



Conference 2016

Empowering Women for Sustainable Development



On March 14, 2016, TalentNomics along with ICRIER organized a Conference on Empowering Women for Sustainable Development in India Habitat Centre, New Delhi. The Conference brought together business leaders, policy makers, academicians, researchers from India and other countries, working to support women's leadership advancement to discuss three key questions:

1. What roles can governments play to drive change?
2. What innovative strategies can business leaders, leading academics, think tank heads, media and journalists adopt to change the status quo of gender balance at leadership levels in the next foreseeable future?
3. What should women do differently to create a compulsive story for change?



The conference started with opening remarks by Ms. Ipsita Kathuria (Founder and CEO, TalentNomics India). Dr. Isher Judge Ahluwalia, Chairperson, ICRIER, delivered the Welcome address where she pointed on bridging the gap from both sides- female as well as male, in order to attain a balance in work and life. She said that organizations should recognize the fact that women need flexibility at various stages in life, as practiced in ICRIER, and this can contribute to greater women workforce participation.

Shri Dharmendra Pradhan (Hon'ble Minister of State- Petroleum and Natural Gas) delivered the Inaugural address at the Conference where he stressed on equal opportunities for women by taking the case of LPG subsidies in particular.

Dr. Mamphela Ramphele, a South African apartheid activist, and a former Managing Director, World Bank, gave the keynote address of the Conference emphasizing on creating an ecosystem conducive to transformations and one that is inclusive in nature. By drawing inspiration from the struggle against racial discrimination in Africa, she talked of building bridges of transformation that embrace women participation and leadership in order to create a new narrative of equality.

The Inaugural session was followed by five other technical sessions which discussed topics such as Gender Balance in Leadership: Impactful Actions Needed to Change Status Quo. Speaking in this session, Anita George, Sr. Director (Energy and Extractive Industry) at World Bank mentioned that on an average, women spend more time in one grade or position than men and Women will be much better leader if they stick to who they are.

In a session on Research & Results: For Sustainable Development- Women Empowerment and Economic Growth- What can government and policy makers do? which was moderated by Dr. Rajat Kathuria, Director and CE, ICRIER, participants presented their research and results on this issue.

While Dr. Kalpana Kochhar, Deputy Director, IMF, presented the funds research on this issue and elaborated the macroeconomic impacts of growing inequality in workforce particularly in India. Dr. Anne Boring, Postdoctoral researcher, OFCE, Sciences Po-Paris also presented results from her study on biases in admissions or selection in academic institutions and programs.

Speaking in the session on Creating a Sustainable Global Supply of Women Leaders Across Sectors and a Collaborative Eco System for Change: What Can Women, Men and Organizations Do?- Neeti Bannerjee, Founder and CEO, TalentNomics Inc. informed the audience of some interesting statistics on the pay gap scenario across continents and age, between men and women which in the US, it is of 32% whereas in India it is as high as 44%. She mentioned that as experience and qualification of women increase, this gap further widens and suggested creating a collaborative ecosystem for women and taking a multi-pronged approach of enabling women with 4C's- capability, confidence, connectedness and credibility.

In the same session, Saurabh Srivastava stated that women are more committed and focused towards their work. He urged organizations to understand the uniqueness and strength women bring with them. He gave a positive outlook on the changing structure of organizations from hierarchical to flat. In the latter session, Saurabh Srivastava, Founder and Ex-Chairman, NASSCOM, Angel Investor, stated that women are more committed and focused towards their work. He urged organizations to understand the uniqueness and strength women bring with them.

In the session on Encouraging and Influencing Young Minds to Dream, Dr. Radhicka Kapoor, Fellow, ICRIER and Jyoti Reddy, former Student, Akansha Foundation, India shared their personal stories of success and struggle.

The last session of the Conference discussed about the role of media in breaking stereotypes. The discussion started with Archana Garodia Gupta, President FICCI Ladies Organisation (FLO), India, speaking about the role of women in movies and sway of cinema in popular culture. Pakistani TV journalist Asma Shirazi, known to be a firebrand and a revolutionary in Pakistani journalism also spoke about her journey in media. She quoted examples of Malala Yousufzai and Mukhtara Mai from Pakistan for their courage and bravery.

In an internet-driven age where media had a far greater outreach than ever before, these stories had inspired a whole generation of women. The Conference was also followed by a post- Conference networking dinner as well where Ms. Meera Shankar, Former Ambassador to the US was the Chief Guest.

