

# GENDER IN FOCUS

June 2023 | Volume 7



## ***Dear readers,***

Welcome to the first edition of Gender in Focus for the year 2023. The end of 2022 also marked the beginning of normalcy, we are now closest to what life was pre-covid. I know times might have been tough for everyone in some way or the other, but what makes it truly remarkable is that we could fight this pandemic. We hope and wish for a happy and healthy future.

As we look back at this remarkably successful journey, I feel extremely proud of what we have learnt, experienced, and achieved here at IWWAGE. I am delighted to share with you that this year marked five years since the inception of IWWAGE. Over the last five years, we have attempted to contribute to the discourse on what works to enhance women's economic empowerment in India by generating and synthesising evidence and testing solutions that hold potential for gender-transformative changes. 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'.

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.

Continuing IWWAGE's mission and commitment to furthering evidence and research to advance women's economic empowerment, this edition of gender in focus is a brief snapshot of all the milestones and progress made by IWWAGE towards identifying challenges and capturing best practices.

In this issue, we have included the insights from 'Together We Can', a compilation of case studies of how women's collectives from different Indian states address the issue of gender-based violence that could serve as an example for others.

I am also proud to share that IWWAGE partnered with Deen Dayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM) on planning, executing, and flagging off a nation-wide campaign focused on gender-based discrimination, 'Nayi Chetna' on November 25th, 2022. The campaign ran in all states and UTs of India, and within a period of a month, more than three crore were people involved in this community movement.

The issue also highlights the best practices from the states of Jharkhand, Odisha, Bihar, Tripura and Meghalaya on the utilization of the vulnerability reduction funds. It also brings to attention the latest state wise Women's Workforce Participation in India trends report series based on the Periodic Labour Force Surveys (PLFS) data.

Looking back at what a noteworthy journey this has been, brings a lot of joy to me and everyone here at IWWAGE. I hope you enjoy reading this edition of the newsletter and find it informative. We welcome your comments and feedback. You can write to us at: [communications@iwwage.org](mailto:communications@iwwage.org)

With best wishes,



**Sharon Buteau,**  
*Executive Director, LEAD at Krea University*

## Spotlight



# IWWAGE celebrates five years of evidence to action

*Shaping the future for women at work*

Global evidence shows that women make a significant contribution to the economy, yet they continue to be disproportionately affected by poverty, discrimination and exploitation. Despite economic growth, decline in fertility rates of women, and rise in schooling and improved learning outcomes for girls, Female Labour Force Participation (FLFP) levels in India remain alarmingly low. Resources, assets and other rights and entitlements also continue to remain low, leading to limited to no impacts on other social development outcomes. Economic empowerment of women is fundamental to achieving gender equality and inclusive growth.

The Initiative for What Works to Advance Women and Girls in the Economy (IWWAGE) was set up in 2018 to address this challenge. The initiative aims to build on existing research and generate new evidence to inform and facilitate the agenda of women's economic empowerment. IWWAGE is hosted by LEAD, an action-oriented research centre of IFMR Society and has strategic oversight and brand support from Krea University (sponsored by IFMR Society) to enable synergies between academia and the

*Economic empowerment of women is fundamental to achieving gender equality and inclusive growth.*

research centre. Since its inception, IWWAGE has partnered with renowned institutions, scholars and academicians, experts in the area in order to generate new evidence for developing deeper understanding of the issues around women's labour force participation. It has also encouraged young scholars to come forward and work in newer areas of research on these issues. The initiative has also nurtured young talent, built their capacity in secondary data analysis, gain experience of field-based studies and develop writing skills to produce a body of work from IWWAGE that adds to the existing debates and discourse around measuring women's work, identifying challenges and barriers faced by women in accessing labour markets, improving labour market outcomes for women as well as find mechanisms for improving and increasing opportunities for women in all sectors of the economy.

IWWAGE through partner organisations in Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha is testing innovative solutions on the ground to understand what works to build women's agencies. The initiative SWAYAM (Strengthening Women's institutions for Agency and Empowerment) provides technical assistance to DAY-NRLM under the Ministry of Rural Development on raising awareness and capacity building to integrate gender perspectives across different verticals of the NRLM and state cadres, establishing gender resource centers that respond to women's needs and support the optimization of existing resources. Additionally, IWWAGE through SWAYAM is also engaged in the evaluation of programmes that measure the strength of women's institutions as well as the efficacy of these programmes that endeavour to drive women's empowerment.

IWWAGE has engaged with a range of stakeholders in its journey over the last 5 years carrying forward its mandate of improving women's economic empowerment not only through evidence generation but also moving a step further and attempting to integrate its findings into policies for women

convening began with opening remarks by Sona Mitra, Principal Economist, IWWAGE leading to the keynote plenary.

The keynote plenary was delivered by the Hon'ble Chief Economic Adviser, Dr. V. Anantha Nageswaran, followed by a discussion with eminent panelists Mr. Kapil Viswanathan, President, Krea University and Ms Archana Vyas, Deputy Director, Communications, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Established in 2018, IWWAGE was founded with a shared belief in the transformative power of evidence to promote gender equality. IWWAGE focuses on building the evidence base on "What Works" to improve women's workforce participation in India and drive an action agenda for women's economic empowerment. With an attempt to present a glimpse into our journey so far and the hope for the next 5 years, IWWAGE launched a compendium titled 'From Evidence to Action: Shaping the Future of For Women at Work'. The compendium was released by Ms. Archana Vyas, Ms. Sharon Buteau, Dr. Sona Mitra, Ms. Preethi Rao, and Ms. Rashmi Mohanty.

## From Evidence to Action

SHAPING THE FUTURE FOR WOMEN AT WORK



– working with the government, helping with developing policy interventions with the private sector and raising awareness on critical issues by engaging with media and designing large scale campaigns.

A day-long convening was held in New Delhi to mark the 5 years of IWWAGE, showcase some of its milestones and discuss potential focus areas for the way forward. The

The next session was focused on 'Learnings around women's labour force participation'. The panelists comprised of Ms. Farzana Afridi, Professor of Economics, Indian Statistical Institute, Ms. Sabina Dewan, President & Executive Director, JustJobs Network, Ms. Soumya Kapoor Mehta, Senior Social Development Specialist, The World Bank, and Ms. Yamini Atmavilas, President, Strategy,





Data & Research, The Udaiti Foundation, the panel was moderated by Ms. Shamika Ravi, Member, Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister of India.

They shared their views around the low Female Labour Force participation (FLFP) in India. It is a matter of concern that FLFP is lower in India as compared to other low and middle-income countries. The very low FLFP makes India an outlier among countries with similar levels of education and income. The panellists highlighted the reasons behind the low level of FLFP and its persistence over time which include both supply-side and demand side factors.

The next session focused on partnerships with Government on women's economic empowerment. The speakers for this panel were Dr. Sakshi Khurana, NITI Aayog, Ms Nita Kejrewal, Jt. Secy, DAY-NRLM, MoRD and this session was moderated by Madhu Krishna, Deputy Director and India Gender Lead, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.



The last session of the day was on partnerships with organisations/ institutions. The panelists comprised of, Ms. Madhura Karnik, Chief Growth Officer, Haqdarshak Empowerment Solutions, Ms. Sumitra Mishra, Executive Director, Mobile Creches, Ms. Suneeta Dhar, Co-Convenor, Feminist Policy Collective, moderated by Ms. Sunaina Kumar T20 Coordinator and Senior Fellow, Observer Research Foundation. Their discussion was focused on collective view on building partnerships, civil society organisations as part of the solution and how crucial it is for the organizations to hold equity in the community.



The program ended with a closing address by Sharon Buteau, Executive Director, LEAD at Krea University. Ms. Buteau reminisced about the humble beginnings of IWWAGE five years back and how crucial it is to bring

the right people into the correct positions. She said, "IWWAGE as an institution is critical to creating knowledge and evidence around women's economic empowerment and engaging in constructive discourses around the issue; an institution like IWWAGE is a spark creator. Partnerships and connections bring effective solutions, and IWWAGE has been acting as a platform to bring people together and bring knowledge-based solutions that are embedded in the Indian context while also drawing from global evidence."

She closed her remarks by saying, "The world is changing, and it is pertinent to think of ways in which women can be equipped to deal with changes. We must persevere when we work with issues of such complexity. IWWAGE has pioneered and persisted in the last five years, and we look forward to many years."



**[CLICK HERE TO ACCESS THE COMPENDIUM FLIPBOOK](#)**

**[CLICK HERE TO ACCESS THE FULL RECORDING OF THE CONVENING](#)**







# Launch of Annual Campaign 'Nayi Chetna'

*A step against gender based discrimination*

Gender-based discrimination, often seen in the form of violence against women, girls and gender-diverse individuals, continues to be one of the biggest deterrents to achieving self-growth, well-being and a life of dignity. The National Family Health Survey (NFHS)-5 data reveals that 30% of women between the age of 18 and 49 have experienced violence (physical, sexual or emotional) since 15 years of age. It also reveals that as many as 77% women never sought help from anyone about the violence inflicted on them. Figures from the National Crime Records Bureau's (NCRB) 'Crime in India 2021' report show that India registered 31,677 cases of rape in 2021 - an average 86 daily - while nearly 49 cases of crime against women were lodged every single hour. With a global rate of 1 in 3 women being a victim of violence, and given its physiological and psychological impacts, this human rights violation deters individuals from achieving their full potential and living a life of their choice. Individuals from socially marginalized groups are more acutely affected as gender-based violence is an added layer of vulnerability.

IWWAGE in partnership with Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM), UNICEF and Roshni recognize this social evil as a

*IWWAGE partnered with Deen Dayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM) for a community-led nation-wide campaign focused on gender-based discrimination, 'Nayi Chetna' on 25 Nov 2022.*

hindrance towards achieving individual and social development and aims to take necessary actions advance the rights of women, girls, and gender-diverse individuals. Strategic efforts have been made towards gender-mainstreaming by integrating gender approaches into its policies and programming to address gender inequality. These include building capacities of rural community-based institutions to identify and take action against issues of gender-based discrimination and setting up institutional mechanisms to make this process sustainable. The staff on ground and in the field were also given training and sensitization to integrate gender approaches into operations to create an enabling environment for multi-sectoral gender-responsive and transformative interventions in rural communities.

To add momentum and build on these ongoing efforts against gender-based discrimination, an annual national-level Gender Campaign against Gender-based discrimination, 'Nayi Chetna' was initiated. This month-long campaign was flagged off on the 25th of November 2022 marking the International Day for Elimination of Violence Against Women and Girls, ending on the 23rd of December 2022. The campaign was graced and launched by Hon'ble Sh. Giriraj Singh, Union Minister for Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Government of India and Sadhvi Niranjan Jyoti, Minister of State for Rural Development, Government of India, along with other senior officials from MoRD. IWWAGE also showcased an animated movie called 'Kamli Ki Kahaani' translating as 'The story of Kamli', a case study-based story following the lead 'Kamli', a victim of domestic violence. Through the medium of the video our aim was to educate the audience on various forms of violence and on redressal mechanisms provided by the government for anyone who may be a victim of violence.

The goal of the campaign is to advance the agency and rights of women and gender diverse individuals, by addressing structural barriers for dignified living with no fear and discrimination and violence based on their gender and intersectional identities. This marks the first campaign as the campaign will be observed annually for the next five years, with a focus on specific themes responding to gender equity each year. Importantly, this

is envisioned in the spirit of a 'Jan Andolan' or people's movement with follow-up actions planned for the rest of the year beyond the month-long campaign. It will thus gradually work towards deepening an intersectional approach to address multiple vulnerabilities, enhanced convergence and deepening the understanding of gender and generating relevant and ownership for multisectoral action.

The campaign ran in all 28 states and 9 union territories of India. This campaign was implemented by all states in collaboration with CSO partners, and actively executed by all levels including the State, District, Block engaging the Community Institutions along with the extended community. It also marked the inauguration of 160 Gender Resource Centres (GRCs) in 13 states. GRCs are intended to act as a catalyst to support women through social, legal & economic empowerment in private and public spaces, within the family, community and at the workplace. There are 1,251 gender resource centres set up across the country from where women facing gender violence can seek help. The Campaign also brought together all line departments and stakeholders to create a concerted effort in acknowledging, identifying, and addressing issues of violence. There was an array of activities which were conducted during the campaign, some of which were night walk, rallies, street plays, wall paintings, hosting of legal and gender camps and women leadership workshops.



## Community-led National Campaign Against Gender-based Discrimination

25<sup>th</sup> November, 2022 - 23<sup>rd</sup> December, 2022

**#SahengeNahiKahenge**





# Barriers And Opportunities for Aspirational Women Entrepreneurs

## *Insights from survey conducted in Delhi*

The literature on feminisation of poverty provides compelling evidence that women in India are confronted, time and again, with the harsh reality of their households' poor economic condition while struggling to rise out of poverty. As a result, women turn to some or the other form of self-employment to provide for basic necessities for their families. In fact, the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2018-19 indicated that more than half of the India's female labour force is self-employed. A booming Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) sector in India over the last decade has also enabled women to run their own enterprises, especially in the microenterprise category. While balancing the demands of households and needs of their businesses, women entrepreneurs often work to survive on a sustenance basis.

At the same time, research has also demonstrated that, over time, encouragement of women entrepreneurs improves the socioeconomic conditions of households. Thus, it is important that women are supported in their entrepreneurial efforts to allow them to establish enterprises and grow them into sustainable businesses.

Historically, in India, household gender norms and restrictions on women, along with lack of education and mentorship among women, have proven to be significant obstacles in nurturing women entrepreneurs, thereby inhibiting women's advancement.

Prioritising the agenda of socio-economic empowerment of women, the Government of National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi announced the Saheli Samanvay Kendra Scheme as part of its 2021-22 budget with the intention of setting up easily accessible local incubation centres to support women-led start-ups. The Saheli Samanvay Kendras (SSKs) have been set up at Anganwadi Hubs (AWHs) to serve as convergence-cum-facilitation centres that provide a vibrant space for women and children to engage in dialogue, receive services and information, and become sensitised on various social issues.

This study was undertaken to serve as a needs assessment to help support the design and implementation of skill training programmes for existing and aspirational women entrepreneurs, in partnership with the

Delhi Skill and Entrepreneurship University and the Government of NCT of Delhi. It started with the objective of accurately understanding demographic information of women and girls and their motivation and willingness to work, interest in business types, and potential barriers to establishing or expanding livelihood opportunities. Through both quantitative data and qualitative information garnered, this study provides insights on enterprise readiness of aspirational women entrepreneurs while gauging their appetite for uptake of skill training programmes.

The sample for the Enterprise Readiness Survey consisted of 522 women of diverse social identities and educational backgrounds across five heterogeneous AWHs in Delhi. AWHs were sampled to capture respondents of varying household incomes, home ownership, migrant status and financial autonomy, and different levels of digital and financial inclusion. A large majority of the respondents (79 per cent) were housewives (65 per cent), unemployed (8 per cent), students (5 per cent) and retired or pensioners (1 per cent). Of the remaining respondents, half were self-employed (including in home-based business and street vending), while the other half reported having

salaried jobs. The average monthly household income in cases where the respondents were housewives was particularly low, in the range of INR 5,000 - 15,000.

More than 70 per cent of the non-entrepreneurs reported that they would be interested in starting their own business. Most women are inspired to set up an enterprise to supplement their family income (77 per cent); some also desired to gain economic independence (11 per cent) or to pursue a personal interest or a pastime. While 40 per cent of the aspirational entrepreneurs said that they could dedicate three to five hours a day on enterprise activities, a large number (64 per cent) felt that childcare and domestic responsibilities would restrict them from doing so.

This analysis and other findings detailed in this report allow us to provide inputs towards the design of the SSK scheme itself as well as the Women Works Programme (WWP). The programme trains, and upskills the women in business skills like any other startup incubator. WWP will, in a nutshell, serve as an incubator for micro businesses by women, in Delhi. Among other suggestions made, key recommendations are also captured in this report.

[READ THE REPORT HERE](#)

## Gendering Madhya Pradesh State Rural Livelihoods Mission Institutions

### *The case of gender justice program in Sheopur*

The Gender Justice Program (GJP) was implemented by a civil society organization (CSO), ANANDI,<sup>1</sup> in collaboration with the Madhya Pradesh State Rural Livelihoods Mission (MPSRLM). It was a two-year program which aimed to integrate gender within MPSRLM's institutions to advance rural women's rights and entitlements. GJP was one of the four gender pilots supported by Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) under its SWAYAM (Strengthening Women's Institutions for Agency and Empowerment) initiative, with IWWAGE (Initiative for What Works to Advance Women and Girls in the

Economy) as an umbrella coordination and learning partner.

The GJP was the gender pilot implemented in Sheopur and Karhal blocks of Sheopur district of Madhya Pradesh. One of the most crucial achievements of the program has been MPSRLM's uptake of the GJP in 18 districts (covering 19 blocks and 60 CLFs), including Sheopur. The willingness to carry out gender work is evident at the state level and also on part of the senior district officials, but block level Nodal officials (Nodals) who are in closest touch with the program have had a mixed response. However, most

Block officials have been supportive. A process documentation of the GJP has been conducted, based on which, this proof-of-concept report has also been prepared, along with case studies.

The process document report presents the findings of the study and analyzes the strategies and processes through which rural women were empowered to claim their rights and entitlements by exercising their voice and agency. It analyzes the strategies and activities, the process of change, the outcomes achieved, and the challenges and limitations faced. It also includes some top-line observations of the work carried out by community leaders nurtured by the project, in the period immediately after project paused<sup>2</sup>, i.e., April– August 2021.

The Proof-of-Concept report demonstrates the changes (outcomes) enabled by GJP, the pathways of change (strategies and

processes) and their embeddedness in the MPSRLM structures and processes. Further, it explores whether the Theory of Change (TOC) with which the GJP started was achieved and presents a roadmap for scaling up GJP within the SRLMs. This is not an evaluative report. Rather, it draws from the process documentation of the strategies and outcomes of the GJP during the first phase implemented between April 2019 to March 2021.

The Case Studies are a documentation of the journeys of change of the Samta Sakhis appointed as part of the Gender Justice Program (GJP) in Sheopur and Karhal blocks of the Sheopur district of Madhya Pradesh (MP). The report also documents narratives of change in the voice of four Samta Sakhis and one Master Trainer. These are their voices from the ground, the stories of their struggle and survival and how they led the process of change in their own communities.

[READ THE REPORTS HERE](#)





# Women's Workforce Participation in India: Factsheets

## *Analysis of the state-wise trends*

Female workforce participation rate (FWPR) is an important indicator of women's economic empowerment and is also reflective of women's agency at home and beyond. FWPR remains low in India despite economic development, decreasing fertility rates and rising education levels of women and girls. On the other hand, there is a high incidence of unpaid work of women and increased time poverty, i.e., a drastic drop in leisure time and loss of choice over allocation of women's time across various activities, highlighting the non-remunerative and unrecognised nature of women's work. Women's workforce participation varies across rural and urban regions and there are sizable inter-state variations as well. There is a need to examine women's work in India, in this context.

IWWAGE's Women's Workforce Participation in India: State-wise Trends is a series of state factsheets highlighting important aspects of women's employment across the states in India. The factsheets use secondary data provided by the National Sample Surveys' Periodic Labour Force Surveys (PLFS), PLFS 2017-18, PLFS 2018-19 and the latest from

PLFS 2020-21. The factsheets also draw on data from the employment – unemployment surveys (EUS) conducted by the same agency in previous years as well as data from other sources to support state specific analysis.

The series reveals interesting trends in women's employment in Indian states such as changes in the composition of women's workforce by employment status over the years, disaggregation of women workers across major sectors, status of non-wage benefits available to women in regular salaried work as well as insights into the performance of MGNREGA within states. As per the 2020-21 Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS), the Female Labour Force Participation Rate (FLFPR) is 25.1%. 2021 estimates by the International Labour Organisation mark the labour force participation of women and girls over 15 years even lower, at 19%. The PLFS' quarterly bulletins for 2022 show that in urban areas, the FLFPR was 20.4% (current weekly status in January-March) and 20.9% (April-June) – although it seems to be recovering, recent setbacks such as the pandemic have increased the barriers for women.

## Factsheets Insights

Our latest state level factsheets analysing PLFS data between 2017-2021 for five states provide the following snapshots on female workforce participation rates:



In **Punjab**, in the rural region, Female Work Participation Rate (FWPR) has doubled from 9.9% to 17.9% between 2017-18 and 2020-21. On the other hand, in urban regions, there is a slight improvement by 3 percentage points from 12.3% to 15.4% in the same period. This also shows the convergence of women's participation rate in both regions.

[READ THE FACTSHEET HERE](#)



In **Telangana**, there are considerable variations among rural and urban women. The Work Participation Rate (WPR) for rural women was higher than that of urban women throughout 2017 to 2021 by at least 15 percent points. The WPR of rural women has increased over time, from 25.9% in 2017-18 to 45.1% in 2020-21, while the WPR of urban women has also moved from 15.9% in 2019-20 to 19.7% in 2020-21.

[READ THE FACTSHEET HERE](#)



In **Kerala**, the FWPR has increased at a faster pace in rural areas as compared to urban areas. The WPR increased from 16.6% in 2017-18 to 25.6% in 2020-21 for rural women and, for urban women, it has increased from 16% to 20.8% in the same reference period.

[READ THE FACTSHEET HERE](#)



In **Assam**, there have been some positive changes in the FWPR both in rural and urban areas. In the former, there has been a notable increase by 9.8 percentage points from 8.1% to 17.9% between 2017-18 and 2020-21, respectively. In the urban areas, there is a marginal improvement by 2.3 percentage points from 11% to 13.3% in the same reference period.

[READ THE FACTSHEET HERE](#)



In **Chhattisgarh**, the WPR for both men and women across rural and urban regions experienced a slight dip during the pandemic years of 2019-20. However, the FWPR in rural areas significantly rose from 38.9% in 2018-19 to 46.2% in 2020-21, which is also 24.6 percentage points higher than the national trend. This has also added to the existing rural-urban FWPR gap, where the urban FWPR is about 26.5 percentage points lower than the rural FWPR in 2020-21.

[READ THE FACTSHEET HERE](#)



## Learning Document On Vulnerability Reduction Fund

***A social inclusion strategy helping vulnerable households cope with external and internal vulnerabilities***

Vulnerability is said to have two facets: an external aspect of shocks, seasonality, and critical trends; and an internal aspect of defencelessness caused by the lack of ability and means to cope. In the wake of an adverse event that pushes people into vulnerability, resilience is the ability of individuals/systems to absorb and recover from the impact of disruptive events without making fundamental changes in everyday functioning or structure. One way to help people/ households become resilient to external shocks is to provide them with access to capital.

Deen Dayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihood Mission (DAY-NRLM), a Government of India programme, has been working effectively through an array of interventions in pulling people out of poverty

and has put in place various strategies for social inclusion to ensure no one falls behind.

One of the social inclusion strategies designed by the Mission is the provision of a Vulnerability Reduction Fund (VRF) to help vulnerable households cope with external and internal vulnerabilities.

*This learning practice document is an attempt to understand how the states of Bihar, Jharkhand, Meghalaya, Odisha, and Tripura have been using their VRFs.*

This learning practice document is an attempt to understand how the states of Bihar, Jharkhand, Meghalaya, Odisha, and Tripura have been using their VRFs. The stories from these states show the myriad ways in which VRF has been disbursed to support vulnerable households. In terms of state specificities, an interesting utilisation of VRF in Odisha is the development of nutrition gardens called Mo Upakari Bagicha (MUB). Odisha has appointed Krishi Mitras, women who have



gained knowledge on agriculture and help other women and households understand the need for and importance of agriculture. They encourage people to develop their nutri gardens and provide handholding support to the farmers.

It contains interesting case studies from the field, one such being the case study of Soni which highlights how many like her, who lost their jobs and means of livelihood during the lockdown imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, sustained themselves but also earned an income through the nutrition garden supported by VRF.

Tripura, a state that is connected to the rest of India only by one road, faced widespread food insecurity as well as a dire dearth of necessities during the COVID-19 lockdown. Given this, in Tripura, VRF was particularly useful during the COVID-19 crisis. The timely COVID-19-specific guideline for VRF disbursement from the National Mission Management Unit (NMMU) to the states to fulfill the needs of the vulnerable without following the three-day Vulnerability Reduction Planning (VRP) exercise has been a significant move. The Village Organisations (VOs) were oriented to fast forward the process and make sure that VRF was used to meet the needs of vulnerable families. VRF was predominantly used in Tripura for food and nutrition (to meet consumption needs) and help build livelihoods. It was also provided for medical treatment during the COVID-19 crisis. VOs procured basic food and household items such as dal, rice, oil, and soap, and distributed them to both Self Help Group (SHG) and non-SHG members. SHGs also prepared cooked food for other highly vulnerable groups.

In Bihar, VRF is classified as Food Security Fund (FSF) and Health Risk Fund (HRF). As Bihar is a state that witnessed large-scale return migration during the COVID-19 lockdown, the FSF was extensively used during this time. Bihar practices an exemplary VRP process that involves detailed micro-planning, financing and then community procurement and management. For the utilisation of FSF, a micro plan was prepared that listed food items required for each SHG, based on demand. A mechanism

for procuring these food items at the best price and distributing them to the required households was formulated.

In Meghalaya, VRF is used for strengthening livelihoods. It is prioritised for the economically marginalised, Scheduled Tribes (STs), single women, and orphan girls. One of the most common livelihood-generating activities in Meghalaya is piggery farming. Apart from this, VRF is also used for starting dry fish shops, grocery shops, vegetable shops, and fermented bean shops. Meghalaya has made plans to augment VRF so that vulnerable households can be supported continuously without any depletion of the fund. Interestingly, in some VOs, every Friday, all SHG members bring their agricultural produce and organise a voluntary sales day; the money so collected is submitted to VRF.

In Jharkhand, the implementation of VRP and VRF has been a learning exercise and the state has been updating its policy based on this learning. To define vulnerability, a robust list of state-specific vulnerabilities has been mapped and developed in a participatory manner; 35 vulnerabilities have been included in the list. The state has also developed a web-based application for tracking and providing support financially and non-financially. The app is aimed at making the approval process more streamlined as well.

Overall, VRF has been appreciated by all states as the only fund available at the VO level to meet emergency or vulnerability needs. Another unique feature of this fund is that, in many states, it also caters to vulnerable households outside the DAY-NRLM fold. It allows each VO to address its specific and pertinent problems, be it food insecurity, livelihood creation, or natural calamity.

The VRP process of identifying vulnerable households has been appreciated as this helps triangulate already existing Socio-Economic Caste Census data on vulnerable families. The household planning exercise provides an opportunity to understand each vulnerable household in detail, especially its unique problems, and record the multiple forms of vulnerability that it faces. This provides an opportunity for the household

*Our study used a sample of 165 villages across the three selected blocks, comprising 1700 SHG women in 234 target groups Overall, VRF has been appreciated by all states as the only fund available at the VO level to meet emergency or vulnerability needs.*

to plan for itself along with the Executive Committee officials of the VO. The process helps to overcome the shackles of caste, gender, colour, caste as well as social ostracism and move towards social inclusion and comprehensive development. The VRF's flexibility (it can be given as a grant or a loan with zero or minimum interest) makes it a unique and accessible product for the most vulnerable households to access. Its flexibility also extends to the terms of repayment of the loan; the repayment schedule can be decided based on the vulnerability and repayment capacity of the household.

The VRF has an efficient system of disbursement with a quick turnaround time. It is also a very timely grant. Since it makes funds available at the VO level, they are released within seven days of VO approval. This timely receipt of the fund makes the VRF an advantageous choice for households. The unique features of this fund made it even more beneficial for vulnerable households during the COVID-19 pandemic as many were pushed into poverty due to loss of jobs, return of migrant labourers, food insecurities, and health emergencies. This can be seen in the upward rate of VRF utilisation in most states during this period.

## Compendium Of Case Studies From Different Indian States

### *The redressal mechanisms in the institutional architecture to address gender-based violence*

Existing social norms make women and girls more vulnerable to physical, sexual, and emotional abuse compared to boys and men. In such situations, women draw strength and hope from the collectives they belong to and institutional mechanisms available to them at the village, block and district level through the engendered strategy of the Deen Dayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihood Mission (DAY-NRLM).

The DAY-NRLM efforts are directed towards empowering women's collectives with information on their rights and entitlements, along with avenues to seek redressal for their grievances. The on-ground experiences reveal that women are able to not only resolve issues at community level, but also reach out to formal redressal mechanisms for resolution of higher order challenges. This compendium is a collection of stories of grit, perseverance and support offered

by women's collectives and institutional mechanisms available within the DAY-NRLM ecosystem in their fight against gender-based violence. It encapsulates ten stories across six States of India with the objective of sharing learnings of how an issue of such complexity can be addressed using DAY-NRLM's

engendered strategies. It also discusses about the existing institutional architecture to address gender and rights-based issues for women, like Gender Point Person, Village Organisation Social Action Committee (VO SAC), Sakhi Manch (GPP Collective), Gender Forum, Cluster-Level Federation Social Action Committees (CLF SAC) and Gender Resource Centre (GRC).

All the names in the stories have been changed to protect the identities of women and their families involved. Some stories are unique to tribal contexts, like Phulmani's fight against witch-hunting in Jharkhand. With the CLF's

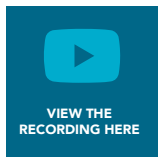
*The on-ground experiences reveal that women are able to not only resolve issues at community level, but also reach out to formal redressal mechanisms for resolution of higher order challenges.*

intervention, over 400 women from 20 VOs rallied against witch hunting, followed by a written commitment by Panchayat officials to protect not only Phulmani, but all women from witch hunting. Rita's story from Assam highlights how she was able to draw strength from the support offered by her natal family along with the strategies applied by the VO to ensure an end to the domestic violence meted out by her husband. Sita's story from Madhya Pradesh unravels her struggle for economic independence after she was deserted by her husband and documents the support she received from Samta Sakhis. Unlike Rita from Assam, Kamli from Madhya Pradesh did not receive support from her natal home, and the efforts by the Self-Help Group (SHG) and the Cluster Level Federation (CLF) were unsuccessful in changing her husband's mindset. Her struggle with domestic violence ended only with the intervention from the Gender Justice Centre. Lakshmi was traumatised by her son's abusive behaviour. When repeated police complaints did not work, Snehittha Gender Help Desk, Kerala facilitated a response from

the Revenue Divisional Officer, Panchayat President, and the Police. Reshmi's husband was addicted to pornographic videos and forced her into performing sexual acts against her will. Refusal to give into his whims resulted in serious injuries to her. Snehittha aided her with medical, legal and counselling support. Lalitha's story from Andhra Pradesh brings out the circumstances that lead to horrors of trafficking for sexual exploitation. Support from the Gender Community Resource Person (CRP) not just busted the trafficking network but helped her secure a loan for livelihood support. The second story from Andhra Pradesh highlights the issue of child marriage and how the gender CRP Preethi was able to prevent its solemnisation through appropriate mechanisms despite resistance from the families of the bride and groom. The incident from Nagaland stands out as it highlights the issue of wage parity. The issue was discussed in the SHG meetings followed by the VO SAC, and a formal appeal to the Village Council, which decided to increase the wages for all field-related work for women.







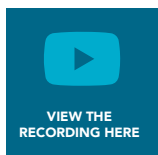
## IWWAGE Seminar Series

### Women, Work and Digital Platforms

We revived our seminar series, after a two year hiatus due to the pandemic. Ms. Sabina Dewan, the co-founder of JustJobs Network joined us on 19th October 2022 to present and discuss "Women, Work and Digital Platforms". She outlined the current state of women's workforce participation globally and in India, discussed how digital platforms and gig economy have impacted their workforce participation and the key challenges that exist, and concluded with providing recommendations on improving the work offered to women through these platforms.

The session ended with a fruitful discussion from all participants who joined in the seminar, both on the web and in-person.

[READ ABOUT THE SEMINAR HERE](#)

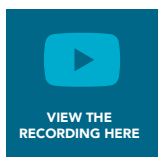


### Women In STEM In India

Dr Nandana Sengupta, Assistant Professor at the School of Public Policy, IIT Delhi, joined us on Jan 11, 2023 to discuss the status of women in STEM in India. She talked about her personal journey, enveloping literature related to top women in STEM and discussions about the supernumerary seats scheme.

She talked about the stereotypes that she faced in school, the rampant gender divide in educational and professional settings citing an example of how women's roles even in liberal institutions are often limited to "academic housekeeping". She also shed light on the Supernumerary scheme i.e. Increase in female representation in IIT classrooms at least by 20% by 2020 without substantially affecting seats for male students. She further covered some policy level action that can contribute to making STEM fields accessible for women.

[READ MORE ABOUT THE SESSION HERE](#)



### Gender-responsiveness Of Union Budget 2023

Dr. Dipa Sinha, Assistant Professor at the School of Liberal Studies, Ambedkar University Delhi (AUD) joined us for a session of IWWAGE seminar series. The talk focused on spending by the government which has an impact on women, especially in the social sector. The two takeaways from the Union Budget:

- Crowding-in of investment and reduction of fiscal deficit. The question arises as to which sector the spending has been being cut.
- One of the seven priorities (Saptarishi) is the empowerment of women as one of the agenda items

She also discussed the extent to which an increase in capital expenditure can lead to employment generation is questionable. Dr Sinha also emphasised on improving public and health infrastructure as it can lead to human development which will in turn increase productivity and generate employment opportunities.

[READ MORE ABOUT THE SESSION HERE](#)

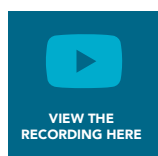


# WeProsper Research Salon Series

On October 19, 2022, [WeProsper](#) hosted a session focused on childcare, featuring research presentations by the International Center for Research on Women, the Center for Global Development, Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL), Initiative for What Works to Advance Women and Girls in the Economy (IWWAGE), and Uthabiti Africa. Following the presentations, discussants from ActionAid International and Oxfam International provided reflections and connected research to ongoing global advocacy on childcare. WeProsper's Research Salons offer an opportunity for coalition members to share research on thematic areas of joint interest in order to expand the knowledge base and inform coalition advocacy on women's economic empowerment, justice, and rights.

In this brief, key takeaways from research presented by each organization are outlined, followed by policy and advocacy implications shared by the discussants.

[READ THE BRIEF HERE](#)



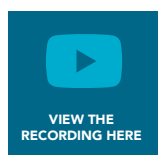
## Continued Presence At gLOCAL 2023

### **Understanding Gender (relations) in Local Culture and Context through Ethnography: Learnings, Challenges, and Adaptations**

IWWAGE held a panel discussion on 30th May 2023 at the gLOCAL evaluation week, powered by Global Evaluation Initiative (GEI). The discussion was led by Moumita Sarkar, Senior Policy and Program Manager – IWWAGE and Pratyusha Baruah, Senior Design Researcher, Advisor – Anthropic, it was moderated by Surabhi Awasthi, Senior Research Associate – IWWAGE.

SWAYAM initiated a qualitative process evaluation in collaboration with Anthropic to generate evidence around intervention that supports empowerment of women collectives in selected districts of Odisha and Madhya Pradesh. The program inputs include building capacity of cadres, institutions for strengthening understanding and undertake actions and interventions through institutional platforms.

In this session, the audience learned about the key challenges and adaptations in developing innovative frameworks to measure complex outcomes in different socio-cultural contexts. The panellists also shared methodological implications, detailed mitigation strategies in navigating the field and the local context in developing a more culturally responsive evaluation framework. The panellists also shared what worked and what else could be done to strengthen the program.

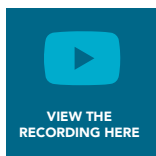


### **Poster presentation on Assessing Women's Well-Being: Insights from NFHS Data (2015-16 to 2019-21)**

The National Family Health Survey (NFHS) provides a broad overview of the socio-economic conditions of women in India from 2015-16 to 2019-21. It sheds light on the challenges faced by women in India, including unequal access to basic amenities and healthcare services, limited representation in economic sphere, and persistent forms of discrimination and violence based on gender.

The research team at IWWAGE also presented a poster at the gLOCAL evaluation week on June 01st 2023. The presentation was led by Aparna G, Research Associate, with support from Bidisha Mondal, Research Fellow and moderated by Prakriti Sharma, Senior Research Associate.

This session was well attended with engaging audience, it consisted of a poster presentation to assess the various indicators contributing to the well-being of women, followed by question-and-answer round with the audience.



## IE Thinc Gender Series In Collaboration With The Indian Express

At the second edition of the IE Thinc Gender series held on June 30th 2022, presented by The Indian Express with IWWAGE and LEAD at Krea University focused on linking skills with opportunity to access markets. Aniruddha Brahamachari was part of a panel discussion on women's collectives: change makers from the ground up. The other panelists included prominent personalities like Smt Nita Kejriwal, Smt Chetna Sinha, Ms Anjini Kochar, Ms Bijal Brahmbhatt, Ms Madhu Krishna and Hasina Kharbhih. The panellists discussed at length focusing on SHGs, Village organisations, cluster level federations, the power of skilling, collectivisation and enabling factors such as government partnerships, access to training, flexible working hours and access to raw materials.

[READ THE ARTICLE HERE](#)



## How We Fared At The 30th IAFFE Conference

IWWAGE was also a part of the 30th Annual IAFFE Conference 2022 at Geneva, Switzerland Parushya, Nidhi Pandey, Karthikeya (LEAD at Krea University) and Prof Hema Swaminathan jointly held a session on low labour force participation (LFP) of women in India, focusing on explaining the existing gaps in the policies. Prof Swaminathan discussed about the use of life history calendar method to map key life events for women and how the onset and sequencing of these events affect their labour force participation rates. Nidhi Gyan Pandey presented an innovative application of classification trees to make effective policies for bringing women in LFP. Karthikeya shed light on a study on measuring gender bias in recruitment by enterprise owners in India.



## Roundtable discussion held by IWWAGE at the 63rd Indian Society of Labour Economics (ISLE) Conference

IWWAGE was part of the 63rd Indian Society of Labour Economics (ISLE) conference held at Rajiv Gandhi University, Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh. They were part of a roundtable panel discussion on 'Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) and women entrepreneurship', that took place on 2nd March 2023. The Chairperson of the roundtable was Jeemol Unni (Professor of Economics at Amrut Mody School of Management, Ahmedabad University). The session was co-chaired and moderated by Sona Mitra (Principal Economist, IWWAGE-LEAD at Krea University). The panellists were N.Manimekalai (Director and Head, Department of Women's Studies Bharathidasan University), K.P Kannan (Chairman, Laurie Baker Centre for Habitat Studies), Dinesh Awasthi (Vice Chancellor at Lok Jagruti University, Ahmedabad), Sakshi Khurana (Senior Specialist, Labour, Employment and Skill Development, NITI Aayog), Keshab Das (Professor at Gujarat Institute of Development Research, Ahmedabad), Radhicka Kapoor (Senior Fellow at Indian Council for Research on



International Economic Relations, New Delhi), Preethi Rao (Associate Director, LEAD at Krea University), Jarjum Ete (Former Chairperson, Arunachal Pradesh State Commission for Women), and Bidisha Mondal (Research Fellow, IWWAGE-LEAD at Krea University).

The roundtable focussed on a few pertinent questions on barriers to women entrepreneurship and proposed effective policy measures to address those concerns. It was emphasized in the discussion that the distinction of women entrepreneurs with respect to their size of capital, number of employees, push and pull factors, is of pivotal importance to formulate an effective entrepreneurship policy as the barriers/ challenges differ among them depending on these factors.

According to the discussion, the challenges to these subsistence entrepreneurs include i) individual-specific barriers like lack of aptitude, technical and business skills due to lack of training; poor self-confidence and decision-making abilities; lack of access to business network; low financial resources; poor access to market information; and ii) restrictive social norms like disproportionately high share of household responsibilities; mobility constraints; lack of family support; lack of favourable property rights leading to lack of collateral and low access to financial resources. These challenges become more severe for women coming from marginalized socio-economic background.

The actionable points suggested in the panel discussion to boost women entrepreneurship consist of promoting women entrepreneurs in non-traditional sectors, closing gender gap in digital knowledge and access to digital devices, enhancing financial literacy and inclusion among women entrepreneurs, and addressing the social norms and legal framework hindering women entrepreneurs. A policy-oriented and customized approach to the varied challenges of women-entrepreneurs is much needed at this hour.



### Panel Discussion On Measuring Women's Labour Force Participation And The Way Forward

IWWAGE organised a panel and a roundtable discussion at the Indian Society of Labour Economics' (ISLE) 62nd annual conference organised by the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT Roorkee in association with Institute of Human Development (IHD) between 11th-13th April 2022. The aim of the panel discussion was to highlight such measurement issues and innovative mechanisms to build into the existing Labour Force Survey to better capture women's' routine work. The panel responded to some crucial questions highlighting existing gaps around information measuring labour force participation in India and the units of measurement. The discussion also revolved around restrictions of primary activities in the unpaid sector, considerations to factors like change in household size, mode of data collection, self-reporting, and availability of panel data to understand women's life cycle dynamics. The implications, limitations and advantages of various forms of surveys like ethnographic, time use, workforce, and individual were also discussed amongst the panel members.



# The Launch of National Family Health Survey Factsheet

## What trends do these figures reveal?

The National Family Health Survey (NFHS) factsheet provides a broad overview of the socio-economic conditions of women in India from 2015-16 to 2019-21. Their decision-making power, access to basic amenities, and their skewed responsibility for provision of resources in the household are highlighted. While, on the one hand, certain women are privileged enough to live independently,

regressive social norms keep others tied inside their homes. These two categories of women can be seen as the two extremes of the spectrum across which lie various shades of women with varying degrees of agency and freedom.

*The survey is conducted by the International Institute of Population Sciences (IIPS) to gauge fertility levels, maternal and child health, and mortality at the national and state levels.*

The NFHS dataset is used as the instrument for understanding the women's conditions. The survey is conducted by the International Institute of Population Sciences (IIPS) to gauge fertility levels, maternal and child health, and mortality at the national and state levels. NFHS 5 was conducted in 2019-21 and includes new topics, such as preschool education, disability, access to a toilet facility,

death registration, bathing practices during menstruation, and methods and reasons for abortion.

The factsheet written by Aparna G and Bidisha Mondal is divided into six themes. The first one features the household profile. The quality of infrastructure, such as access to fuel, directly affects the workload of women. If a woman collects wood for cooking purposes, then the effort and time spent by the woman is much higher than that of a woman living in a household with liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) access<sup>2</sup>. The second theme highlights access to education and media exposure of women. This is an important factor which unlocks a woman's future to its fullest potential. The third theme looks at reproductive and maternal health. The well-being of a female in a household is often neglected by other members. Several welfare programmes have been implemented to bring this aspect to the forefront. The next theme focuses on violence faced by women, and adds on to the previous section on well-being of women. Finally, the sixth and the last theme focuses on women's work outside the home. In a utopian situation, a woman whose well-being is ensured would have the ability and time to work outside. However, usually, women's engagements often remain distress driven — women end up managing both the house and work. Thus, women carry a double burden of both home and work outside and have little time for leisure and recuperation.

# Women and Work Trends Report

## ***How post pandemic job recovery for women has been slower than men***

IWWAGE and The Quantum Hub (TQH) released the 2022 edition of the 'Women and work' report today. The report captures trends on women's participation in the labour force and the factors affecting it by highlighting different developments, both policy-focused and programmatic, that have defined work for women in India in 2022. The report also recognises the opportunity available to India under the G20 presidency to not only proactively set the agenda for 'women-led development' but also plan for the next phase of growth.

This report highlights how exclusion from the workforce could very well be permanent for many women – already data shows that fewer women have been returning to the workplace. The unemployment rate among rural females increased by 1.6% while that among rural males decreased by 1.2%. Further, an analysis of the PLFS data between 2017-2021 for five states by IWWAGE provides significant differences in the workforce participation rate (WPR) of women in urban and rural regions. IWWAGE analysed the monthly trends of formal labour force jobs through EPFO data for a one year period from October 2021 to October 2022, highlighting that the monthly share of women's registration has constantly remained lower than 28% despite the extent of job losses during the pandemic being higher for women. This indicates that the jobs recovered in the year have not been evenly distributed. The report's analysis of the informal sector through the gender-disaggregated data available on the E-shram card portal also

shows that certain sectors like apparel and domestic household work continue to be highly feminised.

The report also mentions a few key government schemes like the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee (MGNREGA), Urban Employment Guarantee Scheme (UEGS) and initiatives targeting to enhance compatibility for the future of work. In 2022, about 56.02% of women's persondays were generated under the scheme, an increase from 54.71% in 2021. Under the MGNREGA scheme, initiatives are being taken by the state government where women are now being appointed as female mates in villages that help manage and supervise MNREGA jobs and job sites. Apart from taking stock of the current situation in terms of female labour force participation, IWWAGE has also highlighted a few recommendations covering series of aspects such as routine maintenance of gender-disaggregated datasets, increased investment in skilling women in emerging and non-traditional jobs, women's access to social security, improved digital and financial services to name a few. In light of India's G20 presidency, the report also includes a wish list for 2023. We hope this report is able to assist policymakers and researchers in making progress towards gender equity and women's economic participation in India. Swipe through this report for insights on female labour force participation in formal and informal work, and the year that 2022 was for women in leadership.

**READ THE REPORT HERE**



# Gender Modules

## ***An attempt to deepen the understanding of gender in collaboration with DAY-NRLM***

Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM), an anti-poverty flagship scheme premised on the principles of collectivising women from primary to higher levels for better access to livelihoods and finance. The scheme has focused approach towards gender mainstreaming in the program architecture. It recognises that it is fundamental to the deepen the understanding of the different gender concepts, human behavior and lived experience of women who face the challenges of patriarchy. The importance of understanding the cause-and-effect relationship of positioning women in the community/household as strong economic and social entity within the program has to be well crafted within knowledge pieces for training and capacity building of the different staff and cadres. DAY-NRLM recognised that there was a demand for a packaged training module based on concepts and issues on gender. Presenting you a set of seventeen gender modules prepared by DAY-NRLM in collaboration with IWWAGE.

The set of these modules is an effort towards propelling the shift in creating an enabling women friendly environment that recognizes the intersectional challenges of women and girls in the community. The modules use lived experiences of women, experience sharing, games and participatory learning methods in various topics and sessions to make it evocative, relatable and push towards a strong demand driven system.

The modules will be used by the National Resource Persons to train the staff and cadres who in turn will train the other cadres of the institutions. This will serve as an endeavour to tailor making modules that are relatable and use innovative pedagogies that stimulate participatory training.

The pedagogy encourages free flowing conversations between the trainer and participants to understand the causes and symptoms leading to gender inequalities in different socio-cultural contexts. The aggregated piece of knowledge is extremely significant in standardizing the capacity building process at the levels of staff and cadres. This establishes a uniform knowledge base across the demand and supply side, thus catalyzing the impact of achieving the mandate of women empowerment and gender equality across the DAY-NRLM.

The modules cover conceptual understanding of various topics on gender like sex and gender, social construct, gender division of labour, asset ownership etc., while other topics have been discussed based on the needs from the states, empirically reflected in the gender operational strategy. The objectives of these modules include enabling the participants to understand the nuances of gender in their lives, introduction of the concepts of gender and sex, and understand the practices and thoughts, and to help understand the concept of patriarchy and how it is related to gender inequalities.

**READ THE MODULES HERE**



### Bali Care Dialogue

IWWAGE and several other organizations partnered with the Asia Foundation to organize the Bali Care Dialogue immediately preceding the G20 Leaders' Summit in Bali from November 12 to 14. The dialogue aimed to leverage global momentum around gender equality in the care economy while advancing the issue in the Asia-Pacific region. The Bali Care Economy Dialogue focused on actionable policies and strategies to build a resilient care-work ecosystem in Asia and the Pacific. The event will allow policymakers, practitioners, the private sector and community-based organizations

to engage in deeper discussions on practical solutions and collaboration. Sona Mitra, our principal economist represented IWWAGE at this summit and was part of sessions on decent work and on expanding and financing the care workforce in Asia and the Pacific. According to Sona, COVID-19 made it clear that care workers are indispensable for the health and welfare of all people. Yet the sector is characterized by underinvestment and gross inequalities, with the bulk of care work undertaken by women from disadvantaged backgrounds.



### Feminist Policy Collective Pre-Budget Consultation

The Feminist Policy Collective is a group of researchers, economists, and grassroots organizations committed to transformative financing for gender equality. The collective has been organizing Pre-Budget Consultations since 2019 to inform policy priorities in the run-up to the Union Budget. The two previous consultations centred around gender sensitive pandemic response and recovery. The pandemic years had once again highlighted the centrality of public services and the need for strategic investments in health & nutrition, social security, and livelihoods to prevent catastrophic losses in human development that we have achieved over the past decades.

In December 2022, FPC in partnership with IWWAGE and SAHAJ organised a Pre-Budget Consultation with the theme "Transformative financing for gender equality". The Gender

Budget statement 2022-23 marginally reduced to 4.3 per cent from 4.4 per cent for the previous fiscal. Simultaneously, there were several reductions in allocations for schemes that critically affected the status of gender equality in India. The discussions during the consultation used an intersectional feminist approach to look back and learn from the lapses in policies and inadequacies in budgeting for critical schemes and programs and draw up recommendations for Union budget 2023-24. The multi-stakeholder consultation drew participation from practitioners, academia, policy makers and UN agencies. The consultation had two roundtable discussions focusing on social sector priorities- the first included themes such as health, education, social infrastructure, gender-based violence etc. while the second roundtable highlighted issues from an intersectional lens to centre

voices of dalit and adivasi women, trans persons, minority groups and so on. It also had two focused panels to discuss livelihoods ranging from non-traditional livelihoods, informal and domestic work, creches to tech-enabled emerging sectors and skilling.

Recommendations from the consultation have been shared with the Ministry of Finance for its consideration as the current government gears up to present its last full budget in the year of its G20 presidency and upcoming general elections in 2024.

## Asia Feminist Coalition

The Asia Feminist Coalition meeting was held at Bangkok in the month of August, the aim was to bring together a set of diverse feminist voices across Asia. It was the first face to face meeting of the coalition. IWWAGE was represented by Atiya Anis, Senior communications manager, and Sona Mitra, Principal Economist. The meeting aimed to build a relationship between the coalition members to guide feminist action in Asia.

Through the meeting the participants developed a shared understanding and

vision of the coalition. Using the blueprint as a guiding tool, they would identify the problem that the coalition will collectively focus on to drive change at the regional level. The participants also used this opportunity to develop the core principles, a governance structure, and some ideas to streamline ways of working. The participants also discussed sustainability of the coalition, resource mobilisation, and to strengthen the alliance.



**ASIA FEMINIST  
COALITION  
INCEPTION MEETING**

**Bangkok, Thailand  
22<sup>nd</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> August 2022**



## Announcements



### Launch Of GRC Modules

Gender inequality is a lived experience. Lives of women are systematically conditioned by a host of social norms (and practices) resulting in limited access and control over rights and entitlement and restricted presence in the public affairs. Rural women are key agents *for achieving transformational economic, environmental, and social changes required for sustainable development.* The use of the word, “*transformational*,” symbolizes commitment to address the root causes of inequality, and not just the symptoms. IWWAGE under its SWAYAM project is launching 6 Gender Resource Centre Modules which are run under different names in various states, these set of modules cover Bihar, Chhatisgarh, Kerala, Jharkhand, Odisha

and Madhya Pradesh. Through Gender Resource Centre, the emphasis is to address the women’s inequality manifests itself in many forms such as gender discrimination in terms of declining male-female sex ratio, Social stereotyping, Gender based violence, health and nutritional status, limited access to resources, etc. It also aims to work for holistic empowerment of women in the state cutting across sectors and to serve as a nodal agency for all gender related initiatives in the state and in the community. GRC attempts to develop and make available the resources at a single place to share them across organizations in order to make their efforts in the sector more streamlined, efficient and effective.

## Podcast



### Episode 3: Minding Her Own Business: Women Entrepreneurs In India

In this episode, we explore women and entrepreneurship in India. Entrepreneurship offers women the opportunity to participate in the economy, which is essential in a country where women are dropping out of the workforce, and struggling to find suitable jobs. The share of enterprises owned by women is just over 20 percent. These businesses are mostly micro or small enterprises, concentrated in the informal sector and generate low revenues. The potential for women’s entrepreneurship is huge, but women entrepreneurs need support and policy interventions. Our two guests, Neharika Vohra, vice-chancellor at the Delhi Skill and Entrepreneurship University and Deepthi Ravula, CEO of WeHub, a platform for women entrepreneurs by the government of Telangana, along with host

Sunaina Kumar discuss the social, structural and economic barriers that women face and look for solutions to support women’s entrepreneurship. The episode includes stories from different parts of the country of women who run micro and small enterprises. Ila Shah is a pharmacist and manager of Lok Swasthya Health Cooperative in Ahmedabad. The cooperative is supported by the Self Employed Women’s Association (SEWA). Bablu Bhowmik is self-employed, she runs a home business of fish farming in Jolaibari, Tripura. Her work is supported by Sesta Development Services. Chandrakali Markam is head of a poultry farming cooperative in Dindori, Madhya Pradesh. The cooperative is supported by Professional Assistance for Development Action (PRADAN).

[LISTEN TO THE PODCAST HERE](#)

## Episode 4: How To Grow The Pie: Entrepreneurship And Employment

In our latest episode of podcast series launched on Nation Rural Women Day focuses on women workers and India's emerging gig economy. In this episode, we explore what it takes for women to set up big businesses that create employment. India was amongst the lowest-ranked countries in the world in a global index on women entrepreneurs. If we can accelerate female entrepreneurship in India, it could potentially create 150–170 million jobs by 2030 and

transform the Indian economy. So how do we grow this pie? Our three guests, Monisha Advani, co-founder of Emmay Entertainment and one of the few women to head a production company, Hemalatha Annamalai, serial entrepreneur, and founder of Ampere Vehicles, and Nupur Garg, founder of WinPE, and a leading investor in private equity, discuss how women entrepreneurs can be equipped to reach their potential, with host Sunaina Kumar.

[LISTEN TO THE PODCAST HERE](#)

## Episode 5: Self-Help Groups: The changemakers for women in India

India has the largest network of Self-Help Groups in the world. Over 80 million women in India are in Self-Help Groups. Over time, these groups have improved the resilience of women and communities. They have helped women build their income and savings, led to higher levels of empowerment and enhanced their decision-making in the household. In this episode, we explore how Self-Help Groups can evolve in the future to become more effective institutions for women, adopt emerging areas of work and make use of technological innovations. Our guests Sanchita Mitra, National Coordinator at the Self-Employed Women's Association and Uma Mahadevan Dasgupta, Additional Chief

Secretary, Panchayati Raj, Government of Karnataka, have spent their lifetimes building women's institutions for collective action.

The episode includes stories of women in Self-Help Groups:

- i. Sunita Shinde works in rural Maharashtra, helping rural women access digital technology. She works with Mann Deshi Foundation.
- ii. Shamima Begum works in Odisha, helping her community access social security schemes through technology. She works with Urban Management Centre.

[LISTEN TO THE PODCAST HERE](#)

## Resources



# Affordable Childcare Can Propel The Economy

Did you know that the Female Labour Force Participation Rate in India is 24.8%, as per Periodic Labour Force Survey 2021-22, one of the lowest in the region? One of the reasons for this low rate is the disproportionate amount of time women spend on unpaid and care work. India officially has become the most populous country this year. Exploiting this demographic dividend requires creating

conditions that allow its workforce- especially poorer women- to earn an income. This op-ed in Hindustan Times by Sona Mitra and Divya Singh explores how affordable and increasing access to childcare has immediate and long-term benefits for individual girls and women, their families, businesses, and economies.

COVERAGE BY HINDUSTAN TIMES

# The possibility of working in hybrid models continues to expand beyond IT: Survey

The hybrid working model is more prevalent in organisations with a relatively larger workforce. Our new publication '[Hybrid Models and Women's Work in India](#)' with [Zoom](#) throws light on the advantages and challenges and provides actionable insights for policy and industry. The reports looks at issues like how can flexible working models such as [hybrid](#) shape women's workforce participation? The report presents findings from a survey of 400 working women, of which over a third were hybrid workers.

Among those surveyed, 55% of them belong to the technology, pharmaceuticals and biotechnology, business, and consulting services sectors, which are Information and Communications Technology (ICT)-intensive. While 21% of them are from consumer goods, social services, teaching or real estate, and construction which indicates that the possibility of working in hybrid models continues to expand beyond technology-intensive sectors.

COVERAGE BY SEE THE PEOPLEMATTERS



## International Women's Day: 5 financial challenges women face at workplace

From lack of representation in decision-making processes to unconscious biases, women encounter numerous obstacles that can impede their career growth and success.

Financial challenges for women might not look the same for men. Read this International Womens Day 2023 ([IWD2023](#)) special article

in [ZEE Business](#) where [Pushpita Dey](#) and [Bidisha Mondal](#) pen down their thoughts about the various financial challenges women face at workplace such as gender pay disparity, lack of inclusive hiring policies, income effect hypothesis, pre-conceived bias and lack of affordable childcare to name a few.

COVERAGE BY ZEE BUSINESS

## Women-led development sans provisions for women's employment?

Low labour force participation of women continues to pose a challenge for the economy. The latest Economic Survey highlights the challenge and makes important announcements to overcome it. India holds the G20 presidency this year and resolves to embark on a women-led development process. All these are good news that indicate the government's priority to empower women via improving their economic participation by creating enabling mechanisms to improve women's socio-economic status.

However, in order to realise the true potential of women as economic agents, there is

a need for pushing strategic investments in sectors that see higher participation of women, creating jobs for women in newly emerging sectors as well as reducing systemic barriers that deter women from joining the labour force. In spirit of International Women's Day 2023, [Sona Mitra](#) and [Sruthi Kutty](#) wrote for [Hindustan Times](#) on how women's empowerment via improving women's labour force participation needs to be backed by sufficient budgetary allocations and the way forward.

COVERAGE BY HINDUSTAN TIMES

# The stark gender gap in market linkages

The latest Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) data, collected during 2020-21, hints towards the women entrepreneurs lagging much behind the men entrepreneurs when it comes to establishing market linkages. The gender gap is particularly stark among those who resort to self-employment as a means of deriving subsistence income rather than being motivated by entrepreneurial aspirations.

The challenge of insufficient market linkages is more acute for the women entrepreneurs as

compared to men. The women entrepreneurs in rural areas settle for a lower goal than their urban counterparts, implying that the challenges to market the products are more severe for the rural women. This might be due to limited market access due to poor road conditions and distance to major markets. Read this article in [Financial Express \(India\)](#) by [Bidisha Mondal](#) on various aspects implying that insufficient market linkages.

COVERAGE BY FINANCIAL EXPRESS

# Post-pandemic job recovery for Indian women slower than men: Report

An analysis of EPFO data for October 2021 to October 2022, finds that the monthly share of women's registration has consistently remained lower than 28%. The exclusion of women from the workforce that began due to the pandemic could very well be permanent for many women, a report titled "[Women and work: how India fared in 2022](#)" released by

Initiative for What Works to Advance Women and Girls in the Economy (IWWAGE) says.

The report highlights that fewer women have returned to the workplace. The unemployment rate among rural females increased by 1.6 per cent while that among rural males decreased by 1.2 per cent.

COVERAGE BY BUSINESS STANDARD

# Gender Responsive Budgeting In India: Pathways For Change

Gender responsive budgeting (GRB) is a fiscal instrument that assesses public spending to identify and address gender discrepancies in the planning and policy making processes. Gender sensitive planning backed by commensurate allocation of funds is a critical strategy that governments must adopt to fulfil its commitment to constitutionally enshrined values of equality and social justice.

Despite its shortcomings, Gender Responsive Budgeting provides an avenue for

mainstreaming gender at different levels of planning and policymaking. Deepening the GRB process would require closing existing gaps and building institutional capabilities with a vision to bring about gender transformative reforms.

[Sona Mitra](#) and [Sruthi Kutty](#) write for YourStory Media on how [#GRB](#) in India can be a pathway for change.

COVERAGE BY YOURSTORY

# Build And Redesign Flexible Work Ecosystem To Boost Women's Employment

Female Labour Force Participation in India is around 25% according to the latest PLFS-2021 data. These numbers are disappointing and we need to work together on many different levels on how to move the needle. There are many barriers to women's labour force participation including social norms, time spent on child and elderly care, distance, lack of safety in mobility, limited mentorship, pay gap, mismatch of skills and aspirations, etc. 'Work-near-home' centres

being developed by the government must at the very least address infrastructure related challenges.

Read this op-ed in The Times Of India where Shreya Ghosh and Suhani Pandey (The Quantum Hub) pen their opinion on how flexible workplaces, work-from-home ecosystem and flexible work hours are needed to boost women's employment ecosystem.

COVERAGE BY THE TIMES OF INDIA



# Why Do Health Institutions Need To Focus On Gender Parity In Leadership?

Promoting women's leadership in healthcare plays a significant role in improving enabling and inclusive policies in the sector. Even though women make up 71% of the worldwide health care workforce, they are disproportionately underrepresented in top leadership positions in the industry. Their involvement in senior and executive leadership varies by nation, location and employment in the public or private sectors.

A qualitative study is being conducted between LEAD at Krea University and WomenLift Health to understand how institutions can be more proactive in driving change and creating a culture that fosters leadership and growth for women healthcare professionals. Authored by Preethi Rao and Shagun Sabarwal don't miss this article in She The People.

COVERAGE BY SEE THE PEOPLE

## Women At Work: Fear For Women's Safety Restricts Their Mobility--And Their Careers

Women choose lower paying jobs, have restrictions on the kinds of careers they can choose and jobs they can take up, because of perceptions of safety. As part of the Women at Work series, IndiaSpend spoke to young urban women and researchers and found that family concerns for safety force women to give up on opportunities, take up jobs that

are low-paying, or choose "safer" careers. While fear of crime impacts career trajectory, it may not always lead to dropping out of the workforce, they found in their interviews. Read this article as they examine the role of violence and perceptions of public safety to see how it continues to impact workforce participation.

COVERAGE BY INDIASPEND

## Fight India's Dark Secret Of Intimate Partner Violence

Intimate Partner Violence is a social evil with long term socioeconomic as well as health consequences. IPV compromises the safety, freedom, and solidarity of the victims. Women who are a victim of intimate partner violence, rarely seek support and continue to suffer in silence. This article by Bidisha and

Aparna G highlights three sets of findings — on justifying IPV, the role of education and intergenerational transmission of violence — because they have potentially important implications for the initiatives aimed at reducing IPV.

COVERAGE BY HINDUSTAN TIMES

# When The Workplace Is Your Respite

Discussing the future of work post-pandemic, moving to remote work, or some hybrid form of it, may be inevitable. But experts believe an inescapable fallout of the push towards remote work will be a disproportionate burden on women. This, we witnessed during the various stay-at-home mandates: Women found themselves taking on more of the care work when they worked from home. Conventionally, in most Indian households,

women were required to take care of the family whether or not they went to work. In this context, the workplace, instead of being a place of stress or a place of personal professional growth alone, became a place of respite—an environment where women were free of domestic responsibilities and systemic claims. Read this article in LiveMint to know Sona Mitra's thoughts on women and workplace.

COVERAGE BY LIVE MINT

## Opinion: DAY-NRLM - A Women-Led revolution Unfolding In India's Villages

The clarion call of 'Sashakt Nari, Sashakt Bharat' given by the Government of India has set the tone and tenor for overall public policy making focused not only on empowering women but enabling their agency at grassroot levels. One such scheme is the much celebrated Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana National Rural Livelihoods Mission

(DAY-NRLM) which is silently empowering women, families, and communities socially, economically and politically through rights and entitlements, SHGs and federations. Moumita Sarkar and Swasti Pachauri express their opinion on how DAY-NRLM is leading a revolution empowering and enabling women which is unfolding in Indian villages.

COVERAGE BY ECONOMIC TIMES

## How Independent Income Give Greater Say

Empowerment is assumed to strengthen vulnerable groups' participation in decision-making. Employment is expected to bolster the individual's autonomy both within and outside households and play a key role in achieving equality. The National Family Health Survey (NFHS) data offers us scope to look into whether economic empowerment bridges the Indian gap in gender equality as

it collects information on women's decision-making in various domains.

Based on the NFHS data, Bidisha and Aparna dwell upon various notions to support whether education and income go hand in hand to empower women. They also suggest that own earnings of women supported by education for all could challenge some of our restrictive gender norms and practices.

COVERAGE BY LIVE MINT

# In India, Women Struggle To Take Active Part In Nation's Growth Story

A report by charity organisation Oxfam revealed that the low participation of women in India's labour force is majorly due to gender discrimination in terms of wages and opportunities. India discrimination report 2022 found that 93 per cent of the gap in earnings between males and females is due to discrimination. As per the federal

government data, India's female work participation rate was just 25 per cent for 2021.

Read this article in Business World to hear Preethi Rao's take on how nearly half of them would start out of necessity rather than an aspiration to start a business venture.

COVERAGE BY BUSINESS WORLD

## Covid-19 Has Driven Up Rural Women's Workforce Participation, But In Precarious Jobs

The latest labour force data for India from 2020-21 show that labour force participation by women (usual status, +15 years) at 32.5%, is at its highest level in four years, driven largely by more women in rural areas joining the workforce. The loss in household income because of reduced pay or job losses for the main earner, often a man, meant that women who previously did not work outside the house, got an opportunity to do so. Research

published by the IWWAGE found that in couples, the norm that the wife is responsible for most housework with the husband almost totally absent is a significant reason that women stay out of the labour force, even when they are educated. This article dwells upon how even though Covid-19 may have driven up rural women's workforce participation.

COVERAGE BY SCROLL.IN

## More Women In Labour Force Must Not Lead Us To Complacency

The female labour force participation rate (FLFPR) in India has witnessed an increase, as per the Periodic Labour Force Survey released by the National Statistical Office (NSO) covering June 2020 to July 2021. The figure in the period stands at 25.1%,

far better than the 17% in 2017-18. Bidisha Mondal and Sona Mitra shed light on trends and numbers draw attention towards the unmet demand for jobs among women in both rural and urban areas in this Live Mint article.

COVERAGE BY LIVE MINT

# Disconnected: How Digital India Is Leaving Women Behind

The Covid-19 pandemic reinforced the importance of access to mobile and mobile internet for information, healthcare, education as well as e-commerce, financial services and income-generation opportunities. Over half of women (53.9%) in India own mobile phones but amongst these only 22.5% reported using them for financial transactions, according to the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5). Increasing use of automation will give rise to a new class of jobs that require a different set of skills. These new jobs will be skill-intensive. There will have to be proper skill development programmes targeted to

women to be able to get these jobs, says Sona Mitra. Read this interesting piece on how India is digitally divided on the basis of gender and access to internet & smartphones. It also dwells upon [Haqdarshak](#) programme, that has trained [25,576](#) women across 24 states on the use of mobile internet to assist with tasks such as applying for a PAN card, enrolling in government schemes like NRLM, [Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Swastha Bima Yojana](#) and [Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana](#) and avail of food subsidies under the National Food Security Act ([NFSA](#)).

COVERAGE BY INDIASPEND

## How The Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme Is A Double-Edged Sword For Women

This article by Sunaina Kumar in IndiaSpend talks about how MNREGS is a key safety net in times of economic, agrarian distress and provides women with an income but the low wages and hard labour make it a last resort. It also mentions our study in 2021 to evaluate

the effectiveness of the scheme during the 2020 lockdown demonstrated how the scheme's effects effect on employment was higher for rural women than it was for rural men.

COVERAGE BY SCROLL.IN

## Urban Joblessness Touches 16-Month High in December

December 2022 saw India's urban unemployment rate rise to a massive 10.09 per cent. It touched a double-digit figure for the first time, since June 2021, when the country was recovering from second wave of the pandemic, according to the latest figures released by the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE).

In December 2022, India's overall unemployment rate was 8.3 per cent, the highest in the last 15 months. The rural unemployment was however 7.44 per cent, 0.11 percentage points lower than November's figures. Read this article to know more.

COVERAGE BY THE HINDU BUSINESSLINE



# Gender Responsive Budgeting in India: Pathways for Change

Gender responsive budgeting (GRB) is a fiscal instrument that assesses public spending to identify and address gender discrepancies in the planning and policy making processes. Gender sensitive planning backed by commensurate allocation of funds is a critical strategy that governments must adopt to fulfil its commitment to constitutionally enshrined values of equality and social justice. India's Gender Budget has remained less than 1% of the nation's GDP and hovers around 5% of

the total Union expenditure i.e only around 5% of the total budget estimate is earmarked for women and girls. Read this article by Sruthi Kutty and Sona Mitra to understand how despite its shortcomings, GRB provides an avenue for mainstreaming gender at different levels of planning and policymaking. Deepening the GRB process would require closing existing gaps and building institutional capabilities with a vision to bring about gender transformative reforms.

COVERAGE BY YOURSTORY.COM

If you are unable to access any document, please visit our resource section at [www.iwwage.org](http://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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