarkantha and Tapi in Gujarat, Khasi hills in Meghalaya, Kandhamal in Odisha and Trivandrum in Kerala was conceptualized together with the senior team of IWWAGE. This study is examining the burden of childcare and ECD requirements in these districts. We look forward to the results that we are hoping will open up pathways to address the inadequacies in the child care space, particularly for the tribal women who live in remote areas, in tough hilly terrains and other difficult geographies. I would like to congratulate IWWAGE on the completion of five years and look forward to working together and strengthening our partnership.

Susan Thomas, SEWA



Paving the Way for Lasting Change



Interview with Dr. Sona Mitra, IWWAGE

How successful has IWWAGE been in moving the needle on women's economic empowerment?

While IWWAGE is still at an early stage in its journey, we have already made some initial strides in probing and presenting sharp solutions for WEE in India. The last few years were spent on evidence gathering and we were able to cover a lot of white spaces with data backed insights. There still exists a lot of evidence gap on what pushes Indian women into the labour force. The gap still remains glaring because while we have cohort analysis, we still don't have a complex macro-economic understanding of labour force participation of women in India. For a market as diverse and segmented as India, this holistic understanding and evidence wealth becomes even more critical.



So while we will continue to work towards deepening our understanding of the enablers of labour force participation of women in India, in our next phase we also aim to focus more on experimentation.

What are the wins at IWWAGE that you are incredibly proud of?

In our journey so far, what we have been able to successfully unlock through our diverse interventions and partnerships across academia, policy and WECs, is a credibility and thought leadership that is attached to IWWAGE today. We plan to tap into this brand equity to bring about greater engagement and collaboration going forward within the Indian gender diaspora. Another significant win has been that we have been able to break the silos in gender discourse. Women's economic barriers were only spoken in niche feminist and academic circles and we have been able to change that tremendously. Today a range of stakeholders across academia, policy and even industry landscape are taking keen interest in finding and discussing pathways for enhancing inclusion of women in the economy. We foresee the collaboration and engagement to happen at a much larger scale now as it is pivotal to our unique two pronged approach of both identifying the challenges and recommending solutions for women's labour force participation.

How do you envision the next 5 years of IWWAGE's mission?

A key element at the heart of our efforts is sustainability. The gender gap, norms and barriers that have existed for generations take time to be identified and assessed. There is a meticulous process to solutions even after you identify them that involves dialogues, testing, collaboration, realigning and more. Only then do we know that these solutions will result in adoption and lasting impact onground. And this is why we choose to put a benchmark of sustainability to our work over a timeline of completion. Ultimately we envision IWWAGE to become the go-to platform,

repository and research body for women and labour in India in the coming years. Our ambition is that everyone, whether government or non-government would think of IWWAGE when they think of women and labour. A huge step to that goal is strengthening evidence backed policy decisions on women's labour force participation; to make the mainstream stakeholder, decision makers and even civil society at large care about it; to be able to achieve a comprehensive discourse on WEE that is easier to access for everyone.



IWWAGE's five-year milestone comes at a critical time in India's journey, with fresh momentum towards advancing gender equity and a welcome focus on 'women-led development'. IWWAGE's work aligns with several policy priority areas, such

as enabling workforce participation and entrepreneurship, catalyzing grassroots women's leadership and bridging the digital gender divide. On the other hand, the pandemic has also exposed existing vulnerabilities and cracks - from disproportionate job and business losses to increased threats from gender-based violence, women are vulnerable to the health, economic and social impacts of such shocks and continue to bear disproportionate care burdens.

As we confront an increasingly complex and unpredictable world, much work remains to be done. I am confident that IWWAGE is uniquely poised to advance women's access to decent jobs, social protection and sustainable livelihoods and help build inclusive care systems, by leveraging its core expertise and collaborations with policymakers, philanthropic institutions, academia and civil

society. IWWAGE's work on strengthening institutional capacities and grassroots leadership on gender issues, in collaboration with the National Rural Livelihoods Mission, has demonstrated tremendous results in a short span and is well-poised to scale further. It is encouraging to see that gender integration is finding a place in the mainstream policy discourse on development, and IWWAGE has a much larger role to play in informing this agenda in the coming years. The world of work as we know it is changing as well with the emergence of new models such as platform work and hybrid approaches - IWWAGE's contributions in this domain will bring in a forward-looking, inclusive and intersectional perspective to women's work.

The first phase of IWWAGE has been eventful, with considerable efforts focused on building a strong foundation rooted in collaboration. I hope that the next phase of IWWAGE is as exciting and IWWAGE will continue to inform policy and contribute to transformative change in women's access to gainful employment through evidence and data.

Sharon Buteau, LEAD at Krea University

Top (Left to Right): **Surabhi Awasthi, Divya Singh, Pallavi Duggal, Sharon Buteau, Sona Mitra, Preeti Bawa, Rashmi Mohanty, Preethi Rao, Neeraj Upadhyay**
Bottom (Left to Right): **Monica Shrivastav, Moumita Sarkar, Arpita Paul, Sruthi Kutty, Bidisha Mondal, Prakriti Sharma, Aparna G**





IWWAGE
INITIATIVE FOR WHAT WORKS TO ADVANCE WOMEN AND GIRLS IN THE ECONOMY

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