



**White Paper On Creating  
An Enabling Ecosystem for Women in India**

# **RE-IMAGINING A GENDER BALANCED LEADERSHIP CANVAS**

**A Self Assessment Tool for Institutions & Individuals  
to review how Gender Balanced is their Ecosystem**

# Foreword



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Entrepreneur, Investment Professional and Institution Builder

I am delighted to write the foreword for this White Paper, another outstanding offering by TalentNomics India.

I have been associated with TalentNomics India as an active member in their Advisory Board from inception and have seen them grow from strength to strength. Over the last four years they have passionately engaged with various stakeholders for enabling women to rise up to leadership roles. They have trained and mentored more than 50 potential women leaders from some of the top organizations in India and received excellent feedback from their cohort members and their organizations. They have held four conferences for men and women from various sectors to influence current and future leaders and policymakers about gender parity at leadership.

Their recently published book, “Bold and Untold- Life & Leadership Lessons from Women who dared to Dream” is a thought provoking read.

This White Paper has been carefully created by collating the outcomes of all the Conferences that TalentNomics India has organized over the last four years. The contents have been very thoughtfully and thematically organized so that all the stakeholders get an overview of the issues and challenges that exist in making our ecosystem more enabling towards Women leadership. I find the Self Assessment tool provided alongside the recommendations particularly useful for all stakeholders to use as a starting point in enabling gender balanced initiatives

I am so pleased and proud of their work and the high level of engagement and passion they bring to their Vision of *having Impactful and Influential Women in Leadership roles* and the Mission to *provide a road map, tools and know-how for creating an enabling ecosystem for women to get to attaining leadership positions.*

I hope all the readers and practioners benefit from this really comprehensive and informative White Paper.

# Contents

## 1

Executive Summary

## 2

Introduction

## 3

Purpose

## 4

Methodology

## 5

Thematic Consolidation  
of Insights with  
Recommendations &  
Self Assessment Tool

## 6

Conclusions

## 7

Let us know  
what you think

## 8

Authors

## 9

References

## 10

About  
TalentNomics India

## 11

Appendix  
Key Conference  
Speakers & Panelists

# Executive Summary

At TalentNomics India, we adopt a holistic and integrated approach for creating an ecosystem that promotes and supports women to succeed and lead.

One of our initiatives for promoting gender equity is to organize annual International Conferences. We have so far had four conferences in India that centred on how all of us - women, men, organizations, policy makers can collaborate to create an inclusive leadership talent pool. We brought together talented and passionate change makers, thought leaders, academicians, practitioners and grass root leaders to delve on how to reorganize and recalibrate mindset, skills, and practices required to lead the world of change and disruption.

Our conferences brought out a range of issues, challenges and most importantly commitments and solutions for the way forward. We strongly felt that these rich insights, discussions and innovative ideas need to be shared and implemented by organizations, by potential women leaders and specially at the home.

The purpose of this White Paper is to thematically put together the issues, challenges, learnings and recommendations in one concise report that can act as a reference document and a guide for Organizations, Academic Institutions, Individuals, Families and Policy Makers.

This White Paper also provides a Self Assessment Tool to review the current status of gender balance of the ecosystem.

Some of the key learnings that have emerged through our conferences are:

- Bringing gender equity requires deep introspection and fundamental change in the mindset of current and potential leaders, family members and policy makers.
- Gender balance is not just an all women issue - more men as allies, partners and role models are required to enable this change.
- Integrating women and enabling them to rise to leadership roles is now a business imperative. This reality is yet to be realized by current leaders and policy makers.
- Each of us can be powerful change agents towards gender parity to impact and influence the ecosystem in which we operate. We could impact our homes and our workplaces, thereby impacting society at large.
- Sharing and disseminating best practices & policies are enablers for creating new paths for others to follow.
- Leadership commitment is the key driver for gender balanced leadership.

Our endeavor in this White paper is to provide a roadmap for organizations, individuals and policy makers to enable movement towards gender equity. Our recommendations have a focus on doable initiatives that can help all pillars of society to move towards a better gender balance. We have also prepared a Self Assessment for institutions and individuals to review the gender balance in their ecosystem.

# Introduction

While there seems to be positive evidence of growing literacy levels among women, and more inclination of women joining the workforce in the organized sectors, the pace of growth is yet to pick up. An alarming trend of women dropping off the work force is being observed.

India ranks as one of the lowest in terms of gender parity as per the WEF Global Gender Gap Report 2017<sup>1</sup>. Female economic participation of women in India is only 27%, and has fallen by 10 percentage points in last 10 years (ILO, India Labour Market Update 2017)<sup>2</sup>. Yet India stands to substantially gain by enhancing female engagement in the work force to the same level as men and GDP can thereby increase by 27% (McKinsey 2015)<sup>3</sup>, (IMF 2013)<sup>4</sup>. TalentNomics India believes that having more women in leadership roles creates a pull factor for more women to join and stay in the workforce. Besides being role models and mentors, having more women in leadership positions leads to women friendly policies, infrastructure and attitudes.

The number of women in leadership roles in India is very low compared to other countries in the region. Though much is being written and said about it, the momentum for change is still slow. Recent intervention by the government to enforce one woman on the Board of every listed companies has been a great initiative and has opened up demand for more women leaders. Despite the mandatory regulation that came into effect in 2013, only 140 women held 12.4% of board seats with just 3.2% of board chairs in 2017 (Deloitte Women in the Boardroom: A Global Perspective, 2017)<sup>5</sup>. It is clear that more needs to be done to make the supply chain robust.

At TalentNomics India, our vision is to create influential and impactful women leaders to move towards equal representation and equal voice at leadership levels. Our work is dedicated to growing the pool of women leaders in India. We have adopted a holistic and integrated approach for creating an ecosystem that promotes and supports women to succeed and lead organizations across all sectors of the economy.

Towards this end, we hold annual conferences to deliberate on leadership suitable for the fast changing world, and opportunities and challenges for women to become leaders of tomorrow. Our conferences aim to address the issue of gender balanced leadership from a holistic platform, with a view to recalibrate mindsets across all pillars of society and institutions. Since 2016, we have explored emerging themes around this issue at great length.

The participants of our conferences have included top corporate leaders, academicians, journalists, potential leaders, youth and entrepreneurs from urban and rural India. Together, they explored the challenges, innovative ideas, breakthrough practices to expand the pipeline of women leaders. The sessions were designed to deliberate on changes needed in the eco system.

We have compiled the learnings from these conferences in this White Paper. This White Paper provides an analysis and suggestions that can be used as a Self Assessment Tool for actions within institutions, organizations and for individuals.



A lot of issues get deliberated during conferences and, many best practices are shared and innovative ideas generated during the course of various sessions. All these unfortunately do not see the light of day and are seldom converted into action plans. At TalentNomics India, we felt that the conferences are a rich source of insights, best practices and bold ideas, waiting to be shared and acted upon.

The purpose of this White Paper is to put together the overall findings, action points and learnings in one concise and consolidated report, as recommendations that can enable change to happen within organizations, academic institutions, grass root agencies, families and policy makers.

Further, the White Paper provides a ready **Self Assessment Tool** for institutions and individuals to review how gender balanced is their eco system, thereby enabling an action plan for progress.

Such an initiative of consolidating recommendations and creating a self assessment tool has not been done previously. We hope this report would prove to be a valuable resource for building an ecosystem to promote gender balance at leadership levels.

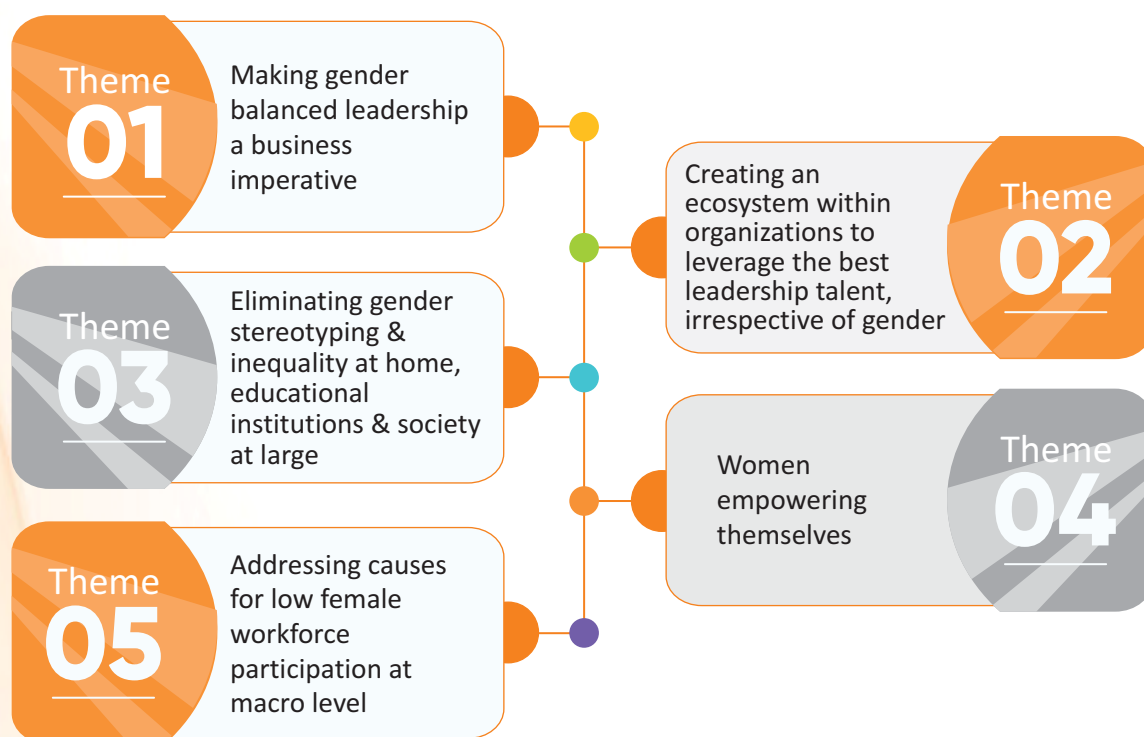
# Methodology

Our four India conferences have focused on how women and men in organizations, academic institutions, grass roots, at policy levels can reorganize and recalibrate mindsets, knowledge and practices to become empowered and lead the world of change and disruption.

## Conferences Themes:

- Leading a World where Uncertainty is the only Certainty: Talent Agility 2025, New Delhi, 2019
- Leadership for Sustainable Success: Dare to Care, Bengaluru, 2018
- Re-imagine Leadership for a World Unimagined, New Delhi, 2017
- Empowering Women for Sustainable Development, New Delhi, 2016

We initially worked to thematically consolidate the insights that emerged on the challenges and the proposed actions and solutions. For a better understanding, we segregated the issues across Workplace, Home, Self and Policy. The action points that emerged at the conferences for the workplace were primarily around structures, policies & processes and mindset issues. For the home and self, the action points focused mainly on mindset issues. For the policy category, action points revolved around the initiatives of government and policy makers. Our analysis revealed some interesting areas that can be used as starting points for some impactful action to take place at the work, at home, on the policy front and by individual women themselves towards making the change happen. This paper discusses the issues and challenges at hand under the following five themes followed by recommendations.



The suggested recommendations have been evaluated by us and graded across “Ease of Implementation” (Easy & Difficult) and “Level of Impact” to the ecosystem (High & Low). The table of recommendations has a strong focus on doable initiatives that can enable gender equity. The recommendations also provide a column for “Self Assessment” (In Place, To Initiate & Not Considered) for institutions and individuals to review their progress towards gender balance. We have highlighted the actions that are Easy to implement and with High impact in green as **E H**.

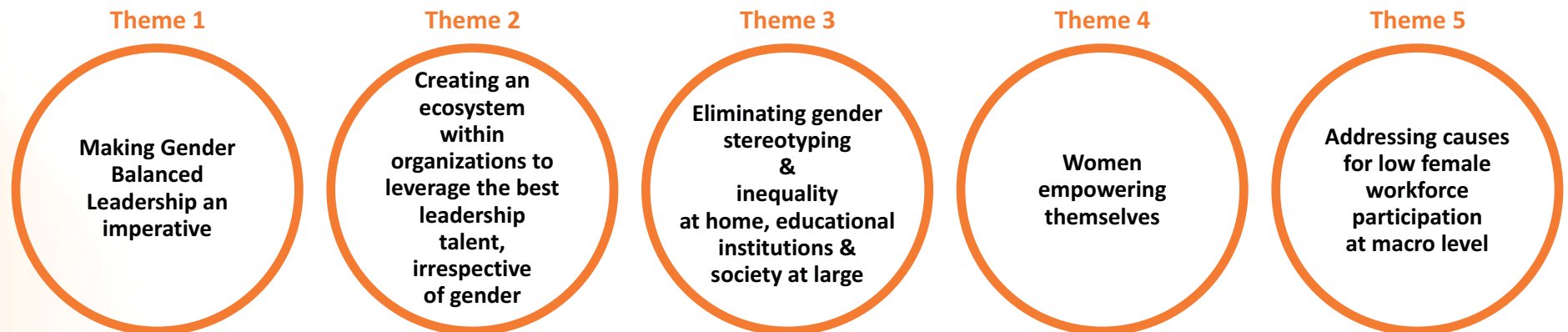
This document, we feel, would be a useful roadmap for organizations, individuals and policy makers to move towards gender balance.

# White Paper Roadmap

TalentNomics India has successfully conducted multiple well received International conferences over the years which have seen participation of men & women leaders from various profiles including corporate leaders, academicians, journalists, entrepreneurs, potential leaders etc. ...



...focusing on thought provoking themes...



... and providing recommended actions for various parties involved



Industry Bodies,  
Advocacy  
and Research  
Organizations



Workplace,  
Current  
Leaders



Home,  
Educational  
Institutions &  
Society



Potential  
Women  
Leaders



Policy Makers,  
State & Central  
Agencies



# Thematic Consolidation of Insights with Recommendations

## Theme 01 | Making Gender Balanced Leadership a Business Imperative

### Introduction

Research has clearly shown a positive co-relation between organizational performance indicators and the percentage of women at leadership levels. In the past decade, various studies carried out by McKinsey<sup>3</sup>, Deloitte<sup>5</sup> have indicated that Profitability, ROI, Value creation, Innovation, Employee turnover are positively impacted by gender balanced teams, with higher percentage of women in leadership roles and in Boards. It is therefore becoming obvious that Gender equality is not just a moral imperative but also a strategic and economic requirement, having a long term positive social impact.

### Quotes from the Conferences

- ❖ *"We sincerely believe that we are rated as the number one research organization in the country because we have 70% women in the organization".*
- ❖ *"Leaders need to break the stereotype that women are high maintenance".*
- ❖ *"Let's network tightly. Let's infuse each other instead of making policies"*
- ❖ *"Investing in women is a good business imperative and not just a right thing to do"*

### Current Challenges

The lack of any urgency in organizations to bring equity, parity and gender balance in leadership and across the talent pool. Many leaders do not see the link between gender diversity and organizational performance.

### Recommended Actions For Industry Bodies, Advocacy & Research Organizations

Change Initiative	Ease of Implementation Easy/Difficult	Level of Impact High / Low	Self Assessment In Place / To Initiate / Not Considered
Create platforms to showcase positive impact of gender parity on business results based on existing and new research	E	H	
Disseminate individual and organizational success stories regarding impact of women leaders	E	H	
Initiate a process of tracking business results to women representation in teams/at leadership within organization	E	H	
Undertake, Promote, Fund sector wise/industry wise studies to assess impact of gender balance on organization performance	E	H	
Include diversity and inclusion goals as performance indicators of all leaders/managers/organization of all listed companies	E	H	
Increase the number of women needed on the Board to at least 3	D	H	
Initiate a formal national/sector level program to build a stronger pipeline of women leaders	D	H	

## Theme 02

# Creating an ecosystem within organizations to leverage the best leadership talent, irrespective of gender

### Introduction

In the current VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, Ambiguous) world, where change is the only constant, it is imperative to create leaders who innovate and adapt to remain relevant. To ensure that the best talent leads the change, we require to bring in, engage with, and retain all potential leaders, irrespective of gender or age. While the percentage of educated women is growing, India has one of the highest drop-out rate of women who join the work force (World Economic Forum, The Global Gender Gap Report 2017)<sup>1</sup>. There exists large gender gap at entry levels, a hollow middle and a minuscule representation at the top (Catalyst, 2015)<sup>6</sup>. Hiring, retaining, supporting and promoting women is a clear challenge.

Very few women reach board-level positions. Despite experience and qualification of women increasing, this gap has been found to widen even further. How can we leverage the best talent? How can we bring back such a large section of our population to the work place ? To initiate proactive steps for creating opportunities and removing barriers for the best talent to grow is the need of the day.

Within this theme, multiple interconnected dimensions were identified and are being presented in the following sections. They have been categorized under Gender Diversity; Hiring, Retention & Promotion and Mentors & Sponsors.

## Gender Diversity Targets & Sensitization

### Context

Organizations today recognize the need for Diversity and Inclusion due to awareness and social, legal and political requirements. The issue is whether organizations focus on D&I to “look” good instead of making it a key business practice. Even those organizations which have realized the benefits of D&I both in terms of business and culture, very often struggle with the “How”.

### Quotes from the Conferences :

❖ *“To succeed in this world, we need more agility, out of the box thinking, less rigidity, more collaboration, more diversity of thoughts and ideas”.*

### Current Challenges

In most organizations, Diversity is just a mere number target that needs to be met. Even meeting those targets is a struggle as organizations claim that the talent pool of potential women leaders is limited. Addressing this requires instituting a set of practices that have the potential to transform the culture of an organization to become gender balanced. This process would help equalize opportunities, and make the workplace fair, safe and enabling for all.

### Recommended Actions at Workplace with respect to Gender

Change Initiative	Ease of Implementation Easy/Difficult	Level of Impact High / Low	Self Assessment In Place / To Initiate / Not Considered
Institutionalize inclusion and diversity by setting goals down the management chain	E	H	
Build in the goal of gender diversity in Hiring, Promotion, Assignments at Organizational level.	D	L	

❖ *“Very Bold Leadership is the need of the day- leadership which is not nervous of setting innovative policies, implementing them for women workforce”.*

❖ *“Just as there is no fee differential for academic courses for women or men, so should there not be wage differences for men and women which is very apparent in the private sectors”.*

❖ *“Leaders need to break stereotype that women are high maintenance”.*

Change Initiative	Ease of Implementation Easy/Difficult	Level of Impact High / Low	Self Assessment In Place / To Initiate / Not Considered
Undertake ‘Gender Sensitizing’ training/workshops/ at all levels. Bring the teams in sync with the drivers behind the goal	E	H	
Measure progress against diversity targets & share results	E	H	
Measure gender sensitivity at workplace through perception surveys	E	H	
Have difficult conversations and dialogue with both women and men to confront gender bias behaviours, starting from the leadership team	E	H	
Showcase diversity champions and appreciate positive changes in the workplace.	E	H	
Move from Hierarchical to Flat / Flexible Organizational Structures to enable agility and collaboration. Flat matrix structures focus on contributions and competencies that is more inclusive unlike hierarchical structures that are power centric.	D	H	

## Hiring, Retention & Promotion of Women

### Context

Inspite of an intent to increase gender balance in organizations, policies, practices and required infrastructure have not evolved to bring this about. At best they are patchy and inconsistent and driven by the HR head or the Diversity head. Organizations where the drive comes from the top management or business leaders has the most visible impact. Therefore, it is imperative that the “vision” of top management on the issue is clearly articulated and communicated down the line. This greatly facilitates review of policies and practices and helps the organization to align them towards gender balance.

### Quotes from the Conferences :

❖ *“For encouraging more women to come to leadership roles we need Career Reboot Plans”.*

❖ *“Organizations need to consciously hire more women”.*

### Current Challenges

- ♦ Lack of focus on skill building and competency building for women to take Leadership roles.
- ♦ Absence of learning programs for women to reach their full potential given the current ecosystem.
- ♦ No focus or measures to address the high drop-out rate of women from the workplace, particularly after maternity/childcare.
- ♦ Deeply embedded Organizational gender biases that are intermingled with societal expectations of gender roles excludes many potential roles for women.
- ♦ Leadership is narrowly defined, mainly through the lens of traditional masculine traits which overlooks collaborative and influential skills.
- ♦ Mind set and existing practices of current leaders act as barriers for building gender balanced leadership.
- ♦ Reluctance of organizations to make public their gender ratios. What cannot be measured cannot be improved.
- ♦ Lack of enabling eco system for hiring and retaining women talent, in spite of good “intentions”.
- ♦ Hierarchical and rigid organizational structures not conducive to retain women and millennials.

### Recommended Actions at Workplace

Change Initiative	Ease of Implementation Easy/Difficult	Level of Impact High / Low	Self Assessment In Place / To Initiate / Not Considered
Set targets for hiring/promotions of women at all levels including for women at leadership levels, Boards etc.	E	H	
Review language in Job Descriptions to make it Gender Agnostic	E	H	
Review language in Job Postings to make it Gender Agnostic	E	H	
Partner with colleges to improve the pipeline of women hires	D	H	
Review experience and competencies measured in hiring/performance appraisal to ensure no gender bias in the language or traits measured	E	H	

Change Initiative	Ease of Implementation Easy/Difficult	Level of Impact High / Low	Self Assessment In Place / To Initiate / Not Considered
Ensure interview panels are gender balanced and promote gender blind selection	E	H	
Ensure Gender Pay Parity by undertaking periodic reviews	D	H	
Introduce Returning Women's Program	E	H	
Redefine leadership competencies for the VUCA world which needs more 'feminine' traits like collaboration, multi-tasking, openness to learn, less hierarchy and rigidity	E	H	
Hold conversations around career enabling factors for women periodically	E	H	
Performance appraisal to measure quality of output rather than 'face time' or the number of hours put in	D	H	
Review existing policies/practices and introduce new policies/practices to consciously align them as gender inclusive eg. women in all short lists around promotion, key assignments, coveted trainings	E	H	
Through training, discussions, seminars, build an environment and mind set where all employees irrespective of their gender feel safe, valued and respected	E	H	
Facilitate women's participation in professional bodies/learning groups. Formalize networks where women can discuss their professional challenges etc.	E	H	
Develop Policies/Job roles to encourage women and men to work flexibly, from home so that they are encouraged not to dropout from the formal workforce	E	H	
Do not write off women from challenging assignments/key roles when they become pregnant/mothers/ primary care givers in families	D	H	
Help women to stay in touch with organizational changes/skill upgradation when they are on leave through structured communications.	E	H	
Build initiatives and policies that reflect "along with men" rather than just "for women" to lead actual change, e.g. parental leave rather than maternity leave, flexibility/part-time work for all new parents and not just for new mothers only, creche for new parents	E	H	
Develop zero tolerance for any sexual harassment	E	H	
Adopt Technology to provide flexibility. Technology is a great enabler for women to remain productive, flexible and innovative.	E	H	
Provide for infrastructure for returning parents; comfortable work space for pregnant women, creche, technology for flexi-working for new parents, lactation rooms for mothers, etc.	E	H	



## Role of Mentors, Sponsors & Champions

### Context

Mentors, Sponsors and Champions are women's strongest advocates, staunchest supporters and partners. The benefits of having a mentor are more than obvious: increased opportunities, help in overcoming obstacles in the path towards leadership and success, career advancement, education and skill-building, greater visibility. Working with supportive, more experienced colleagues can help women develop into the best version of themselves. This in turn provides organizations with a talent pool of trusted, committed high performers.

Similarly, creating Sponsors and individual champions within organizations is extremely valuable especially for women since it helps showcase and support their capabilities and leadership potential. It also enables women professionals to take more risks, to test new grounds without fear of failure or organizational support.

Such initiatives have a powerful ripple effect where women leaders become committed to giving back, to nurture younger talent and create role models.

### Current Challenges

- ♦ Lack of structured mentorship programs for women within organizations.
- ♦ Poor awareness on the important role of Sponsors and Champions for enabling women to grow within organizations.
- ♦ Reluctance of men to mentor/sponsor women in light of "Me too".
- ♦ Reluctance of women to support other women for fear of being seen as 'biased'.
- ♦ Reluctance of women to closely work with senior men to avoid raising of eyebrows at work.

### Quotes from the Conferences :

- ❖ "Setting up role models and mentoring are very important".
- ❖ "Women and Men, please extend a hand- when you are successful, make it possible for others to succeed too".
- ❖ "Mentors taught me not WHAT to think, but HOW to think".

### Recommended Actions at Workplace

Change Initiative	Implementation Easy/Difficult	Impact High / Low	Self Assessment In Place / To Initiate / Not Considered
Build and share powerful real life stories of women leaders to inspire and instill confidence and self-worth. Inspire women with role models to keep them motivated and not drop out from the formal workforce	E	H	
Encourage, support and push women to get out their comfort zones. Nudge women out of their complacency and encourage them to reach their full potential	E	H	
Consciously offer challenging and visible roles to women that enable them to showcase their leadership capabilities	E	H	
Enable and support women to seek and take on important decision-making roles, take risks to reach their aspirations	D	H	
Getting leadership to commit to mentoring women	D	H	
Build structured Mentoring Programs for women at different life stages and monitor progress	E	H	
Select, train and evaluate men and women leaders to become mentors and advocate the benefits of mentorship to all potential women leaders	E	H	
Create ecosystem to reward & recognize Sponsors & Champions of women within organizations	E	H	
Initiate a forum of men and women leaders as allies and partners in creating gender balanced leadership	E	H	

## Theme 03

# Eliminating Gender Stereotyping & Inequality at Home, Educational Institutions and Society at large

### Introduction

Gender stereotyping used for categorizing women and men, is considered as a 'given', ideologically and materially. These stereotypes form the pillars on which society organizes its structures and services. These oversimplified beliefs that men and women possess different capabilities, competences and roles have very binding and detrimental consequences for society, and are dysfunctional both for women and men. The stereotyping is so deeply embedded that it plays out at every stage of the life cycle, starting from gender selection at birth, to early education, school and higher education, at the workplace, at the time of marriage and raising families. In fact gender stereotyping impacts every social role and relations that individuals perform.

The consequences are far reaching, especially for women. Stereotyping impacts workforce women negatively and shows up as pay disparity, discrimination, fewer chances of promotion, poor recognition of merit, harassment, disrespect etc. Gender stereotypes results in high costs in terms of development, impeded democracy, violation of human rights, peace & security. It is equally dysfunctional for men who get bound to disadvantageous masculine expectations and behavior such as to be the key bread earners, providers, decision makers, risk taker etc.

### Quotes from the Conferences

❖ *"Inspire women to cultivate confidence. They need to enrich their lives, nourish their families and fuel communities in the world".*

❖ *"Literature and creative narratives of women as empowered leaders through stories and comic books are very powerful forms of changing the stereotypes around Women. It helps to open up conversations for children to review and reflect on assumptions around gendered roles. It is a great way of creating a positive environment for empowered role modelling".*

❖ *"Successful careers and marriages require a lot of communication and coordination to ensure the home and work are balanced".*

❖ *"Giving freedom to make a choice to your daughters doesn't mean that family values are hampered".*

❖ *"Stop differentiating boys and girls within our households. No separate rules for boys and girls".*

❖ *"Change has to begin from the basic unit of family and home".*

### Current Challenges

- ◆ Current ecosystem at home, schools, society promotes and supports gender stereotypes.
- ◆ Boys and girls, men and women, who break out of the stereotypes roles are few, and need strong conviction to face societal and family backlash.
- ◆ School & educational institutes often promote gender stereotyping.

### Recommended Action Initiatives

Change Initiative	Ease of Implementation Easy/Difficult	Level of Impact High / Low	Self Assessment In Place / To Initiate / Not Considered
Consciously set example by taking on roles which defy gender stereotypes, so that others/children draw inspiration	E	H	
Never miss an opportunity to challenge and question performative gender roles	D	H	

Change Initiative	Ease of Implementation Easy/Difficult	Level of Impact High / Low	Self Assessment In Place / To Initiate / Not Considered
Never miss an opportunity to have conversations with young boys on why patriarchal norms are problematic	E	H	
Refrain from assigning gender-specific roles to children at home; cooking and washing for girls and driving and lifting work for boys. Encourage role reversals at home which will positively impact workplaces as well	D	H	
Show case men who stand out as equal partners at home. Championing spouses and supportive spouses should be publicly acknowledged	D	H	
Treat both girls and boys equally for education, employment opportunities based on their talent and not gender	D	H	
Financial independence should be built as an aspiration for all children	E	H	
Avoid using gender specific language for children (boys don't cry or girls should not run around etc.). Become role models for children at home. Have conversations at home -not just with children but also parents and partners on the importance of support and active participation in bringing about change	D	H	
Visibly oppose violence against women at home or at work; seek answers beyond public legislation	E	H	
Have discussions around TV programs/advertisements that promote stereotype roles/aspirations	E	H	
Expose children to various possible vocations without earmarking any for specific gender	E	H	
Show case fathers who drop children to school/attend PTAs	E	H	
Support spouses, especially wives, who need to travel on work by seamlessly managing the house	E	H	
Show case inspirational leaders from both genders from various fields at home and at school	E	H	
Encourage girls to join team sports	E	H	
Encourage children, both boys and girls, to take reasonable risks and to learn from failures	D	H	
Do not expect girls to be perfect and thereby fear failures	E	H	
Teach girls to stand for themselves, ask for what they deserve, have a voice at the dinner table	D	H	
Have workshops with parents on gender bias and its impact on the confidence of children in the future	E	H	

## Theme 04 | Women Empowering themselves

### Introduction

Before becoming leaders in external ecosystems, it is important to become leader for oneself. HBR Leadership (HBR, 2007)<sup>7</sup> has shared that “Self Awareness” was found to be the most important capability for Leadership. Empowering the self and creating goals that are meaningful and add value to the home, workplace and community is the first step towards developing as leader. Women need to take ownership of their own careers. They need to learn to overcome the derailers. An empowered individual has the potential to perform beyond their best and would be better able to deploy their emotional intelligence to respond and manage situations.

### Quotes from the Conferences

❖ *“To dare to dream big. Charting a new path, where no one has ventured before”.*

❖ *“For ONE SELF” as our mindset. Make a Commitment to Oneself to make that change, and change is bound to happen for self, home and family”.*

### Current Challenges

Current socializations and culturalization norms create many spoken and unspoken barriers for women to experience empowerment. To overcome these barriers for making women empowered, change is required at both Individual and Systemic levels. At the structural level, the challenges are with respect to resources, voice, freedom from violence, access to health and safety. At the individual level, the challenges fall in the areas of mindsets, knowledge, skills, consciousness and a deep commitment to change toward equality.

### Recommended Action Initiatives

Change Initiative	Ease of Implementation Easy/Difficult	Level of Impact High / Low	Self Assessment In Place / To Initiate / Not Considered
Believe in yourself	E	H	
Develop skills to negotiate with key stakeholders and influence the outcome	D	H	
Take ownership for personal growth. It starts from “Me” growing self in confidence and capability. Invest in yourself and keep learning	D	H	
Become the change agent to empower yourself and other women around you	D	H	
Speak up and share your ideas in meetings/forums and help amplify other women's voices	E	H	
Let go and do not strive to be perfect at everything	D	H	
Ask for what you feel you deserve and what is needed	D	H	
Look for mentors & sponsors for yourself at different life and career stages	E	H	
Do not burden yourself with guilt over difficulty in managing a work-life balance	D	H	
Do not fear failures. Use them to learn lessons and move on	D	H	
Support other women to move forward to bring in a community change	E	H	
Prioritize, delegate and create a network for support at home and work	D	H	
Create your own “Brand” in line with your aspirations	E	H	

## Theme 05 | Addressing causes for low female workforce participation at macro level

### Introduction

The Catalyst, Quick Take: Women in the Workforce-India, 2018<sup>8</sup> reports that, Women constitute 48.5% of the population. Nearly 27% of women are enrolled in tertiary education. The percentage of women in leadership roles in India is very low compared to other countries in the region. Recent intervention by the government to enforce one woman on the Board of every listed company has opened up a big demand for more women leaders but the supply chain is broken. The Labor Force Participation Rate (LFPR) for women is one of the lowest in the world at just was 28.5% (compared to 82% for men), despite educational gains. The global average for women stands at 49 percent. Increasing women's labor force participation by 10 percentage points could add \$700 billion to India's GDP by 2025 (or a 1.4 percentage point increase in the GDP growth rate).

Research has further demonstrated a significant multiplier effect of investment in female education on fertility rates, infant mortality rates, maternal mortality rates, and women's labour force participation and income (Observer Research Foundation)<sup>9</sup>. To address the problem efficiently, it is important to measure the magnitude of the issue, set benchmarks, and track progress against targets.

Reaching gender parity would have a bigger impact in India than for almost any other country in the world.

Making policy correction is an imperative from economic, socio, political and cultural perspectives. There is a need for governments to play an active role to make policy changes necessary to drive reverse this alarming trend.

### Quotes from the Conferences

❖ *“Development happens when investment happens in education, safety and transportation. The basic reason for not sending women too far is because there is no safety and no safe ways to travel”.*

❖ *“Instead of being pessimistic and indulging in collective despair about gender parity, corporations, leaders and individuals should strive to actually make a difference and expand the pool of women leaders”.*

❖ *“Equality is a social and corporate concept but to reach equality, one needs to interact, learn, and unlearn from each other. Effective policies are made through understanding the needs of the people the policies are made for”.*

### Current Challenges

The primary causes for this low participation rate can be attributed to :

- ◆ Sporadic focus on safety, transportation for women traveling for work & education.
- ◆ Patriarchy and its assigned and accepted social norms that act as deterrent to women's agency, mobility, freedom and decision making.
- ◆ Disproportionate burden of unpaid work and unpaid care work on women results in high rates of drop outs.
- ◆ Female labor force participation in India is concentrated in a small number of industries (education, textiles, health and social work). These are also industries with low average wages.
- ◆ The lack of quality jobs for women coupled with gendered occupational segregation results in significant gender wage gap.



## Recommended Actions for Policy Makers to Improve Female Workforce Participation

Change Initiative	Ease of Implementation Easy/Difficult	Level of Impact High / Low	Self Assessment In Place / To Initiate / Not Considered
Social, political, and economic incentives must allow for the redistribution of unpaid work and care work	D	H	
Provide for formalized insurance and medical benefits even in unorganized sectors for women to encourage risk taking career breaks etc.	D	H	
Women's health and women's safety needs to be addressed at the workplace as a mandatory requirement	E	H	
Legislate equal compensation for equal work which must be subject to intermittent audits and public scrutiny	D	H	
Incentivizing for enabling more women to participate in paid work	E	H	
Push for larger participation of women at highest levels of politics. This will push forward to introducing more women friendly legislations.	D	H	
Institutionalize parental leave for women and men	E	H	
Childcare facilities need to be mandatory at and by workplaces	E	H	
More government original research to understand low FLFP needs to undertaken for course corrections	E	H	
Government should collaborate with institutions to conduct training and mentoring programs to strengthen the pipeline of women leaders	D	H	

# Conclusions

**T**he four conferences together have thrown up a range of issues, challenges and most importantly solutions for the way forward.

Our summary provides the following perspective for enabling and reimagining a gender balanced and equitable leadership of the future:

- 01** Gender balance is not just an all women issue; we need more men as allies, partners and role models. Collective efforts are required to address this holistically and on multiple fronts.
- 02** The issues of gender balance and equity are deep and require changing mindsets to create an enabling ecosystem for gender equity.
- 03** A collective will is called for across all the society pillars, starting from home, educational institutions, work places, civil society, policies and political participation, to move towards gender parity. There is need for cultural reform, along with government efforts to mainstream gender in all the narratives and to measure outcomes through gender-based parameters.
- 04** Gender issues are not isolated but cut across sectors, in government, business, and social sectors. It's no longer enough to train business leaders in just business, or government leaders in just public policy. We require a dialogue to deliberate and provide exposure across different realms of expertise, across business as well as public policy. There is a need to understand one another, to connect the dots to influence change.
- 05** Each of us can become the change agents - to impact and influence our homes, our workplace and then contribute to impact the society at large towards gender equitable outcomes.
- 06** Powerful inspiring stories of change exists - stories that show that inspite and despite the hurdles women have faced, their journeys have been path breaking. These stories are great motivators for people to take the first step. There is a need to bring these stories forward, to share, to learn for the transformation and change we aspire for.
- 07** Leadership commitment is the key driver for gender balanced leadership. Affirmative action and gender based targets in organizations are a good starting step towards diversity and inclusion. But definitely not the end goal.
- 08** Sharing and disseminating best practices and policies that have worked is a great way for creating a path for others to follow.

## Let us know what you think

Our endeavour with this White Paper, our Newsletters and Research is to bring to you the latest trends, findings and work in the areas of gender balanced leadership. We aim to provide relevant information for emerging leaders in this age of unprecedented global changes. The findings from this White Paper further point to the scope for future research and studies on tracking business results to women representation at leadership in industries.

We find that there is latent need for creating a platform to bring together CEOs, CHROs, Professionals, Industry body representatives, and academicians to dialogue and come out with solutions on the issue of strengthening the pipeline of women leaders both in the organized and start up ecosystem.

We will continue to consciously share and talk about role models who defy gender stereotypes, so that potential women leaders and change makers draw inspiration from the right sources.

We are using every opportunity to speak up and generate awareness on the potential of women talent, help generate the market for women in business, enable women to thrive by restructuring the social fabric, by advocating for policies in organizations and by integrating more flexibility in workspaces. Towards this, we write blogs, opinion pieces, share relevant research through social media and our newsletter. We have also published a book “Bold and Untold - Life & Leadership Lessons from women who dared to dream”.

Let us know what you think. Write in to us with your thoughts, ideas, suggestions, your wish to enlist as mentors and volunteers. We would be delighted to partner and work with you both at individual and organizational level.

Write in to us at : [infoindia@talentnomics.org](mailto:infoindia@talentnomics.org)

# Authors



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**Ipsita Kathuria** is the founder and CEO of TalentNomics India and Principal of TalentNomics Inc. She has over 30 years of experience in Human Resource Management and has held leadership positions in public and private sectors in India. She worked with the International Monetary Fund for a decade prior to following her passion and founding TalentNomics India.

She is passionate about empowering women at all levels, especially for leadership roles. Since launching TalentNomics India in 2015, she has rolled out innovative programs to influence potential women leaders and current men and women leaders, including through programs, conferences blogs and opinion pieces in reputed papers. She is the Lead Author of the book, “Bold and Untold-Life and Leadership Lessons from Women who dared to Dream” released in March 2019.



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**Dr. Geeta Kumar** is an Organization Development Consultant. She works in the areas of Inclusivity, Diversity and Gender Dynamics with organizations and leadership teams towards bringing collective wellbeing, both for the organizations and the individuals.

She is on the Advisory Council of TalentNomics India, a mentor with Cherie Blaire Foundation helping mentor young women professionals globally and mentors Interns associated with Consumers India. She has over 25 years of rich professional experience in Senior roles in Corporates and as a Consultant both for Organizations and NGOs. She is a FIRO-B and MBTI Step II Certified Practitioner and Administrator and is trained in Process Work. She is a published author with several papers published in International and National journals of repute.

## Guidance & Support by :



**BINOO WADHWA**  
COO  
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**Binoo** is a Senior Human Resource Professional with more than 25 years of experience. She previously served as the Chief People Officer, for Yum! Restaurants International for the Indian Subcontinent – and in her tenure, Yum! was listed in “The top 50 Great places to work” and awarded the “Shell Helen Keller award” for enrolling specially abled teams into the workforce. Prior to joining Yum! Binoo worked with Sapient and Steria as their People Strategy Lead. She is passionate about talent development and building organizational culture – and has a track record of enabling organizations to be recognised as “Great Place to Work”.

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# About TalentNomics India

**T**alentNomics India is a not for profit organization and an affiliate of TalentNomics Inc. foundation in the US.

TalentNomics India works with the vision to create a network of capable women in leadership positions in every organization. In this endeavour to grow the pool of women leaders in India, TalentNomics India has adopted a holistic and integrated approach for creating an ecosystem that promotes and supports women to succeed and lead organizations across all sectors of the economy.

TalentNomics India is involved in conducting original research as well as providing a platform to show-case innovative approaches, share and learn from best practices, facilitate thought provoking discussions to influence and lead the journey towards gender parity at leadership levels. We also organize annual International Conferences that focus on creating an ecosystem to leverage all available talent to lead global transformations. Our conferences discuss innovative policies, practices, law, approaches, culture and the mind-set changes to enable unleashing the full potential of the most under-utilized talent-women.

TalentNomics India also runs curated Integrated Leadership Development programs for Women, under the brand CruciBOLD, to incubate future women leaders. This platform offers multifaceted learning, one to one mentoring and networking opportunities to women. We also provide support to leaders and guide organizations in their endeavour to build diverse teams.

The senior leadership team of TalentNomics India have extensive experience in talent and performance management, leadership development, building diversity and inclusion and are passionate change makers for enabling gender balance & equity.

TalentNomics India is governed by an Advisory Board and ably supported by an Advisory Council that includes senior leaders from the public and private sectors. It also has committed partners and volunteers who share a common vision and have joined in the mission to work towards achieving the goal of gender-balanced world.

## Contact us :



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<https://india.talentnomics.org/>

# Appendix

## Key Conference Speakers & Panelists

**Aanchal Sethi**, Project Promoter, MVV Water Utility and Co-founder, Nahi means NO  
**Aditya Gupta**, Co-founder and CEO, People for Parity  
**Ajit George**, Director, Shanti Bhavan  
**Anil Padmanabhan**, Managing Editor, Mint  
**Anita George**, Senior VP, Emerging Markets, CDPQ  
**Anjali Bansal**, Former MD and Partner, TPG Growth  
**Ann Florini**, Professor, Singapore Management University  
**Anne Boring**, Postdoctoral researcher, OFCE, Sciences Po-Paris  
**Annie Koshi**, Principal, St. Mary's School (Delhi)  
**Anu Madgavkar**, Co-Author of Power and Parity Report, McKinsey Global Institute  
**Anuradha Das Mathur**, Founding Dean, The Vedica Scholars Programme For Women, India  
**Anuranjita Kumar**, MD and CHRO, Citi, South Asia  
**Archana Garodia Gupta**, President FICCI Ladies Organisation (FLO), India  
**Archana Hingorani**, Founder, Siana Capital  
**Arvind Subramanian**, ex CEA to GOI,  
**Asha Gupta**, President, Asia Pacific, Tupperware  
**Asma Shirazi**, Journalist, TV Anchor, Pakistan  
**Bharati Jacob**, Managing Partner, Seedfund  
**Binoo Wadhwa**, COO, TalentNomics India, Former CPO, Sapient and Yum! India  
**Christine Graeff**, Director-General, European Central Bank  
**Debjani Ghosh**, President, NASSCOM  
**Deepak Hota**, Chairman, BEML  
**Dharmendra Pradhan**, Minister of Petroleum & Natural Gas and Minister of Steel, Government of India  
**Dilip Chenoy**, Secretary General, FICCI  
**Dilip Cherian**, Founder and Consulting Partner, Perfect Relations, India  
**Eva Lorge**, Country Leadership Development Leader, Ikea  
**Farzana Chowdhury**, MD and CEO, Green Delta Insurance Company Ltd, Bangladesh  
**Indu Balachandran**, Travel Writer, Humor Columnist for leading magazines, Creative Workshop Director  
**Ipsita Kathuria**, Founder & CEO, TalentNomics India  
**Ishar Judge Ahluwalia**, Chairperson, ICRIER  
**Jose Antonio Hoyos Castaneda**, Project Coordinator, Vicente Ferrer Foundation-RDT  
**Judit Alguero Llop**, International Communications Coordinator,  
 Rural Development Trust Vicente Ferrer Foundation  
**Jyoti Reddy**, former Student, Akansha Foundation, India  
**Kalpana Kochhar**, Director-HR, IMF  
**Krshna Prashant**, Brand and Campaigns Associate, Uber, Singapore  
**Lathika Pai**, Managing Partner, Tekinroads Consulting LLP  
**Linda Solomon**, Partner, Deloitte, USA  
**Lopa Shah**, IFC  
**Mamphela Ramphele**, South African Political Activist, Doctor, Business Woman and ex- MD, World Bank  
**Manish Kumar**, MD and CEO, NSDC  
**Ambassador Melanie Verveer**, Executive Director, Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security;  
 Ambassador-at-Large of Global Women's Issues, Author, Professor  
**Neeta Boochra**, Entrepreneur, Former President, FICCI-FLO  
**Neeti Banerjee**, Founder & CEO, TalentNomics Inc.  
**Neharika Vohra**, Professor, IIM-A  
**Nikita Singla**, Consultant, The World Bank Group  
**Nirmala Menon**, Founder and CEO, Interweave Consulting Pvt. Ltd.

**Oona Stock**, CHRO, CDPQ

**Padmaja Ruparel**, Co-founder, India Angel Network, Founder Partner of IAN Fund

**Parveen Mahmud**, MD, Grameen Telecom Trust, Bangladesh

**Prabha Chandra**, Senior Journalist, Consultant - Economic Times and World Bank

**Pramath Sinha**, Co-founder and Managing Director, 9.9 Mediaworx Pvt. Ltd. and Founding Dean, Indian School of Business, India

**Prashant Sankaran**, Director, Interweave Consulting Pvt. Ltd and Mentor

**Radha Mukherji**, Leadership coach, Former CEO, DDB, Oman

**Radhicka Kapoor**, Fellow, ICRIER

**Radhika Prabhu**, Senior Policy Advisor (South Asia), Global Gender Department, U.S. State Department (TBC)

**Rajat Kathuria**, Director and CEO, ICRIER

**Rajdeep Endow**, MD, APAC, SapientRazorfish

**Rajiv Srivastava**, Managing Director, HP India

**Ram K Mudholkar**, Co-founder, Global BioAg Linkages, Ex-President, DuPontSouthAsia

**Reema Nanavaty**, Head, SEWA

**Rhoda Weeks-Brown**, Deputy Director, IMF

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