

Enabling an
Equiverse



**Equal Access to Work, Wealth,
Wellbeing & Welfare**

CONFERENCE REPORT 2022

10th & 11th November

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Enabling an Equiverse: Equal Access to Work, Wealth, Wellbeing and Welfare Conference Report

Executive Summary

This report summarises the key take-aways and recommendations from the International Leadership Conference *“Enabling an Equiverse: Equal Access to Work, Wealth, Wellbeing and Welfare”*, jointly organised by TalentNomics India and KAS SOPAS, Japan. The event was held virtually on November 10th and 11th, 2022. The conference brought together 33 Global Leaders as speakers and panellists, and was attended by 500 participants.

As part of the conference agenda, we looked at four key facets of women’s lives and livelihoods, which must each be enabled to achieve the goal of building an Equiverse – Work (including women’s employment and entrepreneurship), Wealth, Wellbeing and Welfare or the 4Ws. These 4Ws make up a wholesome equity and need to be looked at in an integrated way to move forward the goals of achieving gender equity. Under all these four themes, the panellists highlighted the gender gaps and challenges faced in bridging the gaps, showcased best practices that can be scaled up and recommended a way forward for bringing in equity.

On the Work front, the panellists highlighted various demand and supply side factors that prevent women’s employment in productive work. They made several recommendations to make workplaces equitable, especially the need to be strategic, break stereotypes in hiring and have leadership’s buy in. In the area of women’s entrepreneurship, the discussions centred around the challenges in the ecosystem, possible opportunities for future growth of women entrepreneurs and solutions for promoting both women entrepreneurs as well as female investors.

Regarding women’s wealth, the panellists discussed the causes for lack of financial independence in women and gender disparity in earned and unearned income. The recommended future actions included changing mindsets regarding financial matters, building financial literacy and greater awareness in women, creating innovative financial products to motivate usage by women and taking measures to increase women’s asset ownership.

The panellists also discussed various factors that have had an adverse impact on women’s wellbeing and mental health, which includes a combination of difficulties they face because of the multiple roles that they play and the different forms of discrimination and biases they face in their day to day lives. Creating enabling workplaces, decreasing care-giving burden and addressing gender-based violence against women, were few of the several recommendations made for improving women’s wellbeing.

The panel discussions also highlighted how Welfare of women has been impacted by the growing levels of poverty and unequal income access to the grassroot levels. They recommended that disbursement of welfare measures to women in a planned and collaborative manner by state and central governments as well private and social sectors can enable women to avail of equal access to health, education and work, build their wealth and preserve their wellbeing.

Overall, care-giving duties and the burden of unpaid care work, patriarchal mindsets and practices, lack of financial literacy and technical knowledge in women, were some of the major challenges that were shown to affect all four areas of women’s lives. Addressing these cross-cutting challenges would require holistic, coordinated and large-scale efforts by all stakeholders to address issues around all the 4Ws. But most of all, the panellists highlighted the need for each one of us to take actions that can create a ripple of change.

Preface

We are delighted to release the report from our 7th Annual Conference on **“Enabling an Equiverse: Equal Access to Work, Wealth, Wellbeing and Welfare”**, in partnership with Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Regional Economic Programme Asia (KAS SOPAS). This conference focused on the four key facets of women’s lives and livelihoods – Work (including women’s employment and entrepreneurship), Wealth, Wellbeing and Welfare or the 4Ws. These 4Ws need to be enabled to move towards achieving gender equity and building an Equiverse.

This is even more important now as women have been far more impacted by the pandemic. The Equiverse is the need of the hour to create a sustainable world, and the only way to bring this about is for all of us to collaborate together and work towards it without losing any more time.

I am immensely grateful to the leaders who candidly shared their thoughts and insights at the conference. I am delighted that it attracted 500 men and women to participate in the virtual event. I am grateful to the TalentNomics India conference team for their effort in delivering a flawless and highly impactful conference.

We thank KAS-SOPAS again for their support in making this a very successful joint venture.

We also thank our other partners, Apraava Energy, HILTI, HCL, Saint Gobain, Tata Steel, Green Delta Insurance and Vahura for their partnership, and look forward to future collaborations in our joint quest in creating an Equiverse.



Ipsita Kathuria
Founder & CEO
TalentNomics India

I. Introduction

“In many ways we are in the midst of a perfect storm, but also in the midst of a perfect awakening about the role of Gender Equality as a mainstream key issue for creating healthier societies.”

– **Peggy Clark**

Background

“Equiviverse” is a vision of creating a Universe where equity is the norm. It envisions a new world order that is more balanced, more compassionate and more progressive – one where gender parity in access to work, wealth, wellbeing and welfare would lead to a more equitable and sustainable world for all. The concept of the ‘Equiviverse’ was first introduced in [TalentNomics India’s Leadership Conference in 2021](#).

“It is critical to realise a society in which all persons wishing to work- women and men - benefit from their ability to pursue their careers, free of pressures to choose between work and family”.

– **MP Seiko Noda**

Unfortunately, while we will live in a Universe that has progressed over the decades and witnessed phenomenal prosperity, the growth has not been balanced for all, as certain sections have gained far more than the others, even in the best of times. Women, especially, have largely missed out on reaping the benefits of growth and prosperity, in all areas of the lives including Work, Wealth, Wellbeing or Welfare (the 4Ws). While there has been some recent progress in enabling women’s education and health but miniscule progress is seen in areas like economic opportunity and security, pay equity, participation in science and technology fields.

Even though women have a minimal share in prosperity, women are the worst to be affected by natural and man-made disasters and the last to be taken into account in the remedial measures – as has been seen in the aftermath of recent global crises like the 2008 financial meltdown, the Afghan war, the Covid-19 pandemic and now the Ukraine war. These events have impacted women more adversely than men in all the 4Ws. Some long standing and persistent challenges have even become worse as women are going backwards in terms of health and economic prosperity while Gender based violence has increased.

“In the recent decade gender equality has gained buzz word status and entered policy making spheres as a perennial policy goal. But despite the progress substantial challenges remain. Discriminatory laws and social norms exist. Women remain to be under-represented in political and economic leadership. In addition, the pandemic has worsened the existing inequalities, reversing the process achieved in gender and women rights.” – **Cristita Perez**

Many countries have put in place gender neutral or gender-blind policies, laws and practices in place to give women equal opportunities. However, being gender blind is not being gender equitable. Often these policies have not taken into account the “privilege of being male” and special disadvantages women face just because of their gender. Even though many talk about the inherent gender biases, very few nations, organizations and leaders have actively intervened to understand and eradicate the deep-rooted challenges women face in every sphere of their lives-Work, Wealth, Wellbeing and Welfare. While people are now aware of benefits of engaging women in economic activity yet things have not progressed, and in fact have regressed.

Going forward, it is clear that the only way to build a sustainable world is to build an equitable world, one where women are given equal space in all the spheres. Until men and women are treated as equals and have equal opportunity to rise to their own potential, society cannot become a better place.

Equality doesn't mean that women put themselves into men's shoes. Women are different but equal- and that difference needs to be celebrated and not become a reason for imitating the male behaviour - only then would the world be a better place.”- Shabana Azmi

In the backdrop of this, the conference **“Enabling an Equiverse-4Ws”** endeavoured to provide a platform for leaders across sectors and regions, engaged in empowering women to come and share their insights. Jointly organised by **TalentNomics India** and **KAS SOPAS, Japan** the International Leadership Conference was held virtually on **November 10th and 11th, 2022**, and brought together more than 33 Global Leaders as speakers and panellists, and was attended by over 500 participants.

The conference focussed on addressing the questions “How do we reverse the negative impact and put women on a level playing ground? How do we transform the universe to be more equitable-**an Equiverse**? The aim was to enquire deeper into the specific areas, fill data and information gaps, and create a basis for further research on specific actions to increase the momentum of change to create more sustainable world.

The deliberations during the conference largely centred on:

Challenges faced by women and ecosystem barriers in the areas of work, wealth, wellbeing and welfare

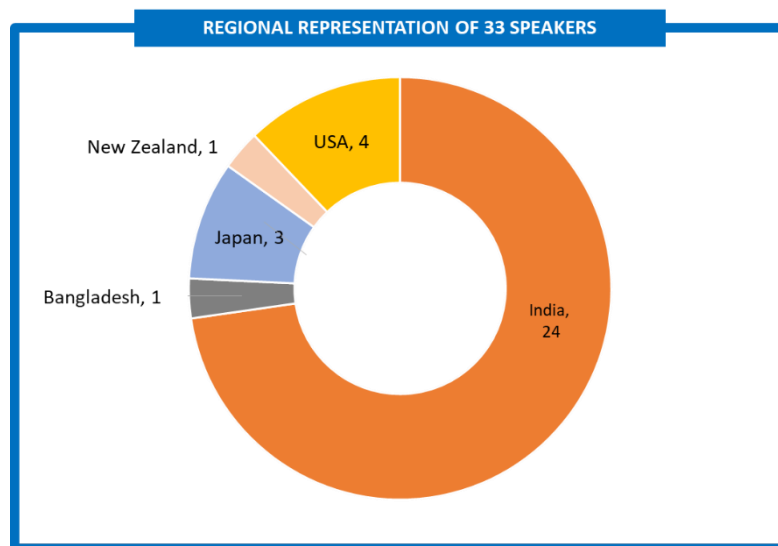
- Awareness about the criticality of issues
- Innovative ideas and practices from the ecosystem that can set examples and be put into action
- Understanding ways by which women and men can partner together to provide equal access to 4Ws
- Create a list of actions that can be implemented at scale to create an Equiverse
- Deliberate how each of us can be change agents for such a world and every participant can be a ripple of change
- How to make sure that Equity becomes a norm

The conference delivered knowledge and insights on the focus issues, through structured discussions, storytelling, experience sharing, best practice dissemination as well as engagement with participants through Q&As, polls and quizzes. The conference was divided into ten sessions, which included three Keynote addresses, six panel discussions with experts and a Closing Manifesto.

Speaker and Participants Profile

The event brought together 33 speakers and panellists from diverse backgrounds including academicians and researchers, corporate leaders, entrepreneurs, policy makers, senior leaders from Development and International organisations as well as leaders from Indian and International Non-Profit/Non-Government Organisations.

The 500 participants at the conference also comprised of a diverse group of stakeholders, including senior leaders from the industry, Government, academia, and civil society. The conference saw an astounding 45% representation of male participants. Around 95% of the participants were from India, while the rest were from 12 different countries.



**As per currently held position and country of residence of the speakers; and not including their previous roles, responsibilities, and countries.*

Agenda

Introduction and Opening Remarks	Ipsita Kathuria and Rabea Brauer introduced the conference by giving a background to the concept of Equiverse and the need for highlighting ways to bring equality in women's access to Work, Wealth, Wellbeing and Welfare.
SESSION 1 - Her story in Enabling an Equiverse	Shabana Azmi highlighted the various facets of her life that had shaped and enabled her to become a feminist and a champion of gender equality, in an inspiring discussion with Saurabh Srivastava.
SESSION 2 - Creating Equity in the Workspace	The panellists discussed ways of enabling women in workplaces, with the discussions being centred around three themes – 1) placing women in non-stereotypical roles and in leadership positions; 2) understanding ways by which leaders can be motivated to engage women in all roles, including the non-traditional ones; and 3) ensuring a more equitable world at work.
SESSION 3 - Investing in Women for Parity	The panellists discussed various dimensions of gender disparity that exists in Venture Capital and Private Equity funding and start-up investment, the causes behind it and the ways to overcome it. They backed their comments using evidence and anecdotes from their own experiences.
SESSION 4 - Restoring Personal Wellbeing	The panellists discussed the negative impact on the physical and mental wellbeing of women that is caused by the burden of various demands on them, especially focusing on the impact of women's role as caregivers.
SESSION 5 – Work, Wealth and Wellbeing of women in the organized sector	MP Seiko Noda shared her perspectives and insights from Japan's progress in enabling women's access to work, wealth and well-being.

SESSION 6 - Success Differentiators for Work, Wealth and Wellbeing of women entrepreneurs in South Asia	<p>The panellists discussed the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs, the success differentiators that have enabled women entrepreneurs in South Asia to succeed and measures that the ecosystem can take to enable women entrepreneurs.</p>
SESSION 7 - Gender Specific Welfare network	<p>To highlight best practices in public policies that can enable progress towards bridging gender gaps, the panellists discussed various country and regional examples. They also discussed specific examples of successful development initiatives taken by the private sector, development banks and non-government organizations.</p>
SESSION 8 - Empowering through Wealth	<p>The panellists discussed the causes for and ways to address the gender wealth gap. They highlighted measures that would enable addressing the inheritance barriers, pay-gaps, lack of insurance and wealth policies, inability to borrow credit etc.</p>
SESSION 9 - Progress and Way Forward: Work, Wealth and Wellbeing of women	<p>Peggy Clark shared research-based insights and perspectives on the steps required to build an Equiverse in an insightful conversation with Ipsita Kathuria.</p>
SESSION 10 - Closing Manifesto of Equiverse	<p>Uma Sharma delivered the closing manifesto where she shared lessons from her inspirational story of succeeding in her personal and professional life, despite facing several life challenges.</p>

II. Understanding the 4Ws

As part of the conference agenda, we looked at the four key facets of women’s lives and livelihoods, which must each be enabled to achieve the goal of building an Equiverse – Work, Wealth, Wellbeing and Welfare or the 4Ws. These 4Ws make up a wholesome equity and need to be looked at in an integrated way to move forward.

DIMENSIONS OF THE 4Ws EXPLORED AT THE CONFERENCE			
WORK	WEALTH	WELFARE	WELL-BEING
Creating meaningful employment opportunities for women	Women’s low levels of saving and investment	Government’s Welfare policies that help build equitable states in general and enable gender equality	Importance and necessity of women wellbeing
Building equitable workplaces	Unequal access to property and assets	Financial inclusion measures by the public, private and social sector	Factors adversely impacting women’s well being and mental health
Enabling women’s entrepreneurship	Limited decision-making rights on income and expenditure	Power of collaboration to enable welfare activities at scale	Good practices that institutions & organizations are undertaking
Developing supportive leadership	Limited use of insurance policies by women	Using technology for scale	Ways by which women’s physical and mental wellbeing can be enhanced in the future
Persistent gender pay gap	Lack of access to financial education		

The conference speakers and panellists deliberated on the following aspects under each of the 4Ws-

- Current status, in terms of gender gaps and barriers faced by women
- Areas of progress and best practices that can be used as examples and scaled up to create greater impact
- Recommendations and way forward for bridging the gender gap and enabling women

In this report, we have summarised the key points brought out during the conference on these aspects for the 4Ws. This is followed by listing the key areas of action that can be taken by various players in the ecosystem, which can holistically address the current challenges of women across the 4Ws.

III. Women’s Work, Wealth, Wellbeing and Welfare – Challenges and Opportunities

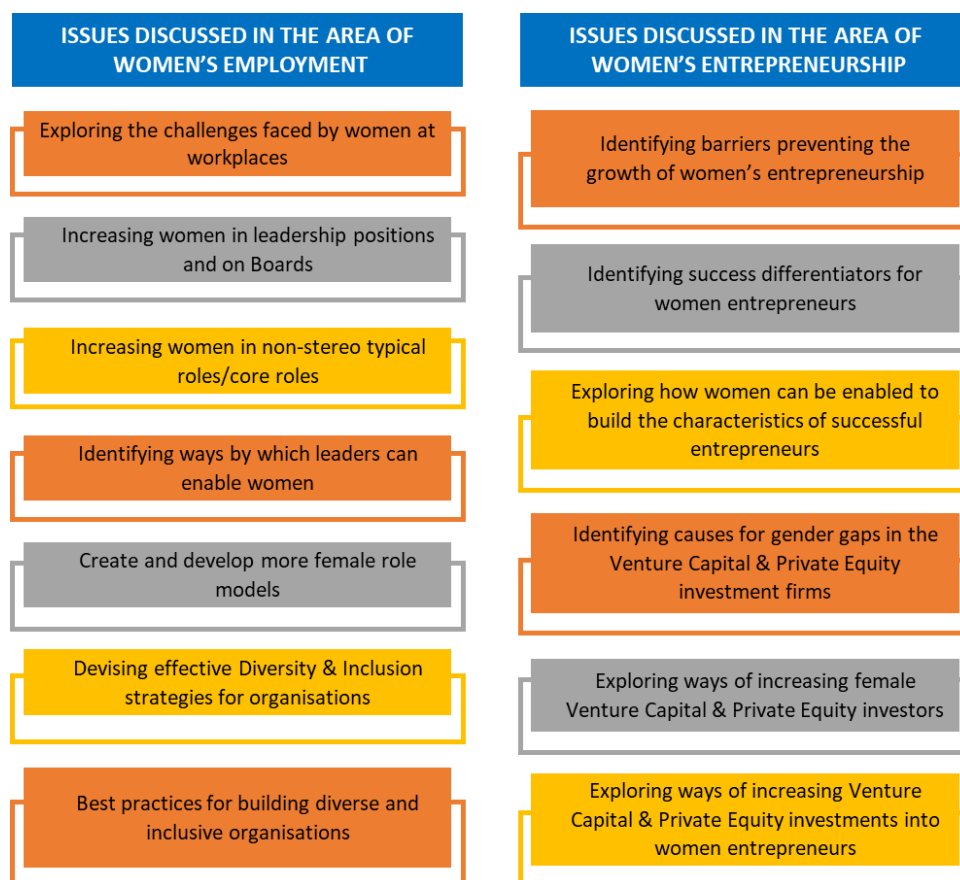
III.1 Work

Women’s workforce participation remains low globally, despite the fact that countries and companies are trying hard to engage women economically. Women make up 50% of population and 70% of global consumption, yet their participation in workforce remains low globally (38%). In urban India, less than 20% of women, 15 years and older are participating in the workforce. Even before the Covid pandemic, the Asia Pacific region was the only region which already had a declining female labour force participation rate. In the near future, participation in the active paid labour force is projected to remain below pre-pandemic levels in 169 countries of the world.

“The percentage of women in workforce has declined during and post the pandemic. This means, we still haven’t figured it out! We still haven’t found a way to bring them back into the workforce and engage them productively in a sustainable way”. – Shilpa Ajwani

This is despite much evidence favouring how an equitable environment positively affects the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of countries, the bottom lines of organisations and the opportunity to have a more sustainable world.

In the light of this, the conference explored several dimensions of enabling women’s productive employment and entrepreneurship.



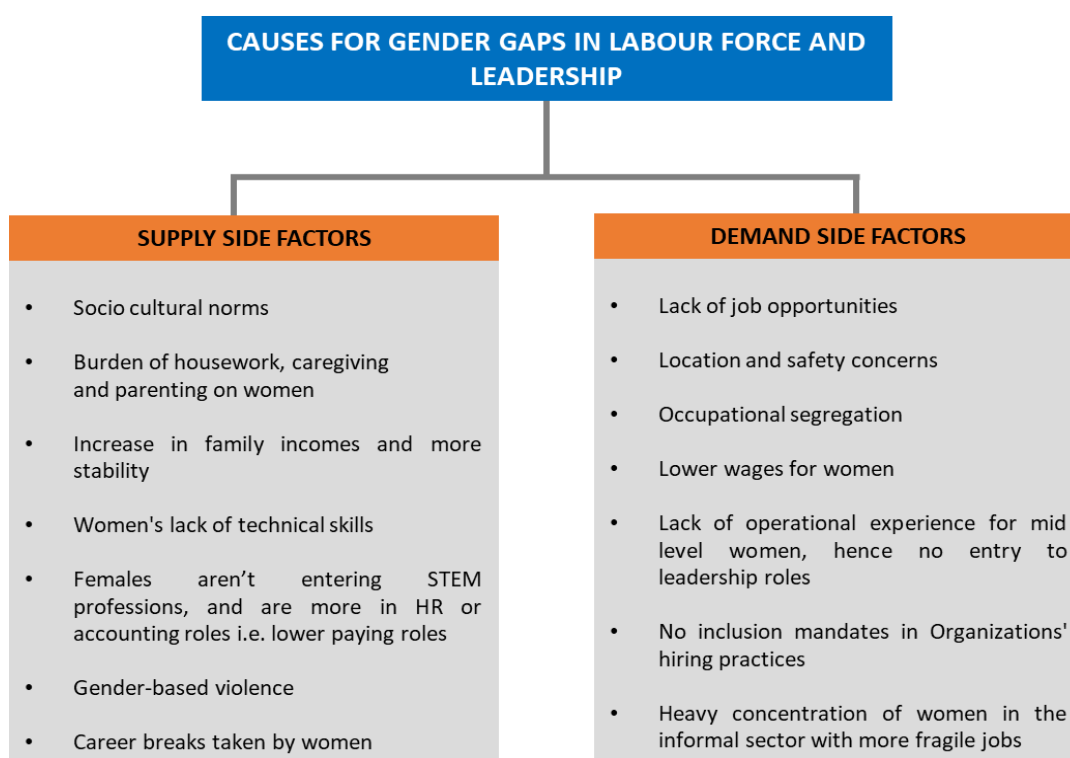
“More women investors and entrepreneurs are two critical components of the whole corporate economy - so that they can influence and bring Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the whole corporate setup and have a much wider impact on economy and society. Investing in women is not just investing in women but in the organisation's own success and future.” – Nupur Garg

III.1.1 Women’s Employment in Productive Labour Force

“Business case for DEI in workplace with respect to women has been proven again and again. During the pandemic also we noticed that the best companies for women in India who believe that diversity is a big enabler for business, very admirably managed the effects of pandemic - were able to bounce back, pivot into the flexible mode of working for everyone and were able to assist women workers in their ability to manage life and work”. – Dr. Saundarya Rajesh

Women’s Labour Force Participation rate in India has been falling and declining for two decades and is now nearly 20%. In some sectors like oil and gas (7%) and automotive (10%), participation of women is much lower compared to other sectors like hospitality and retail. Women are under-represented at all levels of employment, even in the corporate sector. As per latest data from LinkedIn, women constitute 28% of the workforce at the entry level but just 15% of the positions at the C-Suite level.

To understand the causes behind the low level of female labour force participation and gender disparity in management and leadership levels, the conference panellists looked at not only the supply side factors preventing women’s productive engagement but also demand side factors. The demand for female labour and the supply for female labour are mutually reinforcing, as they are both contingent on the social norms and barriers that show up both in the mindsets of employers and in the mindset of the households providing female labour.



“When you're trying to fix a problem, you ask five Whys: Why aren't women applying to these jobs? Well, they're not applying to these jobs because it's too far from work. So why is it too far from work? Because there's no transportation? So why don't they have transportation? And so on.... Once you've asked these why question, you will be able to zoom in on really whether it is a demand for female labour or supply for female labour issue.” – Samantha Hung

Best Practices and Recommended future actions

“The workplace was designed hundreds of years ago before the World Wars, for men and by men - and that design hasn’t been updated although the workforce composition is completely different today - so the process of updating this workplace design to reflect the current workforce is critical.” – Nupur Garg

Research supported by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and conducted by Duke University, on female friendly workplaces in urban Pakistan found data-driven evidence to prove that female friendly work environment makes a difference. It proved that basic facilities like adequate toilets for women and adequate working hours made it easier for women to commute and that made a big difference in terms of encouraging women to want to work.

*“Things don’t happen by accident; one has to create an enabling environment. There has to be an intent, plan and execution with a tenacity to keep going at it. And the joyful part is a crazy change in statistics!”
– Aditya Ghosh*

Following are some suggested actions and best-practices that were highlighted during the conference, which workplaces can initiate to enable more women to join, grow and thrive in their workforce –

- **Leadership buy-in:** The first step is for leaders to have a will to bring about change, and be persistent about achieving the goal. True diversity can be achieved only when done with intention, persistence, focus and optimism of creating an outcome. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) needs to become a central agenda, a topic in each and every meeting, a factor of consideration in every goal and target. Only then the changes can be expected to happen.
- **Being structured and strategic:** Companies need to be a lot more structured around the goal of building women’s leadership pipeline. Creating a DEI framework should not be about checking boxes but a well thought out and genuine reflection of the companies’ true values - across multiple countries, dimensions of diversity and all aspects of business (everything from employee attraction to retention to growth to development). Each organisation needs to assess the reasons behind the gender gaps in their workforce across different levels, and only then will they be able to come out with solutions. And it is important to focus on outcomes, without which equality and equal opportunity will not translate into equity.

*“Nurturing a culture that embraces DEI doesn’t come with a playbook and finding the right formula for success takes the commitment from everyone, right from the executive leadership to the newest employee.”
– Anuradha Khosla*

- **Provide flexibilities:** Going forward, the dramatic shifts in terms of prolonged periods of remote work and working from home must lead to longer term change and also a better consideration of securing jobs for everyone, particularly women. Organisations must provide a diverse range of flexible employment modes including enlightened responses to childbirth, parenting, nursing and other needs, to enable both men and women to achieve a work life balance.
- **Employ women in non-stereotypical roles:** Women need to be moved away from safer roles into more core roles that give them opportunity to make more significant contributions. This especially requires encouraging women to take up more operational roles rather than stick with the safer bets – to take risks to break glass ceilings. It is important to ensure women have the same level of ability to take on the senior level positions by having a proper system of transitioning, training and giving adequate opportunities so that they are equally ready to take on the role. For instance, it was pointed out that currently women are not offered operational roles as “leaders believe they

are doing a favour to women by not offering them roles that will involve travel and working late”. As a result, women in mid-management lack operational experience and consequently don’t qualify for any leadership roles. Organisations must, therefore, give everyone an equal opportunity without making assumptions and allow women to raise their hand to make the choices.

- **Conscious hiring:** Employers must consciously encourage fifty percent resumes from women for all open positions, because through the natural process a very small proportion of applicants are women and it reduces the mathematical probability of women being chosen.
- **Unconscious bias training:** It is very necessary to train people to become aware of their own biases. Even women have unconscious biases about women, because of the way they have been brought up in society.
- **Enable men in the organisations:** Workplaces must create a facilitating environment for men, by implementing initiatives to change the long hours worked by men, enable their ability to provide childcare and other changes that make it easier for them to participate in parenting, nursing care and other areas of care giving.

“I often get asked how do you manage both work and family – and my reply is “the day any man gets asked that question, we would have achieved our objective of equity.”- Nishi Vasudeva

- **Make the “floor unsticky”:** Often, even if there is an equal number of men and women in the organisation, men tend to progress and women stick to the sticky floor and don’t go beyond that. Therefore, organisations must strive to not only provide equal opportunity for both men and women to progress to higher levels but also understand why the floor is sticky for women and create a level playing ground.
- **Partner with multilateral organisations:** Multilateral organisations are playing and can continue to play a pivotal role in supporting the private sector address the disparity in their gender statistics. For example, UN Women has been working with private companies on advising them on reviewing their policies and practices from a gender lens through a tool called Women Empowerment Principles. ADB provides gender responsive loans to the private sector by helping them also develop a sexual harassment policy, implement more flexible work policies, system to build internship programs with the intention of encouraging women into the industry, etc.

HCL Case Study: Building an Equitable Workplace

As narrated by Anuradha Khosla

30% of HCL’s Board is women. This has allowed them to build a more inclusive organisation. Following are some best practices that worked in their favour and have enabled them –

- 1) Leadership commitment - a tone at the top and a top-down approach along with the effort to build inclusive behaviours and habits has gone a long way in accelerating the journey
- 2) Diversity council – they have a diversity Council that creates the diversity charter across all the pillars and mandates all business leaders to have women as their direct reports
- 3) Board level commitment - the commitment in organisation starts at a Board level DEI Committee that comprises of the Board, CEO, CHRO etc., who all review the DEI charters. Also, interaction between women leaders and board members is encouraged
- 4) Measurement – metrics are tracked on a regular basis to see where the needle is moving and where it is not, what could have been done, what else is lacking, etc

5) Focus on inclusion – the organisation believes that inclusion is what unlocks diversity and “if you are not actively including, you are accidentally excluding”. They focus on building inclusive leadership capabilities and driving a culture of inclusion across every interaction - could be during recruitment, performance discussions, career discussions. There is an inclusion lab for leaders, managers, individual contributors to go through a unified learning experience to understand inclusive behaviours.

A lot has been achieved but a lot still needs to be done. The focus on the journey has to continue till parity is reached.

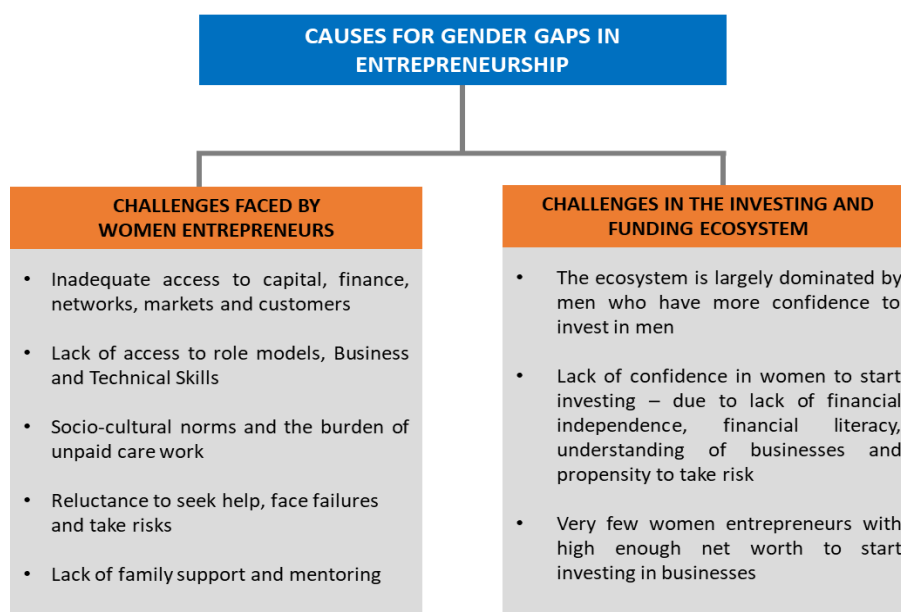
III.1.2 Women’s Entrepreneurship

Women continue to be under-represented in the sphere of entrepreneurship. Women constitute only around 20% of the total entrepreneurs in India as compared to 37% globally, and of these, an overwhelming majority (98%) are micro enterprises. Only 5% of India’s start-up founders are women and only 5 out of 136 unicorn founders are women. India ranked 70th among 77 countries covered in the female entrepreneurship index by IWWGE report.

Additionally, there exists a great gender disparity in investment to fund women-led businesses. Over 70% of the total finance requirement of women entrepreneurs in India remains unmet and 80% of enterprises run by women are self-financed. According to the World Bank’s global fintech data, only 10% of women in India have actually borrowed from a financial institution compared to 15% of men. Funding for women-led start-ups accounted for less than 15% of the total funding that Indian start-ups raised in 2021. In the US as well, in 2019 women-led start-ups garnered just 3.4% of all Venture Capital (VC) and in 2021 they received 2% of all US VC funding. Private Equity funding is equally less. But apart from that, another major challenge is the unfavourable funding and investment ecosystem that has its own challenges and gender gaps (60% of all PE/VC firms have an all-male leadership team).

The reason for the dismal state of women entrepreneurs is that they continue to face several challenges when starting and growing their business.

“We women need to constantly prove ourselves. It’s never that the product or service can speak for itself, especially when dealing with clients. They will never bet their dollars on you”. – Uma Reddy



Best Practices and Recommended future actions

Bridging the entrepreneurship gender gap is, however, very important because not only will it spur growth, productivity, innovation and poverty reduction but it will also create more employment, particularly for women. It has been estimated that accelerating women's entrepreneurship can potentially generate 150–170 million jobs in India until 2030.

“Promoting women’s entrepreneurship is a very powerful tool of women’s empowerment in the South Asian region. Increase in female labour force participation and agency, brought about by fostering female entrepreneurship, will in turn erode restrictive gender norms and reduce the stigma associated with female employment.” – Dr. Radhicka Kapoor

To promote women's entrepreneurship, several steps were suggested by panellists that must be taken not only by the women entrepreneurs but by the ecosystem as a whole.

(i) Suggested Steps to be taken by the ecosystem

- **Build ‘self-confidence’ of women:** boosting women's level of confidence is a major factor needed to promote women's entrepreneurship as well as women investors. There is a need to enhance women's ability to speak up, voice their thoughts in meetings and to communicate what they know. One way this could be achieved is if school and college education systems start instilling confidence and ambition in young women as well as inculcate in young men respect for women and to see women as their equals in every field.
- **Include investment in college education curriculum:** many colleges are encouraging girls and boys to take up the entrepreneurial route while still in pursuing their education. But it is also important to introduce a course on financial literacy and equity investing in the academic trajectory to create a strong footing and understanding of basics. And within the course, the young men and women should also be taught about how to empathise with the entrepreneurs (understand the problems and solutions) to build up their ability to invest.
- **Encourage men to allow women to talk:** the message must be sent across to men on the same table to create space for women to talk and to encourage and nudge women at meetings.

“Women need to not just sit in the corner of the table but come into the centre of the discussion.”

– Padmaja Ruparel

- **Showcase role models** – showcasing and sharing success stories as well as providing data driven insights from experiences of other entrepreneurs are very important steps for inspiring and guiding women entrepreneurs. This should be regularly done at entrepreneurship events and in women's networks.

“Changing the narrative and dealing with biases around female entrepreneurship is not easy - it requires highlighting stories of role models, which can influence career aspirations of women and show that norm deviation is in fact, possible.” – Dr. Radhicka Kapoor

- **Enable women to invest in women founders:** Women's specific problems (health issues, female issues, home issues etc) are most likely to be empathised only by women. Therefore, there is need for women entrepreneurs to create solutions to solve these problems as well women investors who understand the need to invest in these solutions. More and more women founders are targeting demand from other women like themselves and are much more focused on building products and

services that meet the needs of women. Therefore, it is important to encourage more women to come forward as investors and bet their money on women entrepreneurs. One option to achieve this, as suggested by the panellists, is to encourage co-investing and partnership between regular Venture Capital or Private Equity firms and female-focussed funds. Such consortiums will help build confidence and capabilities in women investors.

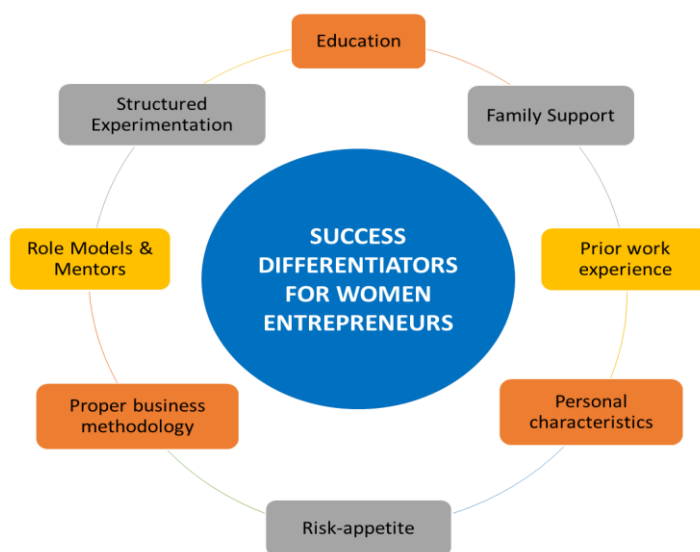
“Gender balanced portfolios get to higher returns faster and gender balanced companies get to higher valuations faster.” – Padmaja Ruparel

- **The investors should empower the women entrepreneurs after investing in them:** For instance, the Indian Angel Network (IAN) follows up their investments with following steps -
 - 1) Ensuring that the female founder is given a board seat
 - 2) Dividing roles between the founders and team based on the person's competence
 - 3) Bringing in senior women mentors to guide women founders on what is expected of them and what is not expected of them
- **Make the policy ecosystem enabling for women:** India needs to have a department of Women Entrepreneurship in Ministry of MSME. Apart from the small schemes and programs for women entrepreneurs, there should be a full-fledged government department looking at it in the Central as well State governments. Also, there is a huge policy-practice gap as implementation of policies is slow and the benefits don't reach the women entrepreneurs. The government, therefore, needs to build awareness for women entrepreneurs to actually access these schemes.

(ii) Suggested advice for women entrepreneurs

“Society has conditioned us to believe that it is harder for us or we need the support of men – but even then, there are so many shining examples in the world like Sarah Blakeley, or Kiran Majumdar Shaw who have shown us that discrimination does not stand a chance against passion and perseverance.” - Rashi Narang

Results of a study by TalentNomics India on women's entrepreneurship in South Asia, presented during the conference, revealed that successful women leaders possessed common traits and specific attributes that enabled them to succeed and overcome the many obstacles they encountered in their entrepreneurial journey. The study highlighted both human capital (valuable skill sets and knowledge) and social capital (social relationships cultivated by an entrepreneur) as key facilitators for success.



Based on these success differentiators as well as advice from other panellists, following is a list of actions for women entrepreneurs that was brought out during the conference –

- **Proactively join networks:** most often, women entrepreneurs find it difficult to be part of networks due to the many hats they wear. A major problem is that they are unable to attend most networking meetings that happen in the evenings. But technology has provided the opportunity to be part of virtual networks and WhatsApp groups – so women entrepreneurs must proactively be part of these networks. That will provide access to role models and opportunity to share problems and find solutions.

“Having access to social capital and networks can help overcome women's barriers related to lack of access to financial capital and other resources.” – Dr. Radhicka Kapoor

- **Have patience:** women should understand that it takes time to bring the mindset changes needed at home, tackle social norms and to establish themselves in the business. It is very easy to let go but they need to be resilient, find ways and mechanisms to make the shifts needed. Even if they don't have any support from the home, they can always find people in the extended family group or friends to support and mentor them.

“One good news is that due to the pandemic, many women actually saw the potential to add to the family income, by creating small businesses. Although on the macro level, a lot of women were adversely affected by the pandemic in terms of having to either stay at home for child care, but that also became an inspiration for getting women to think about how they can earn additional money.” - Anita George

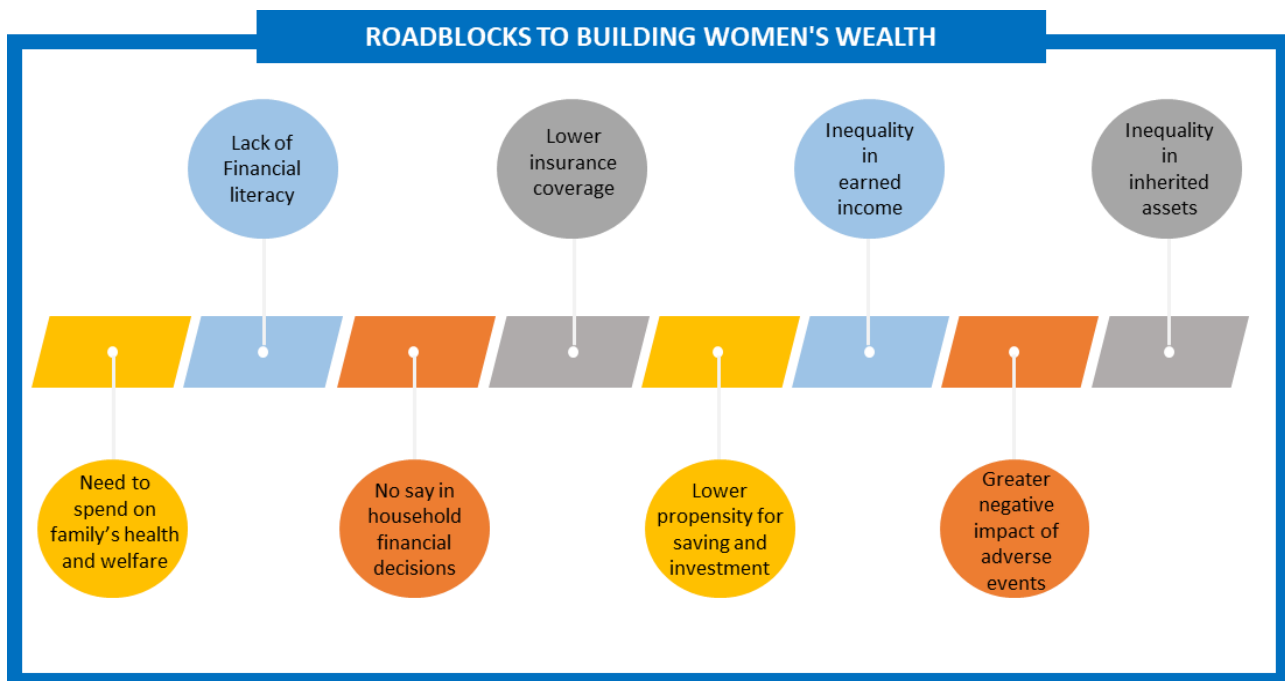
- **Bring about change in mindsets at home-** successful women who have gone through the journey must take the onus of changing that trajectory at home and ushering the mindset changes.

III.2 Wealth

There is a huge gender disparity in wealth creation and women are far from achieving financial independence because women earn lesser than men, have limited access to their own finances and have low propensity to invest and save. They also don't have decision making power on how to spend their own income.

Statistics show that Indian women earned 28% less compared to their male counterparts in 2018-19 (labour force survey data of the National Sample Survey Office, NSSO). As per Oxfam's India Discrimination report, men's average earning is nearly 2.5 times that of the earnings of women in urban areas. Another survey showed that out of every 5 investors in India, just 1 is a woman. According to a new Wealth Equity Index calculated for 39 advanced countries, women accumulate only 74 percent of the wealth that men have at retirement. In the Asia Pacific region, women are expected to accumulate just 76% of men's wealth levels by retirements (WTW Global Gender Wealth Equity Report). In India, only about 10 percent of women have sole homeownership.

There are a several key factors that impact women's capacity to be financially independent.



“Property rights and political empowerment are the two areas where we don't see a lot of progress over time. In its report on gender and development, the World Bank called these the ‘sticky issues, because it is a zero-sum game - there are fixed assets that need to be redistributed. So, it's a very different kind of issue from improving health or education or Finance where as a country grows and develops there's more resources for everybody and men and women both can benefit together.” – Nisha Agrawal

Best Practices and Recommended future actions

Financial independence is important for women as it not only gives them economic security and social empowerment but also gives them an identity and the ability to have a voice and to manage their own lives in ways that makes them less vulnerable. Another factor to be considered is that women have a higher life expectancy than men, making it more critical to focus on this disparity to ensure women can live to the end of their lives with dignity and respect.

“In Japan, most women live up to 90 years. Number of divorces has reached one third the number of marriages while about one third of both men and women remain unmarried at the age of 50 in Japan. With greater diversity emerging in women's lives, it has become extremely important for women to enhance their ability to become financially independent, thereby avoiding descending into economic adversity linked to longer life spans.”– MP Seiko Noda

Innovative approaches are, therefore, needed to advance financial inclusion to enable women to build and preserve their wealth. Following were suggestions for bridging the gender wealth gaps that were brought out during the conference –

- **Make efforts to build pay-parity:** bridging the gender pay gaps is the first step towards creating equality in women's wealth and net worth. Policy interventions, especially, can go a long way in bridging the pay gaps. For example, Japan, where women's wages are only about 70% of men's, has introduced a policy of mandatory disclosure of gender-based wage-gaps by businesses with 301 or more regular workers.

“Wage Transparency helps. Once women know, maybe they'll negotiate a little better without that information or data, you can do nothing about it.” – Binoo Wadhwa

Professional associations, industry bodies and influential persons can also take the lead in taking actions for bridging wealth gaps. For instance, the Board of Cricket Control in India (BCCI) recently announced equal pay for men and women cricket players.

Often, the goal of pay parity first requires an ecosystem to be built. For example, in cinema, when female actors play protagonists and do a good enough job to make the movies a commercial success, then the pay parity will follow. Therefore, what are needed are more women to work in meaningful films and create an ecosystem.

- **Enable women's self-reliance through government policies:** governments need to mandate financial inclusion through policies. For example, Indonesia introduced a National Women's Financial inclusion policy, which included refining National definitions for women owned and led businesses, mandating sex-disaggregated data through regulatory requirements for the banking sector, capacity development to make it mainstream through the whole financial ecosystem, etc..

Japan introduced a Women's Edition Big Bone Policy Measures 2022, within which “Economic Self-reliance for Women” was a major pillar of the vision. It includes steps to correct wage differences between men and women, eliminate stereotyped support of gender-based roles and resolve other deeply entrenched structural issues.

- **Enable Financial literacy and address information asymmetry** – there is a need for concerted efforts to tilt the information asymmetry that exists on financial services through financial literacy and education. Financial literacy can enable women to understand and manage what they sign up for and ensure that they are more in control of their finances. Following were some suggested actions in this direction –
 - Education and awareness are needed to be created in people about the various options for savings and investments, costs of borrowing and managing credit histories.
 - Road shows, mentoring and other training would help women to understand how they can utilize borrowed funds more productively.
 - Investing should be a part of early curriculum in school education.
- **Motivate women to invest in Insurance:** Innovative ways of motivating women to invest in insurance policies are needed and this may require a holistic and multi-stakeholder approach by forging partnerships. Beyond insurance, access to finance can also be provided by involving banks, telecom companies and Mobile Financial Services (MFIS) platform. Such partnerships can make it seamless to file an insurance claim as well as avail bank loans and other value-added services. Also, larger distribution channels can be created by working with MFIS, development organizations, banks or women councils who have influence in their neighbourhoods and can be agents to create awareness among women about various products.

Case study of Green Delta's Nibedita Insurance Policy Scheme

Narrated by Farzanah Chowdhury

- Nibedita is not only a policy but a One-Stop service platform for women to get everything they want.
- They provide value-added services in addition to the insurance coverage, in order to attract women. They provide access to bank loans and also give training in financial literacy. They also help them get cashless facilities, healthcare facilities and counselling. The unique feature of this insurance policy is access to law enforcement agencies and also allowances for those who were exposed to traumatic events like road bullies and acid attacks etc.

- They also encourage women to bring their spouses for training, so that they also understand how to utilize the funds.
- The dissemination of information is done using technology to address the problem that women don't want to come forward. With the help of an app carried by women officers, they provide access to insurance to women customers who didn't have any access to finance, bank or any institutions. The apps have enabled women to make decisions independently without asking their spouses.

They have reached out to more than 25,000 women who have taken this insurance policy. There are many success stories of women generating incomes from the policy benefits and access to bank loans they provide. For example, one beneficiary was able to open a clinic with this assistance and another one re-started her tailor shop after claiming the insurance against her shop catching fire.

- Take measures to increase the level of women's asset ownership: Property rights are an area where there is not much progress. Women don't own assets at anywhere near the same rates as men. This gap needs to be recognised and rectified, as asset ownership is an important tool for building resilience and enhancing confidence to take risks. It is important for women to own land under their own name as it not only improves productivity but also has very widespread effects on improving women's well-being, on reducing violence against women and even on improving the nutrition of children.

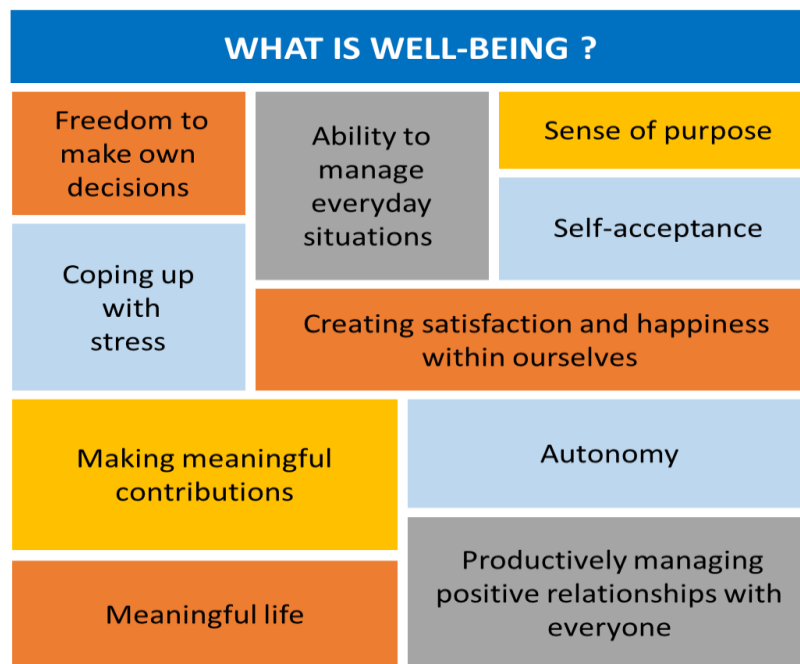
Following are some actions that were suggested for bridging this gap–

- Awareness campaigns about women's rights to inheritance and asset ownership are needed. For example, Green Delta Insurance provides trainings via a panel of lawyers to make women aware of their inheritance rights, as women don't have any information about what they can inherit from their parents or even what happens when their spouse dies or how to accumulate assets for their business.
- Government policies can play a big role in shifting and breaking through social norms and bridging the asset ownership gap. For example, some states in India have encouraged women to buy property by making it easier for them, as they pay smaller stamp duty and registration fee. In Bangladesh, if the land is registered under a woman's name, then no other family member can take it away or file a case against her.

III.3 Wellbeing

“Wellbeing of women leads to wellbeing of the world.” – Ipsita Kathuria

Wellbeing is an all-encompassing phenomenon that impacts every individual's physical, mental, emotional and financial aspects of life. Wellbeing links together to economic, climate and health challenges in a way that is important to the future.



Work and wealth, juxtaposed with patriarchy and women’s role in society, have a direct impact on the physical and mental wellbeing of women. Wellbeing in turn directly impacts their ability to work and build their net worth.

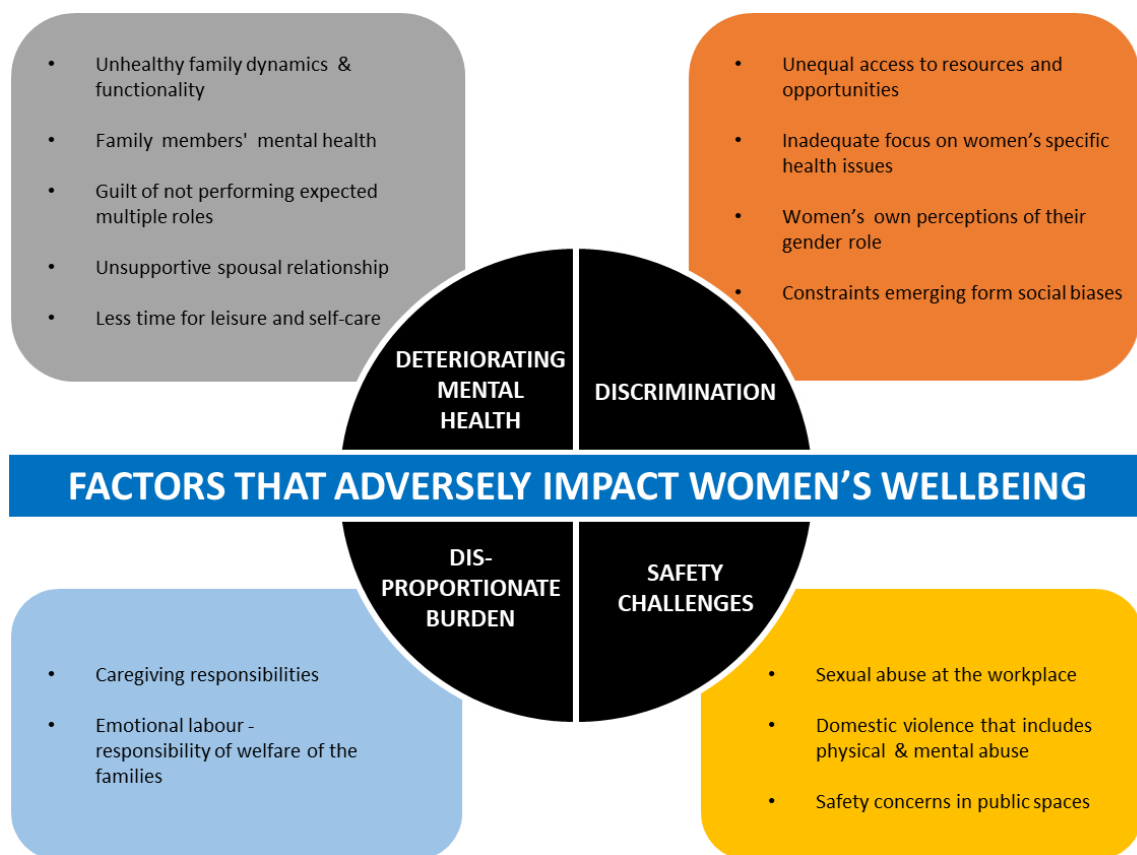
Women’s wellbeing is adversely impacted because they bear the burden of unrealistic expectations that is imposed upon them in terms of –

- domestic labour that includes care giving
- economic labour that contributes to family income
- reproductive labour to propagate the family lineage
- emotional labour to cater to wellbeing of others

“Care giving can be a fairly lonely, challenging and unpredictable journey. There are many expectations for caregivers, emanating from stories in our socio-cultural milieu that tell women to put family and children first by sacrificing themselves - reinforcing an idea that thinking about self is selfish.” – Bhavana Issar

The unpaid care burden is phenomenal as women perform 10 times more work than men in India as opposed to 4.8 times more, globally. In India it's estimated that women take on close to 90 percent of unpaid care work. They have fewer opportunities to participate in economic, social, political lives, even pleasure - which has an impact on their wellbeing.

“It’s a real tall order to meet these demands and women really pay a heavy price. It’s a sacrifice of their own wellbeing.” – Dr. Geeta Kumar



Women are also subject to a host of discrimination - unequal access to resources and opportunities, abuse both at work and home, and are still expected to keep everyone happy.

“Success leads to backlash, and gender-based violence actually moves ‘in waves’ depending on the ways in which women assert their rights.” - Maitreyi Das

Mental health is a subset of wellbeing. When wellbeing is compromised over a period of time, it leads to mental health challenges.

“Often when a woman seek therapy, people pass judgements about her, as if something is wrong with her. Negating a woman's experiences by such judgements cuts her empowerment and individuality which undermines her value.” – Dr. Varundhini Kankipati

Wellbeing had been declining since 1970s when more women started working but could not shed their home responsibilities. The pressures stemming from a biased work environment further impacted their wellbeing. However, the Covid era has brought an even sharper focus on the alarming negative impact on women's wellbeing, caused by increased care giving responsibilities, domestic violence, sexual abuse, mental health issues - resulting in women dropping off the workforce. A Deloitte research reported a “burnout epidemic” in women, wherein 53% women reported higher stress levels, with “burnout” being the top-cited driver to leave the workforce. As per a report by CMIE, 21 million women quit India’s workforce between 2017-22, largely due to safety or time-consuming responsibilities at home.

Best Practices and Recommended future actions

“Women's wellbeing depends on their ability to work, earn and save - but their wellbeing also impacts their ability to work, earn and save.” - Peggy Clark

The pandemic has brought the issue of wellbeing into sharper focus but there has not been enough deliberation on how to enhance the wellbeing of women. Since the wellbeing of women directly impacts

their ability to work and earn, there is an urgent need to bring the dialogue to the forefront to give women the same fighting chance as men to live their life with dignity. We need to understand how women can maintain their physical and mental wellbeing in a society that continues to be patriarchal and deprives them of basic human rights.

“There is still a lot of work remaining in the area of mental health. One big problem is that people are over emphasising the slogan that “it’s OK to not be OK” - that is incomplete. We need to add that “there is support you need to get” and that’s where people have to move to.” – Dr. Varundhini Kankipati

The panellists brought out various suggested actions to enable women’s physical, emotional and mental wellbeing-

- **Family members should support women’s mental health needs:** When women take professional counselling and therapy, there is a marked shift in their ability to look at themselves as an individual and how they need to take care of themselves. But women most often don’t ask for help, for the fear of being stigmatised or judged. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the family members to take the initiative of encouraging women to seek professional help. Of late, it has been observed that the younger generation are much more open to the idea of mental health and therapy, and very often they are instrumental in pushing their mothers to seek help.

But more than the children, it is the spousal support that is the key factor behind women’s mental health. If partnership between husband and wife is healthy and supportive, a woman has so much strength to be able to work on every other dimension. If she has space for her individuality and individual experiences to be heard, it takes care of her mental health. So, when husbands come along for therapy, there is a visible shift in the family dynamics and women’s mental health.

“Women are more resilient than you would ever think them possible when their primary support is healthy. This is one dimension that gets totally camouflaged.” – Dr. Varundhini Kankipati

- **Workplaces should enable women’s care giving:** Childcare is hardly subsidised anywhere and it is very difficult for women to find affordable childcare. Workplaces can take actions to improve working conditions for women. Following were some suggested actions –
 - Give flexibility to employees with the understanding that different people have different needs, and create policies around it. For instance, during the pandemic, Axis Securities gave women the flexibility to take time off for making lunch and dinner.
 - Recognise housework and care giving as work when evaluating women’s resumes for recruitment
 - Provide not just maternity leave but parental leave / care giving leave, and incentivise men to take time off for care giving
 - Keep meetings at conducive hours
 - Help men highlight their care giving challenges
 - Enable women’s capabilities to seek out help and support when needed

Axis securities case study: Enabling Wellbeing

As narrated by Soonu Wadewala

Axis Securities has been nominated among the Top 10 Happy workplaces, and have also made strides in enabling women in their organisation. Following are some of their successful practices that were highlighted–

(1) They integrated wellbeing into the mainstream corporate agenda, in the following ways -

- Involved psychological modalities in all workshops/ learning and growth interventions: They

introduced modalities like psycho drama/ dance therapy that are integrated into mainstream corporate agenda like team building or conflict resolution or collaboration. This struck employees at personal levels, so absorption of learning has been significantly higher.

- Started measuring wellbeing: instead of traditional health checks (in terms of employee satisfaction surveys), they started measuring parameters like job satisfaction, manager relationships, people's interaction in cohesive groups in the organisation etc. They also introduced an Index to measure happiness and stress levels, and looked at it in correlation with satisfaction, cohesion etc. That showed a different spectrum that it is not necessary that employees who are happy are satisfied and vice versa.
- Inaugurated a Podcast called *Pause for Purpose*: a place where people can take a conscious pause.
- Brought in in-house counsellors: these provide a constant and regular person to whom people could voice and express their deepest concerns and fears.

(2) They started investing in the "Equity" dimension of DEI-

- Performed DEI data analytics around how many women were leaving, getting hired and promoted to senior roles etc. Just by measuring and having an agenda behind it helped them open doors for more women's participation.
- Introduced initiatives to make young women understand the factors that drive women to exit from the workforce, so they can build a vision to deal with it right from the beginning.

"Once employees become aware, the employees carry those conversations home, and awareness in society about mental health and wellbeing improves. So small tweaks can create ripples and exponential impact."

– **Soonu Wadewala**

- **Create an enabling environment within households** - Enabling conversations start from home, and families should make sure that their sons do the exact same work as their daughters.

"UN Women has a moto "Ghar ka kaam, Sabka kaam", that essentially promotes the idea that housework is everyone's duty." – **Suhela Khan**

- **Enable women to focus on self-care** - Women need to be trained and enabled to focus on self-care. They must develop a positive relationship with food, exercise, and weight management. But more importantly, they need to not only "feed their body but also feed their soul", express themselves through whatever way they want and give their voice a unique story.
- **Take measures to give women freedom from violence** - Women have a right to live without a fear of violence in all spheres and all spaces. However, increasingly women are facing violence in the digital spaces, apart from the workplace as well public and private spaces. Domestic violence is a serious violation of female human rights and during Covid-19 this increased rapidly as women faced domestic and sexual violence at the hands of their spouse. Therefore, all stakeholders must take actions to enable women's safety (physical and emotional).

The government, especially, has the biggest role to play in changing mindsets and providing enabling infrastructure to enhance safety of women. In Japan, for example, widespread efforts are being made to stamp out such crimes. Regarding violence perpetuated by a spouse, the endeavours include upgrading the consultation support system available to victims, improved treatment of care workers and other steps for

sexual crimes. They are expanding the support programs available to victims, as well as strengthened counter-measures, litigation and enlightenment for offenders.

- **Focus on innovative ways of addressing women's health issues** - It is important for women to be able to directly determine matters related to their own health, based on accurate information and on their own free will. This is the fundamental premise for women to excel in society and attain true gender equity. Until now, the atmosphere has not been favourable for public discussion on health issues like menstruation, menopause etc that are unique to women. However, it is very necessary to raise an understanding of such issues and discuss them openly at home, workplaces and society as a whole.

There is also a need to promote femtech initiatives to empower women with their health literacy and to use cutting edge technology to address the special challenges faced by women,

“Femtech has gained popularity in recent years in Japan. We started a team of MPs who strongly cheer for femtech companies. We also attended an exhibition of Global femtech start-ups. Femtech is a word that Japanese women believe is a saviour of our health!” – MP Seiko Noda

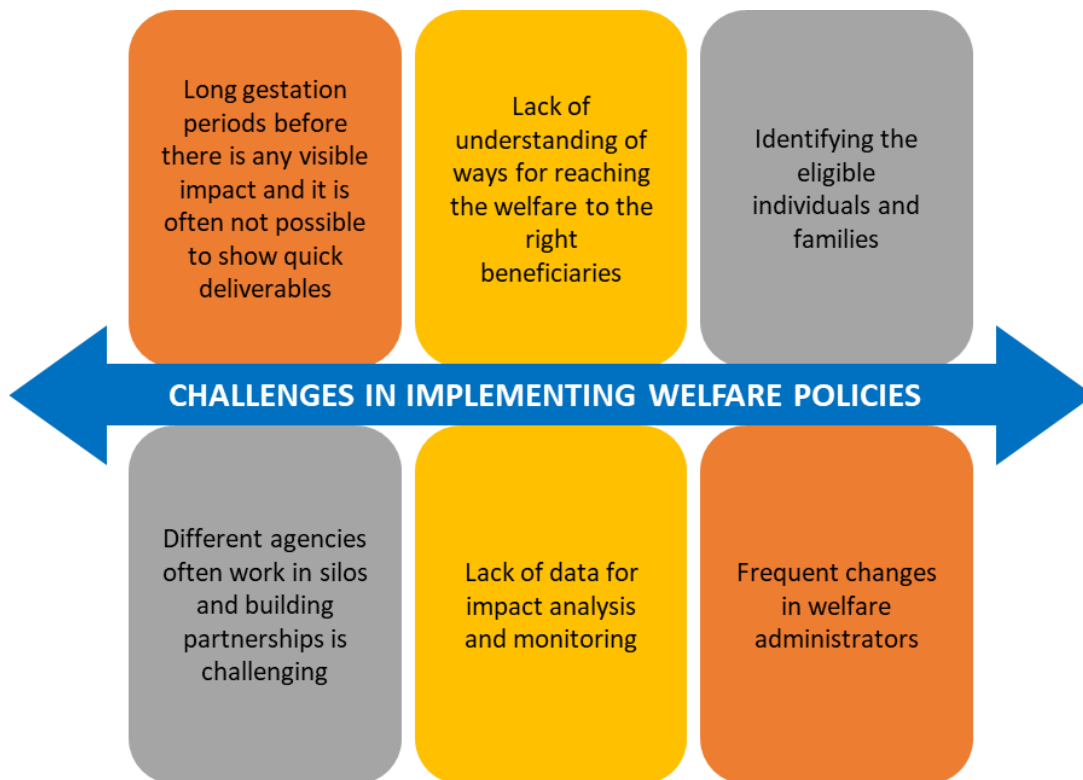
III.4 Welfare

“Development benefits, whether they are monetary or otherwise, are known to last longer and benefit a larger number of people if they initially accrue to women. So, therefore, women are key to development particularly from sustainability but also from a scalability point of view.” – Arun Nagpal

Globally, over 380 million women and girls live in extreme poverty, i.e. they live on less than a dollar and ninety cents per day. The majority of the world's population, especially women, are unprotected by any form of social protection. However, equitable access to gender-responsive social protection has a significant impact on women's and girls' empowerment and opportunities. Gender-responsive social protection can improve women's access to and control over income and assets strengthen social networks and improve women's public, economic, social and political status etc.

“Covid-19 has jeopardized progress on poverty reduction; actually it has reversed previous gains by about four to ten years by some estimates. This is not important only for women themselves but for society at large.” - Kalpana Kochhar

Therefore, there is a need to increase efforts to ensure social protection explicitly promotes gender equality, since failure to do so will hamper progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. Disbursement of welfare measures to women by state and central governments, private and social sectors can enable women to avail equal opportunities to work, build their wealth and preserve their wellbeing. Welfare policies designed for sustainable development and productive engagement of women in economic growth will play a huge role in bridging gender gaps.



Best Practices and Recommended Future Actions

There are several public, social and private interventions that have yielded great results in uplifting the welfare and wellbeing of women. Following are some best practices in innovative development policies and social initiatives that were discussed and highlighted at the conference, along with suggestions for a way forward in enabling women’s welfare -

- **Implement Government policies to enable welfare**—Government policies have the biggest impact on enabling the welfare of its citizens, and different countries have evolved on different political trajectories in this regard. It is important to look at the historical circumstances of countries to assess where they are in terms of not just gender equality but also other forms of inclusion.

“The state is preeminent but the State acts in tandem with citizens. There is a social contract that the State forges with its citizens which then leads to policies that are palatable and implementable. If the state puts in place policies for which there is no support, the chance is that those policies will not succeed.”

- **Maitreyi Das**

Countries like India can learn from experiences of other nations that have fared the best or better than India in terms of bridging their gender gaps, and whose success has been very intentional –

- The Scandinavian countries, who are leaders in gender equality, are also at the top on various welfare indicators as well as wellbeing parameters like happiness. These countries have always had a welfare system that has focused on equality and cover basic services for the majority of the population. These countries have historically forged a social contract, where the state and citizens have agreed that they will have a more equitable society and economy.
- Bangladesh, which performs better than India on gender equality, very early on put in place an understanding between the state and citizens on two or three really strong priorities, which completely turned around what Bangladesh stood for. Poverty reduction, inequality, and gender

equality were express goals. Gender equality has always been a priority for Bangladesh and the state created the space for NGOs to work in tandem with them to achieve this goal.

- In Nepal, which also does better than India on the Gender Inequality Index, there has always been a focus on human development outcomes (including gender equality and reducing gender-based violence).

- **Capital providers and financiers need to play a responsible role in building inclusion** - Institutional investors play a significant role in building financial inclusion. Many investors ask their investee companies to reveal their specific gender strategies, not only in terms of the target group but also internally in terms of the metrics they're measuring for their workforce and gender equality at a Board level. For instance, a lot of financiers, investors and development institutions like IFC, World Bank have a requirement on different performance standards which forces their beneficiaries to make sure that information about their products is made available, there is more parity in terms of access to finance etc.

Similarly, CDPQ has created a diversity linked fund where it gives preference to investing in companies that are promoting change in improving and increasing access to finance over other types of companies. WinPE, a Private Equity firm, mandates its member firms to hire only when they have a pipeline for at least 40% of women for every open position.

Many large financiers of affordable housing or construction companies are making sure that workers involved in the industry are actually gaining that access and also availing of services. For example, 15 institutions led by Omax have come together post the pandemic that led to the mass exodus of Migrant labour. They have started asking the tough questions and are developing a "Social compact", which is looking at metrics like whether workers both men and women get paid minimum wage or do they have access to food, shelter and so on.

- **Social sector initiatives are key enabling women's welfare** -Development sector initiatives by social enterprises and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) that work with stakeholders at the grassroots levels, are the key to bringing about large-scale change in empowering and enabling women. What is required is to encourage such initiatives by building partnerships and collaborative efforts to scale-up their outreach and bridge long standing problems. Synergy between government, private sector and social enterprises is critical for scalability and also impacts sustainability. We need to think about how we can create an ecosystem for multiple actor collaborations that produce the most impactful outcomes for women and how we can sustain these gains from such public and private partnerships.

Case studies about Mrida Group, showcasing partnerships and development impact

Narrated by Arun Nagpal

Mrida Group collaborated with the private sector to deploy CSR funds on a project to electrify a remote village in Uttar Pradesh that hadn't been connected with the electricity grid. The objective was not to end just with energy access but to use energy access to spur development of productive activity. In collaboration with other NGO partners, they started a skill development initiative in that village to teach women how to stitch and then enabled them to use their skills to become entrepreneurs. Over six years, these women have created a self-help group that has set up a stitching centre, which in turn enabled them to get access to markets. Mrida is now trying to collaborate with the state government in Uttar Pradesh and the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) to set up an off-farm producer organization, which will scale up the impact by having more women engaged in this productive activity. The bigger impact has been that the financially independent married women have become prominent earning members of their respective families and the unmarried women are no longer under pressure to get married.

Another collaborative initiative by Mrida group is to empower women of a village of small and marginal farmers who cultivate ancient healthy grains like millets and amaranth. The women in the village were enabled to engage in productive activities by doing value addition to those grains, as part of a social enterprise called Earthspired. Using the grains, they produce a range of healthy millet and amaranth based multi-grain flour, gluten-free healthy cookies, ready to cook food products, ready to eat snacks, which are supplied to the end consumer. These products are also processed through another NGO working with women from urban slums. Now Earthspired is being taught as a case study at management institutes in India, thereby extending the collaboration between small and marginal farmers and women with academia. The next step being explored is to access government support or private equity funding to scale up both our work as well as its impact. This initiative enabled women to the extent that they have moved from being confined to their homes under a veil to being independent entrepreneurs.

- **Visionary leaders can change lives of whole communities:** Inspired individuals can collaborate with communities to bring about change. It starts with small steps of making communities believe in themselves and their potential, involving them in making decision for themselves and their community. Education and empowerment of girls and women is key to change

Case study of Mijwan Welfare Society

Narrated by Shabana Azmi

Mijwan welfare society is a charitable institution in Eastern Uttar Pradesh that empowers and educates women and girls in an extremely poor village. It enabled the seamless movement of girls from studying to sports to getting technical education and getting employment. It works towards the total personality development of girls in schools.

And they have witnessed a huge transition in the attitude of women, and the true achievement has been the change in mindsets of all the villagers. The women are now self-reliant and earning their own money, and even supporting the education of their families. It has changed the status quo of family structure too. The biggest achievement was that the girls themselves started a movement to put an end to the practice of child marriage and forced marriage before 18.

- **Enable financial access to the underserved population in rural areas:** Women in rural areas don't have access to mainstream employment, which erodes their respect and prosperity. Challenges for women in rural areas get compounded by other factors - social norms, mobility issues, childcare burden, unequal division of labour, power imbalance, safety issues at workplaces, etc. But once measures are taken to economically empower women, social norms can get broken at an incredible pace.

Case study of SEWA - Enabling Rural Women's Entrepreneurship

Narrated by Aditya Ghosh

SEWA works with 2 million self-employed workers and has achieved success at creating increasingly better livelihoods.

Following are factors behind their success in enabling women entrepreneurs -

- 1) collective struggle, bringing everyone together behind a common objective is powerful
- 2) creating role models from similar backgrounds, similar homes, similar rural areas
- 3) giving time, patience and tenacity to do this
- 4) analysing the problem and breaking it down to the most basic level and start building solutions from there
- 5) undertaking huge amount of capacity building

Further, boosting rural entrepreneurship would require encouraging innovations in financial inclusion. More and more finance companies need to come up with innovative ways of becoming inclusive to reach the rural areas and the underserved population, including women.

Case study of Avanti Finance

Narrated by Rahul Gupta

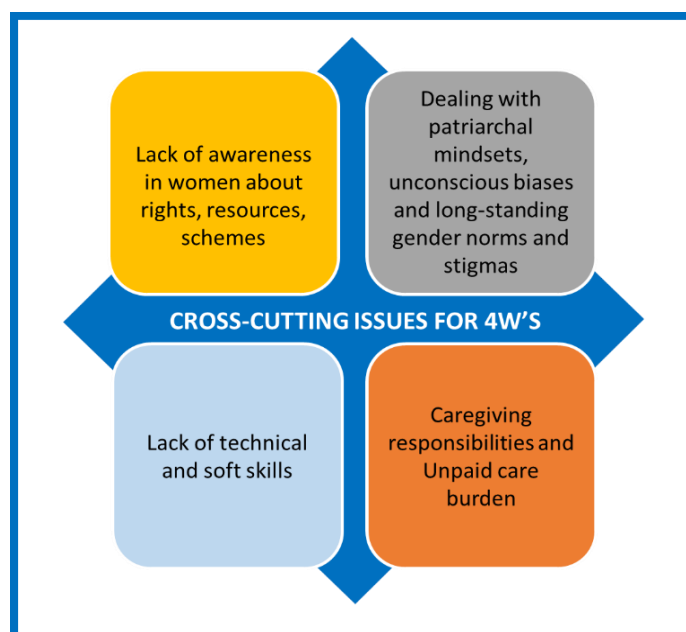
Avanti's vision is to provide affordable Financial Services to the next 100 million underserved and unserved households leveraging New Age digital Technologies. Following are some innovative practices they are using to increase financial access for women -

- Avanti accesses customers by partnering with social enterprises that are deeply entrenched in the communities they serve so they help us reach this target audience and help them onboard these customers onto their digital platform
- They use a digital delivery model. About 90% of Avanti's customer base comprises of women but only about 40 percent of them have a smartphones. So they have brought together a digital delivery model in an assisted mode through the various community organizations, where they have enabled women partners who record data from interviews onto an app and help Avanti decide on the amount of loan to give to different individuals.
- Women customers can decide the tenure of her repayment depending on her the income that she generates and affordability to repay
- They have innovative ways of disbursing retail loans. To enable people at the grassroots, Avanti Capital follows a more inclusive approach. Some women customers have a good past credit score and are empowered with further loan programs. But for first time borrowers with no credit history - women or men at the base of the pyramid – they provide an opportunity to give their information in a very unfiltered form in terms of how will the money they borrow lead to income generation as opposed to using only relying on published data and run the risk of excluding them. The same is done for someone who has a poor credit history and may be victims of circumstance. To not penalize them for the rest of their lives, one has to take into account the social trust signals and accord that facility.

IV. Key Challenges Impacting the 4Ws and Holistic Actions to Address Them

The global framework of Sustainable Development Goals not only has a standalone goal on gender equality (SDG 5), but gender is seen as a critical factor in the achievement of all other SDGs that have a positive impact on society. Therefore, it is imperative to accelerate the efforts towards achieving gender equality, if we want to create a truly sustainable and enabling world. Women need to have equal rights and opportunities in all spheres.

Insights from the discussions on women’s work, wealth, wellbeing and welfare highlight the fact that there are some core critical issues that are cross-cutting and impact the gender gaps that exist in all the 4Ws. Addressing these would have an overall positive impact on helping women thrive in all areas of their lives.



“The notion of the care economy, which is unpaid - has been a side line issue that’s not been that important – but now governments, companies and families are realising that addressing the issue of care is going to take efforts from all of us.” – Peggy Clark

For any positive change in the lives of women, especially around their economic autonomy and agency, it will require appreciation and addressing of structural constraints they face as well as the discriminatory norms, attitudes, practices etc. **To address these issues and to build an “Equiverse”, it is clear from the discussions that everyone needs to play a role, including governments, corporations, civil society, family members and women themselves.** We need progressive corporate and public policies. We also need to recognise, revise and redistribute women’s unpaid care burden. And we need to create equal opportunities for women's participation in social, economic, political and even pleasure activities.

“While the challenges have been nuanced, historically the onus was always on the women to find solutions– they were the outliers who needed to fit in. And yet when one looks at the challenges, the solutions and the influence of implementing those solutions are not with the women - they are with the industry or society or employers or families.” – Nupur Garg

Systemic change calls for collective will, best met through collaboration between change makers in this area. We, therefore, must create a multi-pronged strategy to build the Equiverse that involves different stakeholders and uses various approaches to address the challenges of gender equality.

“Working on gender equality requires a very holistic response at all levels. Systemic change will happen when you bring different players on board, and have sustained engagement and policy dialogue at the national level. Only this will ensure achievement of long-term gains that won’t be threatened when there’s the next pandemic.” – Samantha Hung

Following is a list of key actions that came out of the insights presented at the Conference –

I. Role of Government and Public Policy is absolutely critical

The criticality of enabling public policies and the key role of governments in addressing the challenges faced by women came up in every discussion and on every topic during the conference.

Following are four key dimensions of Governments’ role in enabling an Equiverse, which were brought out by the leaders and subject experts at the conference -

(i) Gender mainstreaming across all aspects of public policy

“Rather than look at women as victims, what if we look at them as superpowers and engines to address these problems.” – Peggy Clark

Governments need to understand that gender inequity lies at the root of every major problem the world faces and it is not possible to progress unless we put women at the centre of solutions. Gender equity is central to all global issues including climate change, economic growth, food insecurity, health challenges etc. And therefore, it is important to mainstream or integrate gender considerations into pretty much everything because everything affects men and women or boys and girls differently. Women must be included in all policy decisions that are being made and gender must inform every solution.

Investing in women should be a core part of those solutions. For instance, only 2% of all the money going into climate finance goes to women led climate initiatives. But there are many examples of women-led climate action that need to be made part of mainstream conversations. For example, in Gujarat, a collective of 8000 women in SEWA are salt pan workers. They were primarily dependent on diesel powered plants for salt extraction. As they expanded, they transformed all diesel pumps to solar pumps, which not only led to huge energy savings but also helped them create a huge solar plant that generates energy that they now sell externally. Therefore, putting women at the centre of a climate initiative not only created additional income for the women but also led to a significant reduction in carbon footprint.

Another example presented was one of applying a gender lens to a water utility reform project that revealed various aspects that were otherwise overlooked. It showed that the delivery of water services affects households and people within the household differently. For one, it showed that the timings when there is water supply requires women to stay back at home, thereby impacting their ability to go out and work. Another thing it revealed is that energy utility services have a minimal female representation in their workforce and this unequal representation of men and women in the utility service jobs impacted the manner in which the service provider designed its service delivery. Lastly, it showed that while designing projects in the water sector, the focus had entirely been on women's role as water collectors but not on women as productive service providers like street vendors.

(ii) Initiating targeted policies to address care giving challenges

“What is needed is to recognise, reduce, redistribute and reward unpaid work.” - Suhela Khan

Governments should recognise the specific constraints of the caregiving economy and see that as a real barrier to their economic progress as a nation. Public infrastructure needs to be created to ease the

unprecedented unpaid care burden faced by women. There is a need to increase funding for social protection initiatives like childcare in both the formal and informal economy. To encompass all these initiatives, there is a need for a National Care Policy at the country level.

(iii) ***Bringing more women into policy making roles***

We need more women in policymaking and political leadership, so that they can be champions of gender equality issues and bring a change in the dominant patriarchal systems and social norms. More women involved in policy making roles especially at the political level leads to more targeted policies for women and a better society for women as a whole.

One such example of this is President Ellen Johnson, the first female President of Liberia, who transformed a country suffering from the consequences of prolonged civil strife to a peaceful country by bringing forward human issues of food, education, safety and productive work. Another example is PM Jacinda Ardern of New Zealand who brought the issue of equity in making the Covid-19 vaccine available for everyone by immediately going to community and household level, prioritising children and families in her response.

“Countries with women leaders have brought forward the so called “kitchen table issues” or traditional women’s issues like quality of education, safety of children, vaccines, access to basic medicines, inflation, people’s ability to get jobs etc. These kitchen table issues are fundamental issues to the human population at the national level”. – Peggy Clark

The other facet of women’s leadership is that their style of leadership (decisiveness, risk-taking, empathy, value for more Collective Thinking etc) is more suited to certain situations like crises. This fact was highlighted during Covid times where research showed countries that were led by women had systematically and significantly better covid-outcomes.

(iv) ***Initiating targeted efforts to address patriarchal mindsets***

“Our society is so deep-rooted in patriarchy; the pace of change is so slow that at times it seems there has been no movement.” – Binoo Wadhwa

Invisibility of patriarchy has affected not only men but also women, because society as a whole has internalised patriarchy. However, this is unfair and detrimental to society’s growth, and therefore needs to be challenged. Public policy and political leaders have the greatest ability to bring such kinds of changes.

*“Both men and women should be able to choose both work and living styles that are harmonious with individual aspirations. I believe that it is the role of policymaking to cultivate such an environment.”
– MP Seiko Noda*

It is critical for all policy makers, leaders and influencers in society to be personally aware of the nature of stereotypes, gender-based role divisions and other unconscious biases that exist in the society. The Japanese Government, for example, has advanced research projects targeting such unconscious biases while utilising the result of those studies to prepare checklists and collections of examples for understanding biases. Further, they are trying to raise awareness about the” risks of raising girls to accept

the traditional value that marriage guarantees financial stability for a lifetime”. Efforts are being promoted to raise social awareness by sponsoring workshops with local public entities, organising teacher training programs and developing other fruitful initiatives.

II. Education ecosystem needs to become more enabling

Women need to be made aware of the legal rights and prevailing laws about inheritance, domestic violence etc. They also need to become financially literate as well as become aware about available schemes for loans, insurance etc

All the panellists brought out the power of school, college and the skill-building ecosystem in changing mindsets and enabling women in spheres of their lives.

Following were the key suggested actions for education system to imbibe–

(i) ***Make the education curriculum more enabling***

As per various recommendations from the speakers, the education curriculum in schools and colleges must include following-

- Financial education so that people can understand the basics of financial literacy
- The value of all forms of diversity, to prevent young minds from developing unconscious biases
- Self-confidence, aspiration and pride in girl students to voice their opinions confidently
- Basics of becoming an entrepreneur and of equity investing

(ii) ***Encourage diversification of men's education***

Just like we need to encourage women to take up higher education in STEM fields, it was proposed that men and boys should be encouraged to take up HEAL (Health, Education, Administration and Literacy) programs. This will give men and boys opportunities to work in these fields that have been stereotyped as being more suited for females.

(iii) ***Enable Skilling and re-skilling of women***

Schools and colleges must ensure that technical and employable skills are imparted to both men and women. This is essential to provide opportunities for learning to enable women to raise their vocational abilities and choose a career that fits with their own aspirations.

Additionally, different re-skilling opportunities need to be created to encourage re-entry of women into the workforce, so that they can be equally attractive to be considered for open positions.

III. Corporations must enable all dimensions of women's lives

As seen in the discussion across the 4Ws, the corporate sector can especially play a key role in creating an Equiverse. While several suggested actions for workplaces have already been discussed earlier in this report, following is a summary of major actionable areas:

(i) ***Create workplaces that enable women's work and wellbeing***

Following are some suggested actions that workplaces need to have in place to create diverse and equitable workplaces that enable women's work, wellbeing and wealth -

- Initiate policies and practices that enable caregiving, like provide subsidized childcare, flexible policies and care giving leaves to both men and women.
- Explicitly address sexual harassment and gender-based violence at the workplace
- Have gender parity at the board/decision making level
- Measure and track the right metrics
- Enable learning, development and re-skilling in women employees

(ii) **Enable mindset changes in men**

The private sector can play a huge role in enabling men to be involved in traditional women's areas, by providing and encouraging them to avail paternity leaves, flexible work options, etc.

(iii) **Partner for building women's welfare**

Corporations can make a real difference in enabling the overall ecosystem by partnering with the Government and social sector on large scale initiatives. They can actively engage in community and government initiatives to enhance the well-being of women through targeted welfare measures. They can also invest their CSR funds in women led movements, like women's collectives.

IV. Enable women to join hands in collectively tackling common challenges

Women need to hold hands with each other to break the barriers preventing their growth. Women need to form bonds with other women's groups.

“Coming together is very important because in numbers you have strength, especially if someone wants to break rules and go ahead, it is comforting to have someone who will go ahead with you - that's what leaders are about – not just changing status quo but also going beyond.” - Shabana Azmi

Successful women should pay-it-forward. Women leaders who have been through the process can at least begin to make changes for other women in the work environment. Women who have achieved leadership roles or built significant wealth must come out and support other women to grow and thrive. They must help build confidence and courage in women, enable them to speak up, bring their voices forward, believe and invest in them, embrace and nurture their enterprises that offer solutions, etc. Women in leadership positions must mentor younger women to reach that same place. Successful women also need to make sure they create enabling environments in their home spheres, so that the next generations of children in their homes are not victims of old gender biases.

Women's collectives and cooperatives must be encouraged, as they have shown significant results in helping women build resilience, and this model of sisterhood must be enabled and encouraged. The power of economic collectives that allow women to save and invest, advocate collectively for ownership of land and assets, etc, must especially be recognised and invested in. For example, SEWA has grown into a collective of 2 million women who have led the way in recognising the economic contribution of even very poor women.

V. Women must empower themselves with enabling soft skills

“It is important for a woman to recognise herself as an economic agent and that her identity is not just that of a wife, daughter or mother but also of an individual right holder with autonomy, voice, choice and agency.” - Suhela Khan

Women should recognise that there is a difference in their access to equal opportunities and resources. Stranglehold of patriarchy is something which women must confront. It comes in ways visible and invisible, because of which women's view of themselves gets decided by society rather than how it should be. There were several actions suggested by panellists that women themselves would need to take to change their own destinies-

(i) **Consciously build networks**

Deliberate efforts for networking are important as men naturally gravitate towards networking, but women barely do. Women need to become part of big and small networks that provide opportunity for learning, bon-homie, sharing problems, finding solutions etc.

(ii) Pick their battles

“Don’t make everything into a war”. Women need to work out what is clearly non-negotiable (things that they can’t tolerate in any relationship). Apart from those, they must choose carefully where they would like to take a stand and where to let things be.

“For women to negotiate more space for themselves - you have to be strategic.” – Shabana Azmi

(iii) Decide what is a priority in life

Constant desire to be a superwoman will bog women down and must be avoided. They must realise that don’t need to be perfect at everything.

(iv) Learn to speak up

Women need to speak up and own the table.

“I always advise women that don’t just stop at leaning in - that’s not good enough.” – Saurabh Srivastava

(v) Communicate with authority

Women must learn to negotiate well and figure out how they will champion issues in a male dominated environment.

“Every woman is born with inherent potential. They just need to grab the opportunities coming their way and assertively fight for the same.” – Uma Sharma

(vi) Pursue excellence to prove their worth

Women must strive to be their best, respect commitments and timelines, and excel at whatever they do by giving 100% commitment to their work. They must also exhibit thought leadership in everything they do and pursue.

*“My ethos has been it’s all about take on challenges, manage risks and deliver excellence.”
– Nishi Vasudeva*

(vii) Assess risk but never be averse to taking risk

Women should not be averse to taking risks. They should not wait to be 120% ready to raise their hand. They need to reflect on what they want and take bold steps towards their aspiration.

“Career intentionality is a vectored principal that has both speed and direction - and it allows you to relegate problems to the background. And show the world who you are - that’s the kind of spirit we want to see from the Indian woman professional.” – Dr. Saundarya Rajesh

(viii) Ask for help and change the trajectory at home

Women must build a strong support system for themselves to help pursue their dreams in life. Women should not accept that their work is less important than their husband’s work, and ensure that they have an equal division of workload at home.

“Women have to know that they don’t have to do all the work - please recruit your husband to do 50% of the work, your family, neighbours, can help in bringing up the child.” - Bhavana Issar

(VI) Use technology to address complex challenges

Another common trend visible in all the panel discussions was that technology can be used in several powerful and innovative ways to achieve different goals related to gender equality. Following are some dimensions of how technology has been utilised and can be utilised in the future -

(i) To enable scaled-up access to grassroots and underserved populations

There is great hope for digital literacy and digital tools. Technology led digital mode of delivery needs to be adapted and used because it's scalable over a period of time. It reduces friction, costs and the time taken for a transaction. Technology can help information to permeate to grassroots levels and build awareness about issues like property rights or violence against women or social practices or financial literacy, and thereby enable mindset changes.

“The further proliferation of smart phones will grow exponentially and the adoption of digital delivery forms in financial services or in other industries is not going to be linear, rather is going to be exponential over the next few years.” – Rahul Gupta

(ii) To enable workplaces to address women's mobility issues

Digital and online work models, which have enabled people to work from home while also managing household duties, have been great enablers of women's work. The pandemic further opened up the opportunity to go digital and that could be something women could leverage in the future as well. This use case of technology holds significant potential for increasing and sustaining women's participation in the labour force. Digital could be one answer to women joining the workforce and being able to take care of their families and work at the same time.

(iii) To increase women's participation in the workforce

The advent of the Information Technology industry in India is what really opened up for women to join the workforce, and therefore we have many companies in the software services sector where almost 48-50% of workforce comprises women. The digital field is an industry for which employment has continued to expand, even under impact of Covid-19 while also capitalising on ease of adopting telework and other flexible work modes.

(VII) Encourage men to become enablers for women

Men can be powerful allies and enablers for women across the various roles they play at home, in the workplace and in society.

Following were some enabling actions that were highlighted for men-

- (i) **Build supportive spousal relationships**, as the support from the husband is the most important factor behind a woman's wellbeing. Both husband and wife must be able to mutually decide how to live together. Men have to not only share family duties but also need to support the mental wellbeing of their wives by empathising with them, understanding their dreams and aspirations, and boosting their confidence and self-esteem to achieve their dreams.

Research shows that in households where there are traditional roles and men didn't do care work or housework that was perpetuated into the next generation. Only place where there was change between generations was where women had decision making power and men took part in caregiving.

- (ii) **Be enabling in the workplace.** Men on the same table must allow women to talk and give them space in the meetings.

(VIII) Leaders and role models must lead the way

“Leadership is not a position per se - it is more of an attitude where you excel at what you are doing.”

– Nishi Vasudeva

Today, we need leaders who are ready to unravel and tackle this imbalance with affirmative gender focused policies, actions, and education for bringing equity in Rights, Opportunities and Resources. The most important requirement for any company to build an equitable culture is *“the tone at the top”*. Leaders need to be absolutely clear about their DEI intentions, vocalise those intentions and take right actions on a day-to-day basis. Leaders must also recognise and address their own undocumented biases. Business leaders can also influence the men at the workplaces, which they then carry back home and influences society.

(IX) Showcase and scale up best practices

The panellists recommended greater efforts need to be made to showcase women entrepreneurs, women leaders, impactful social programs and great companies that are enabling women. They highlighted that celebration and sharing is critical - it is important to showcase leaders, women's whose lives have changed, pioneers in championing gender equality, etc. We need to build and showcase many pockets of excellence in different areas in different states and countries with different products and services. But we also need to create a critical mass of such pockets of excellence so that collectively they can build up a momentum of their own and can become virtually a movement.

V. Concluding thoughts

The conference brought out various facets of discrimination and inequality that women continue to face around the world, and agreed to the sobering reality that we still have a long way to go before we achieve an Equiverse. The latest World Economic Forum (WEF) report has also indicated that it will take the world another 132 years to reach gender parity. However, it is also evident that there is now a greater awareness about the urgent need to build a gender-equal world, and all stakeholders have begun to take actions to achieve this goal.

But each and every panellist agreed on one point – that if we want to accelerate the pace of change, then each individual will need to take on the onus of initiating actions for building an equitable world. They iterated that every individual needs to play a part and collectively their actions will ultimately create ripples that would lead to the required large-scale changes. Society will take a long time to change but we can all work in our sphere of influence. This will enable change to percolate through society in the long term.

Individual Actions Can Create a Ripple of Change

“If there are 400 people at this conference, and 40 percent are men - if all those men here could take a pledge that they will now go back and think about sharing property equally with their wives, sisters, daughters and persuade 10 other men to do the same, I think you would start a movement.”

- Nisha Agrawal

“Each of us has the ability to become a catalyst of social change. We need to push ourselves. We can try to be responsible for enabling one more person and that would create a ripple of change.”

- Shabana Azmi

“We can achieve the goal of enhancing the welfare of women by imbibing and internalizing it as a core personal belief, not just as a development sector term but as an integral part of our day-to-day lives.”

- Arun Nagpal

“I believe there is a lot that each of us can do to change and to push forward towards a more equitable world.”

- Rabea Brauer

“I would like this conversation to go with all of you out there to our ecosystem to see how can it catalyse change where it needs to happen and reach all stakeholders.”

- Shilpa Ajwani

“Everything starts with a ripple of change but we need to morph that into more collective actions and not settle for change at a linear pace. The world is changing fast and we need to accelerate change, so we need to collectively do things that will make change at scale.”

- Rahul Gupta

“If we all help each other, I don't think we need 130 years to empower women.”

- Farzanah Chowdhury

“If each of us starts our own ripple of change, we can bring about a Tsunami so large that it can wash over our current universe and leave behind an Equiverse for us.”

- Ipsita Kathuria

Appendix I: Speakers Profile

Emcees

Nikita Singla

Associate Director-BRIEF, Consultant-The World Bank

Disha Tripathy

Program Coordinator, TalentNomics India

Introduction

Ipsita Kathuria

Founder & CEO, TalentNomics India

Rabea Brauer

Country Representative, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) Japan

SESSION 1 – Guest of Honour: Her story in Enabling an Equiverse

Shabana Azmi

Actor and Social Activist

Saurabh Srivastava

Chairman, IAN, Co-founder, NASSCOM

SESSION 2 - Creating Equity in workspace: Together we prosper

Nishi Vasudeva

Independent Director on Boards, Former CMD, HPCL

Dr. Saundarya Rajesh

Founder & President, Avtar-The Power of Diversity

Aditya Ghosh

Former President, Indigo, Chairperson-Social Enterprises, SEWA

Shilpa Ajwani

Founder & CEO, Unomantra, Former MD, Tupperware India

Anuradha Khosla

Sr. VP-HR (Global Head Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, Talent Development & Employee Engagement)

SESSION 3 -Explore: Investing in Women for Parity (Work, Wealth and Wellbeing)

Padmaja Ruparel

Co-founder, Indian Angel Network

Nupur Garg

Founder, WinPE

SESSION 4 - Restoring Personal Wellbeing: Sustaining a happier world

Dr. Varudhini Kankipati

Director & Co-founder, Inner Connect

Bhavana Issar

Founder & CEO, Caregiver Saathi

Suhela Khan

Country Programme Manager- Women's Economic Empowerment, UN Women

Soonu Wadewala

SVP-HR, Axis Securities Ltd.

Dr. Geeta Kumar

Founder and Principal Consultant, Pragati: Partners in Progress

SESSION 5 - Explore: Work, Wealth and Wellbeing of women in the organized sector

MP Seiko Noda

Former Minister in charge of Women's Empowerment, Former Minister of State for Gender Equality, Japan

Binoo Wadhwa

Ex CPO, Yum! Brands and Sapient,
Advisory Board Member, TalentNomics India

SESSION 6 - Explore: Success Differentiators for Work, Wealth and Wellbeing of women entrepreneurs in South Asia

Dr. Radhicka Kapoor

Senior Visiting Fellow, ICRIER

Uma Reddy

Managing Director, Hitech Magnetics and Electronics Pvt. Ltd.

SESSION 7 - Gender specific Welfare network: Making equity the norm

Cristita Perez

Sr. Programme Manager, Regional Economic Programme Asia (SOPAS), KAS Japan

Maitreyi Das

Practice Manager, Urban, Disaster Risk Management, Resilience and Land Global Practice, The World Bank

Samantha Hung

Chief of Gender Equality, Thematic Group, ADB

Arun Nagpal

Co-founder & Managing Director, Mrida Group

SESSION 8 - Empowering through Wealth: Getting a voice and gaining respect

Kalpana Kochhar

Director, Development Policy and Finance, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Nisha Agrawal

Former CEO, OXFAM India

Farzanah Chowdhury

Managing Director, Green Delta Insurance

Rahul Gupta

CEO & Board Director, Avanti Finance

Anita George

Co-Founding Partner, Edhina Capital

Rashi Narang

Founder, Heads Up For Tails

SESSION 9 – VALEDICTORY - Progress and Way Forward: Work, Wealth and Wellbeing of women

Peggy Clark

CEO & President, ICRW

Ipsita Kathuria

Founder & CEO, TalentNomics India

Closing: Manifesto of the Equiverse

Uma Sharma

Head - Business HR & Talent Acquisition, PNB Housing Finance Ltd.

Vote of Thanks

Heena Handa

Managing Partner & Creative Head, EDC Space

Appendix II: Conference Feedback

- *Outstanding & Informative. Need more conferences on different topics.*
- *The session was such full of relevant insights that is enlightening and truly relevant nowadays.*
- *It was an insightful session on both days. Panelists addressed the issues, the data and trends as well as measures to be taken.*
- *It was an enriching experience.*
- *It was perfect. Very thought-provoking sessions face-to-face conference soon.*
- *Very thought-provoking sessions and really glad someone is leading this ripple of change.*
- *The conference was very useful for me because I find a link between the presentations and my Ph.D. research topic. My work is focused about Women's Cooperative and Rural Development. It is talking about the role of women entrepreneurship in rural development.*
- *Well Organized Excellent Presentations Useful & Interactive Sessions.*
- *Thank you for such an empowering opportunity to learn more about how we can collaborate and work on achieving the "equiverse".*

About TalentNomics India

TalentNomics India is a non-profit organisation and an affiliate of TalentNomics Inc, which is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt private operating foundation in the US.

We are dedicated to taking actions that will help grow the pool of women leaders and 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.

To incubate future women leaders, our platform offers multifaceted learning and networking opportunities to women, provides support to leaders and guides organizations in their endeavour to build diverse teams. We leverage the best available global leadership talent to offer programs that deliver tangible outcomes.

We see ourselves as influential **change agents** to support and guide women on their professional journey. We also conduct original research as well as provide a platform to show-case innovative approaches, share and learn from best practices as well as facilitate thought provoking discussions to influence and lead the journey towards gender parity at leadership levels.

We are also on the way to building a **Global network** of organizations to reimagine women leadership collaboratively.

We follow a 4C approach to transform the ecosystem by growing the network of Capable, Confident, Credible & Connected **women leaders**, and influencing the Capacity, Convergence, Culture and Collaboration within organisations.

Our Focus

- **Individual Level** - To build and grow Capable, Confident, Connected & Credible women leaders
- **Organization Level** - To create influential change agents in organizations to support and guide women in their journey
- **Global Level** - To develop a global network of organizations to reimagine women leadership talent collaboratively

Conference Team

Ipsita Kathuria
Tanika Marwah
Tazeen Parvez

Ina Wadhwa
Megha Chhabra

Disha Tripathy
Shravani Prakash

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About KAS

The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) is a political foundation in the Federal Republic of Germany. Its activities and projects support a proactive approach towards international cooperation and understanding. The foundation's office in Japan hosts the Regional Economic Program Asia (SOPAS). SOPAS is a regional forum that contributes to the debate and reform of economic and governance models in Asia. The key issues it advocates for are advancing female leadership, free trade and multilateralism, and the future of work. It brings together a network of policy makers, economists, political analysts and thought leaders across Asia-Pacific to discuss emerging issues, propose policy alternatives and share best practices.

Conference Team

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