



# **VIKALP: POLICY REPORT ON SKILLING AND NON- TRADITIONAL LIVELIHOODS**

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### **Cover Photo**

A participant in the Young Women Leadership Program (jointly run by Feminist Approach to Technology and IZAD) explains software to another participant, building leadership and positive teamwork skills.

Credit: Paula Bronstein/Getty Images/Images of Empowerment.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CEDAW	- Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women
DDU-GKY	- Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushal Yojana
DGET	- Directorate General of Employment and Training
GDP	- Gross Domestic Product
HUDCO	- Housing and Urban Development Corporation
ICCs	- Internal Complaints Committees
ICLS	- International Conference of Labour Statisticians
IGMSY	- Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahayog Yojana
ITCs	- Industrial Training Centers
ITIs	- Industrial Training Institutes
LGBTQI	- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex
MoWCD	- Ministry of Women and Child Development
MSDE	- Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship
NCVT	- National Council for Vocational Training
NPSDE	- National Policy for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship
NGOs	- Non-Governmental Organizations
NSDA	- National Skill Development Agency
NSDC	- National Skill Development Corporation
NTL	- Non-Traditional Livelihoods
NVEQF	- National Vocational Education Qualification Framework
NWC	- Non-Women Concentrated
PMKVY	- Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojna
PMMVY	- Pradham Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana
SANKALP	- Skills Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness for Livelihood Promotion
SEWA	- Self Employed Women's Association
SDGs	- Sustainable Development Goals
SDI	- Skill Development Initiative
SGSY	- Swarnayajanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana
SNA	- System of National Accounts
SSCs	- Sector Skill Councils
STEP	- Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women
TUS	- Time Use Survey
UNDP	- United Nations Development Program
WC	- Women Concentrated

## CONTEXT



It is well-established that the labor market in India is gendered, both in terms of proportion of women in the labor market and division of roles in the economy that emanates from sexual division of labor within households (Abraham, 2013; Chatterjee et al., 2018; Gothoskar, 2016; Klasen & Pieters, 2015). Given this context, non-traditional livelihoods (NTL) is an umbrella term referring to an approach to address this disparity in the world of work for women.<sup>1</sup> Other alternative terms used to imply “non-traditional” is “non-standard income” and “non-gender normative” (EMpower, 2010). The emphasis is on breaking normative expectations of what women can do, allowing “young women into new public spaces – even if they continued to work in familiar and more traditional sectors”, away from the domestic sphere. Azad Foundation defines NTL as “livelihood practices that help women break stereotypes and challenge the gender division of labor emerging from the intersections of gender, caste, class, religion, sexual orientation, disability and other marginalities and oppressive structure, within a dynamic context of space and time”. NTL increases the set of viable livelihood choices available to women and gives them access and control over skills, technology, market, mobility and resources. They create economic stability along with psychological, social and political empowerment (Azad Foundation, 2016a).

The **International Center for Research on Women**, with support from **Ford Foundation**, conducted a study to better understand the motivations and challenges for women to work, particularly in the

context of NTL. This study proposes an understanding that the world of work for women is not organized in the binary of traditional and NTL/sectors/occupations, but is highly determined by existing gender norms that are reflected across the three pillars of social organization – the household, the market and the state.

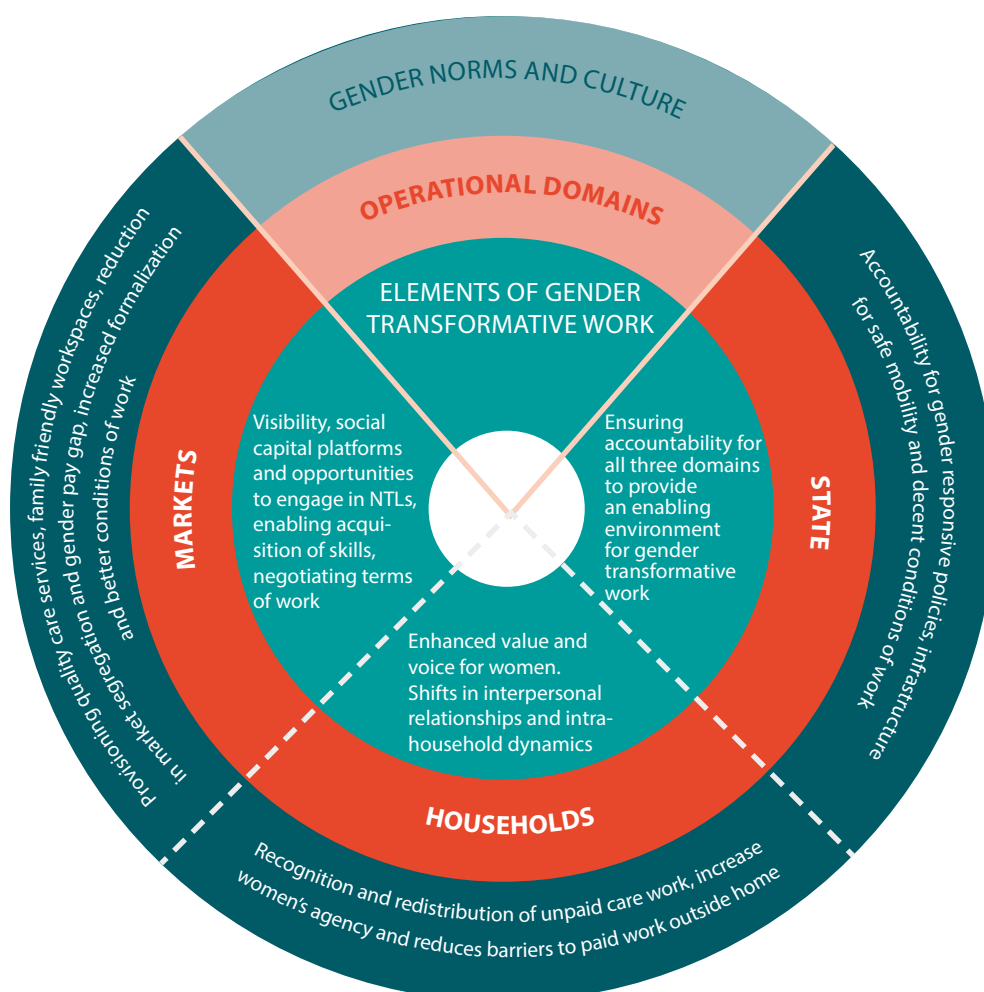
Whichever perspective one adopts to view “non-traditionality”, one observes that all barriers are enhanced when women move into domains of work that are considered non-traditional. Similarly, enablers in the form of social sanctions are far and few with respect to non-traditional domains of work. The “definitors” of non-traditionality are determined by women’s social location; hence, the enablers and barriers they grapple with are highly sensitive to their positioning in social and economic hierarchies. Figure 1 highlights the framework that emerged from this study.

Female labor force participation in India has been declining consistently over the last three decades. An analysis of labor surveys shows that even within the context of this decline (Abraham, 2013; Chatterjee et al., 2018) there are variations, which helped us propose a redefinition of traditional and non-traditional work for women as “women concentrated” (WC) and “non-women concentrated” (NWC).<sup>2</sup> The breakdown of women’s participation as per sector reveals that there are specific sectors wherein women’s labor has a higher demand than others. Mostly, these are sectors and occupations that emerged as an extension of their

<sup>1</sup> The NTL Network is a collective of individuals and organizations working with marginalized women in rural and urban settings, advocating for gender equality through facilitating skill development/ adult education programs for generating livelihoods. Azad Foundation acts as the secretariat for the Network. The details of the NTL network can be found on their website: <https://www.ntlnetwork.in>.

<sup>2</sup> An analysis of the terms traditional and non-traditional, during the first convening of the members of the technical advisory group for the research study in August 2018 suggested that these terms have an inherent value judgement attached. They may be understood as undermining much of the work women are currently engaged in, that which could be considered “traditional”. Additionally, assumptions of “traditional” being unskilled and “non-traditional” being the acquisition of new skills is problematic as it does not account for intergenerational skills (women farmers), recognition of existing work (care work) and ignores barriers posed by existing market forces (lack of jobs). Hence, a redefinition is proposed. In this document we stick to TL/NTL. Please refer to our research study, *Vikalp: An Exploratory Study on Non-Traditional Livelihoods*.



**Figure 1** A Framework on Gender Transformative Work

“caregiving” gender roles or those which provide mere subsistence in low productivity. These are termed WC sectors. The remaining sectors, wherein the proportion of women has been relatively small over time, were termed NWC.

A trends analysis of the last three national labor surveys points to other factors affecting women’s participation in WC and NWC sectors, such as place of work, marital status, unpaid work, and terms and conditions of employment.<sup>3</sup> This macro analysis also indicates that gender norms operate at the nexus of the household, the market and the state. Some of

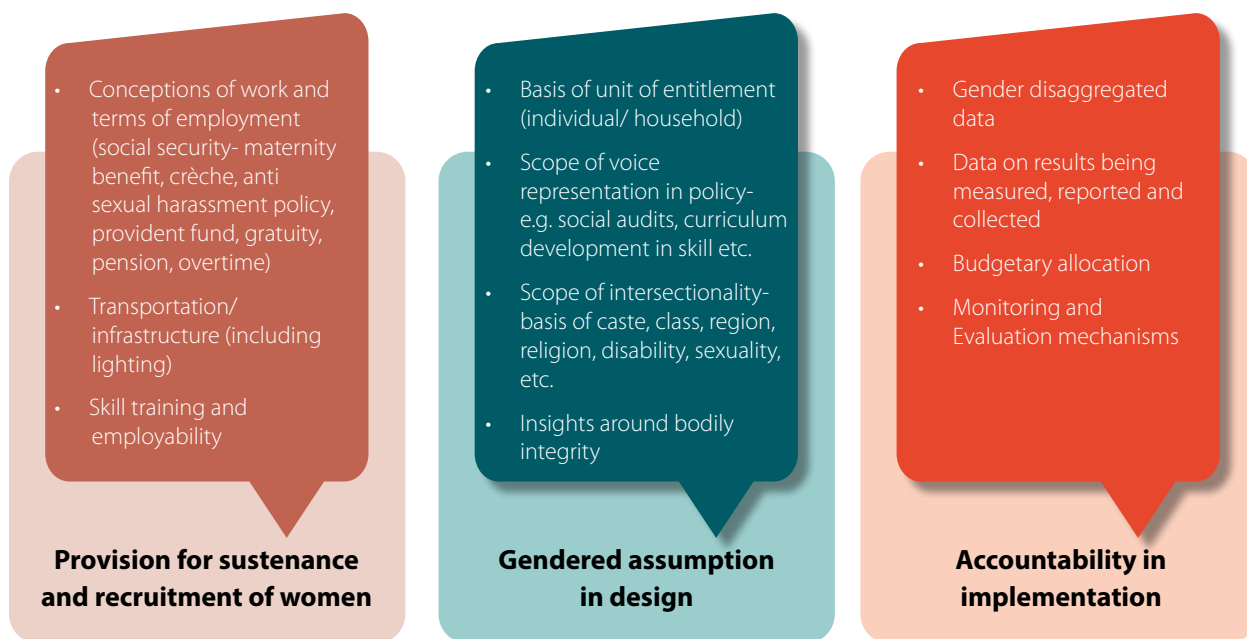
the elements in the aforementioned framework are related to macroeconomic policy imperatives, poor job conditions, lack of gender-responsive infrastructure and public services (ActionAid India, 2017; Lei et al., 2019). Much of the policy response addressing decline in women’s labor force participation, and linking them into market, has been channeled through promotion of skill development and entrepreneurship initiatives.<sup>4</sup>

A mapping of policies, schemes and initiatives was undertaken to understand policy-level gaps and trends to analyze directives through a gender lens addressing concerns of women in the world of work. The emphasis

<sup>3</sup> The trends analysis was undertaken for the research study Vikalp: An exploratory study on Non-Traditional Livelihoods by Prof Dipa Sinha, 2020. It includes the longitudinal trends of women’s participation in the economy over three labor Employment and Unemployment (EUS) survey, 1993-94 to 2011-12 by National Sample Survey (NSSO).

<sup>4</sup> Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana; National Policy for skill development and Entrepreneurship 2015; Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women; Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, 2005

**Figure 2** Framework of key research themes



on policy focus on skilling in India has been addressed in greater detail further in the research study.

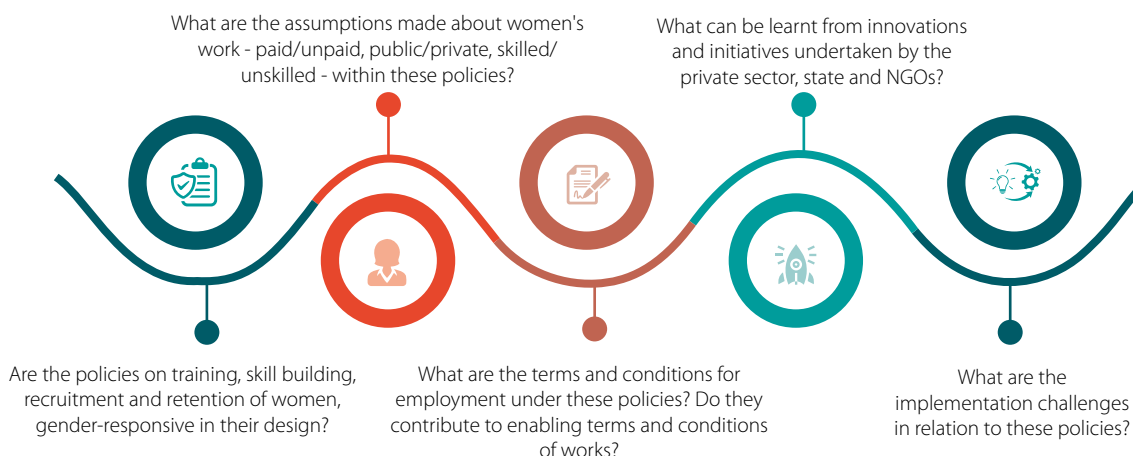
The current policy landscape (Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, 2015) mentions mainstreaming gender roles by skilling women in “non-traditional” roles, but does not clarify the concept of non-traditional or roles encompassing it.

It is an attempt to discuss specific points on the skills ecosystem as well as broader issues pertaining to women’s labor force participation along the paid-unpaid work continuum. Apart from skilling, this report

also considers some of the innovative practices that are designed to create an enabling environment for women’s work, mostly undertaken by non-government organizations (NGOs) and the private sector, at times in partnership with the government. This policy report is shaped by several policies, schemes and initiatives informed by the framework (see Figure 2).

This report is divided into three sections: overview of the skills landscape in India; overview of the policy approaches in India; and recommendations. In addition to the aforementioned framework, certain key areas of inquiry (Figure 3) guided the analysis.

**Figure 3** Key areas of inquiry





## SECTION I: OVERVIEW OF THE SKILLS LANDSCAPE IN INDIA



India has a demographic dividend of young population facing a skill mismatch with respect to demand and supply. "India has a paradoxical situation – on one hand, young men and women with higher education are entering the market seeking jobs, on the other, industries are facing challenges of unavailability of appropriately skilled personnel" (ASSOCHAM India, Skill India, & TISS, 2017).

The first generation of work on skills in India was initiated by the Directorate General of Employment and Training (DGET) of the Ministry of Labour and Employment. The DGET supported the Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs), with the perspective of long-term skills acquisition in 1950. Private ITIs known as Industrial Training Centers (ITCs) were started in the 1960s. These were self-financed and offered almost the same courses as the ITIs. A landmark moment in this journey was the Kothari Commission Report<sup>5</sup> in 1966, which made important recommendations with regard to many aspects of the structure of education and training in India, including vocational and technical education. There have been several studies which highlight challenges in implementation, such as poor structural and learning infrastructure, limited scalability and uncertain stakeholder satisfaction (NSDC & Accenture, 2013). The second generation of skills development work was through the *Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana* (SGSY) by the Ministry of Rural Development. This was through Self Help Groups – in dairy, poultry and fisheries. In 2008, the Government of India launched the Skills Development Initiative

(SDI) scheme, which included short duration courses through the Ministry of Labour and Employment. The skills trainings part of SGSY were renamed as the Aajeevika Skill Development Programme and subsequently renamed as the Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Antyodaya Yojana with an elaborate set of guidelines and standard operating procedures (ASPBAE & Azad Foundation, 2017).

The National Policy on Skill Development (2009) laid down the framework within which skills-related training was to be conducted. It also clarified the roles of different stakeholders – government, industry, trade unions and civil society to create a skills ecosystem in India. This landscape of skills ecosystem includes institutions – National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), National Skill Development Agency (NSDA), National Council for Vocational Training (NCVT), Sector Skill Councils (SSCs); the implementers – ITIs, training institutes, NSDC partners, and colleges and universities that enables training and skilling of job seekers.

In 2008, NSDC was formed to facilitate the creation of SSCs. The purpose of SSCs was to create curricula for skill development in their specific sectors based on industry requirement and to establish occupational standards for each job role. (ASPBAE & Azad Foundation, 2017). The next big innovation was the formation of the NSDA. While the NSDC is a private sector company, NSDA is an autonomous body (registered as a Society under the Society's

<sup>5</sup> National Education Commission (1964-1966), popularly known as Kothari Commission, was an ad hoc commission set up by the Government of India to examine all aspects of the educational sector in India, to evolve a general pattern of education and to advise guidelines and policies for the development of education in India.

Registration Act, 1860) created with the mandate to coordinate and harmonize skill development activities across India. With the creation of a separate Ministry for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) in 2014, the NSDA became part of the MSDE. The MSDE formulated the Common Minimum Guidelines for all skill development efforts of the government. These guidelines attempt to set a common minimum framework for all central schemes. This was undertaken as around 15 ministries had received allocations for skill development and their own specific schemes.

The National Policy for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (NPSDE), 2015, has a strong focus on gender mainstreaming<sup>6</sup> of skill trainings keeping in mind the skill gap for sustainable employability options for women. Appropriate incentives for women owned businesses under the public procurement process are said to be instituted to encourage women entrepreneurs to enter the workforce (MSDE, 2015). The policy also emphasizes updating courses existing in ITIs and Polytechnics with curricula aligning with market needs and demands. One of the policy interventions mentioned is the setting up of the National e-Hub, which would help in inter-ministerial coordination and align entrepreneurs by making linkages with national flagship programs such as Make in India, Smart Cities, Skill India, Digital India, Green India and Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan. From 2016, all courses offered as part of any government scheme are to conform to the occupational standards and learning outcomes for each job role that form part of the National Vocational Education Qualification Framework (NVEQF). The NVEQF sets common principles and guidelines for a nationally recognized qualification system, covering schools, vocational education institutes and institutes of higher education with qualifications ranging from secondary to doctorate level, leading to international recognition of national standards.

### Women's Participation in Skill Training

The National Vocational Training Institute and Regional Vocational Training Institutes were set up specifically

to impart training for women in 1977. These have been renamed as the National Skills Training Institute and Regional Skill Training Institutes for Women. The ITIs have provision of reserving 30 percent of the seats for women (ASPBAE & Azad Foundation, 2017).

The Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP), implemented by the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MoWCD), aims to provide competencies and skills that enable women to become self-employed/ entrepreneurs. The flagship program of MSDE, the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojna (PMKVY), caters to all sections of the society, including women. Further, there are certain incentives (travel allowance, post placement support) under PMKVY to encourage women's participation in skills training. Under the Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushal Yojana (DDU-GKY), implemented by the Ministry of Rural Development, there is provision for placement-linked skill development trainings for rural youth, including women. While no specific scheme is currently run by the MSDE for women, the new Skills Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness for Livelihood Promotion (SANKALP) scheme has inbuilt targets to increase the participation of women, scheduled caste, scheduled tribe and persons with disabilities in short-term vocational training. Many argue that skills development programs must be integrated into secondary education to ensure that youth are employable after school (ASPBAE & Azad Foundation, 2017).

### Non-Traditional Livelihoods in Policies related to Skill Development

The NPSDE, 2015, mentions women in two specific areas: as part of youth and as entrepreneurs. The policy mentions skilling women in non-traditional roles and increasing gender sensitivity at the workplace. It mandates encouragement of women entrepreneurs through appropriate incentives for women-owned businesses under the public procurement process;

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<sup>6</sup> Gender Mainstreaming is a globally accepted strategy for promoting gender equality. It involves ensuring gender perspectives and attention to policy development, research, advocacy/ dialogue, legislation, resource allocation, and planning, implementation and monitoring of programs and projects. Please refer to <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/gendermainstreaming.htm> for more information.

gender-neutral incubation/ accelerators, network of mentors, industry, resource centers and credit institutes to facilitate women entrepreneurs. It calls for steps to be taken to generate gender disaggregated data to understand current gaps in numbers for effective implementation in future. The policy mentions skilling needs of disadvantaged and marginalized groups such as scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, other backward classes, women and differently abled persons as well as those living in difficult geographical areas. There is mention of *Kaushal Vardhan Kendras* to be set up at the “*panchayat level for mobilizing and imparting skills pertaining to local employment/livelihood opportunities to school drop-outs, adolescent girls, housewives and rural youth*” (Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, 2015). It is important to note here that the policy document refers to adult women as “housewives” denoting a narrow understanding of women’s identity and roles in society. It also reiterates gendered assumptions of women’s work, predominantly understood to be within the realm of the household and in caregiving and caretaking roles. This understanding also compounds issues as there is no recognition of unpaid care work and women’s paid work is often undervalued and under paid.

The National Strategy for New India @ 75 by NITI Aayog mentions the following factors as constraints for low female work participation rate – workplace distance, non-flexible working hours, lack of availability of crèches, safety, absence of part-time work options and challenges around re-entering the workforce; nature of women’s work mostly comprises invisible/unpaid work. Regarding women’s participation in industry and enterprise, it calls for improving asset ownership and economic security; identifying skill gap and training needs for women; promote skill development among women in non-traditional work such as electronic technicians, electricians, plumbers, taxi drivers, etc. The policy mentions the need to organize women into professional groups/guilds to improve their bargaining

power as well as mechanism to be in place for ensuring mobility, security and safety for women. The strategy document has sections on women specific to skill development; however, it does not specify women as workers separately. It mentions encouraging women’s participation in non-traditional occupations; however, does not mention guiding principles of how non-traditional is defined, rather it identifies some trades as non-traditional.

### **Initiatives by NGOs and the Private Sector addressing Women's Skilling Needs**

The initiatives mentioned below have been selected based on how they bridge the gap in policy directives by enabling women in the world of work by providing certain skills or enabling women at entry level or being able to sustain their paid work/ livelihood options.

The mapping of initiatives has been clubbed into the following clusters:

- Initiatives on NTL (training women in specific jobs defined as NTL)
- Initiatives on creating enabling workplace conditions (provision of crèches, skill training designed from intersectional lens, etc.)
- Initiatives on addressing violence against women in public spaces (specific to addressing safe transportation)
- Initiatives in collaboration with the state/ government bodies (establishing the scaling up potential of initiatives)
- Initiatives aimed at high demand sectors (such as retail, information technology, hospitality and digital engagement)

These clusters are not all inclusive; some of the initiatives have aspects that are reflected in more than one cluster division. Some of the learnings from these initiatives as well as challenges pertaining to the skilling ecosystem has been collated below.

## Initiatives by NGOs and Private Sector Organizations

1.



### Initiatives on Non-Traditional Livelihoods

- Women on Wheels (Azad Foundation)
- Karmika School for construction workers (SEWA)
- IT for She; Archana Taxi; Construction Supervisor course (Archana Women's Centre)
- IMPACT and ENRICHE Program for supporting women's aspiration (Barefoot College)

2.



### Initiatives on Creating Enabling Workspace Conditions

- Crèche Centre and Early Childhood Care services (Barefoot College and Mobile Crèches)
- Skills training for socially and marginalized Dalit youth (Dalit Shakti Kendra)
- Skills training for Muslim and Dalit Women (Sadbhavna Trust)
- Adoption Leave for LGBTQ+ employees under the diversity and inclusion policy (Tech Mahindra)
- Low-cost hostels for men and women in four states (Pratham Institute)
- Skills training for persons with disability, in high demand sector under the Skills to Succeed Program (Accenture)

3.



### Initiatives on Addressing Violence Against Women in Public Spaces

- Under the Empower Dreams Program, engagement with police services and public transport authorities to make public spaces safe for girls (Akshara Women Centre)
- Gender and Social inclusion component to enable safe transport for women in Mumbai metro rail System (Asian Development Bank)

4.



### Initiatives in Collaboration with the State

- DISHA, a public-private partnership connecting education with skills, jobs and growth (UNDP Project)
- MyQuest program equips women in government ITIs with life and career skills (Quest Alliance)
- All women construction company sponsored by HUDCO-Kudambshree (Archana Women's Centre)
- Gender-specific employment prospects for young girls in Maharashtra, supported by the Govt. of Maharashtra and UNDP (Pratham Institute)
- Project Cyber Shikshaa, a cybersecurity skill training program for female engineering students (Microsoft and the Data Security Council of India in association with the Ministry of Electronics and IT)
- MOU with NSDC to train and provide access to finance to women in Gujarat for investing in livelihoods (SEWA)

5.



### Initiatives aimed at High Demand Sectors

- EY STEM Tribe a digital platform for girls (13-18) for a career in STEM (Ernst and Young)
- Jugaad Labs and Young Women's Leadership Program focusing on STEM careers (Feminist Approach to Technology)
- Parivartan and Pragati programs, for skill training of women in retail trades (5 by 20 Coca Cola)
- SMART initiative for women and men, providing skill training in digital media, IT education, health care, manufacturing and nursing (Tech Mahindra)
- GAP P.A.C.E. program trains women in the garment sector (Gram Tarang)
- Skill development in retail, hospitality, health and care for women (Centum Learning)

### ***Our analysis highlights the following trends with respect to the skills ecosystem***

- Limitations in effectively bridging the skill gap due to demand and supply mismatch
- Poor employability for graduates from the formal education system
- Gap between skill training, employability and market linkages
- Gendered assumptions in government ITIs specific to women's skill training needs
- Challenges faced by NGOs training women in NTL in connecting them to the market
- Limitations in terms of preparedness of industries and governments to comprehend such trades and roles
- Life skills and technical skills are not provided in tandem to candidates
- Limited systematic evaluations of such initiatives for skill training to measure the gaps
- Poor quality of curricula for training of trainers
- Lack of awareness of skill training provisions
- Lack of coordination between different Ministries/ Departments running vocational training in the skills and entrepreneurial spaces

## **Emerging Challenges**

### **Skill ecosystem is pushing for entrepreneurship for women**

There are challenges pertaining to the skill ecosystem in India. There are schemes and policies that enable women to undertake training in ITIs and ITCs; however, the few reports that exist on outcomes of such trainings highlight that skill trainings are geared toward entrepreneurship rather than toward wage employment/ livelihoods. The challenge with the thrust on entrepreneurship for women in India comes

from inadequate infrastructure and absence of holistic policy strategy to help women develop entrepreneurial abilities; and on the supply side, women's agency is often not strong enough to establish themselves as an entrepreneur (many times dependent on male members in households for decision-making, financial management and so on) (Yadav & Unni, 2016). Further, an analysis of existing literature highlights that such thrust on entrepreneurship among women has led to increasing stereotypical occupations for women (beauty parlors, tailoring units, tuition centers, food processing) rather than women using it for alternative/ newer start-up initiatives challenging gender-based occupational rigidities (Thakur & Mitra, 2019).

### **Gender bias in skill acquisition training curricula at ITIs and ITCs**

Gender bias in training curricula is reflected in policy design, particularly in training institutions where gendered assumptions play a critical role in nature of skill training provided for women. Often women are seen as "domestic beings", "nurturers", "caregivers" who prefer specific trades because of gendered perceptions. This is borne out by specific courses conducted by the National/Regional Vocational Training Institutes for women.<sup>7</sup> Some of these courses show cross-sectional (horizontal) segregation, while others show intersectional (vertical) segregation patterns, such as women opting for courses on electronic mechanic, computer operator, architectural draftsmanship, desk top publishing, etc. Some of the courses, such as secretarial practice, basic cosmetology, dress making, spa therapy, etc., are reflective of the deemed "suitability" of certain skills/jobs for women. Often women end up opting for courses that are influenced by occupational gender segregation and reflective of limited options given to them based on patriarchal biases which operate in the political economy of the market (Gothoskar, 2016).

<sup>7</sup> The courses offered are: Secretarial Practice (English), Basic Cosmetology, Dress Making, Fruit & Vegetable Processing, Electronic Mechanic, Computer Operator and Programming Assistant, Architectural Draftsmanship, Desk Top Publishing, Front Office Assistant, Stenography and Secretarial Assistant (Hindi), Fashion Design Technology, Interior Decoration and Designing, Food Production (General), Computer Aided Embroidery and Designing, Travel and Tour Assistant, Food and Beverages Service Assistant, Computer Hardware and Networking Maintenance, Spa Therapy and Surface Ornamentation Techniques for women.

### Limited scope of curricula for skill training

NPSDE focuses too narrowly on provision of technical and in some cases “soft” skills. Often the duration of the training cannot respond to different learning abilities, economic stresses or social challenges such as enduring violence within the family. Capacity-building of trainers and training institutions are important to understand the realities of participants who undertake such trainings. The policy framework does not provide for flexible learning schedules to enable skill providers, trainers and educationists to respond to women’s actual needs encountered during their learning process. The policy framework for skills training for women and other marginalized groups should include training on rights and structural barriers to enable them to build an understanding of the complex structural challenges faced by marginalized women in particular and how to address these (ASPBAE & Azad Foundation, 2017).

Further, in the discourse on skill training, both hard skills and life skills are essential. Life skills are mostly provided by NGOs and have components of spoken English training, communication, self-defense and attitude toward self through self-confidence and self-esteem (Adler & Stewart, 2004). While feminist organizations consider both “hard” skills and life skills critical for addressing empowerment of girls and women, other organizations and government institutions often do not consider them important (Gothoskar, 2016).

### Critical lack of convergence across sectors and departments

Lack of convergence between different ministries and departments providing skill trainings along with the lack of awareness of such provisions was highlighted by a report from the Committee for Rationalization & Optimization of the Functioning of the SSCs. The MSDE is the nodal ministry for skill development. However, in addition to the MSDE, there are 17 other Ministries/Departments that are conducting vocational training. Nine other Ministries do not have training infrastructure; however, they conduct short-term courses with the help of vocational training providers in the private sector or with NSDC training partners. As per the aforementioned report, the Ministries have neither skill needs assessments of prospective employers and standard course curricula for trainees nor independent assessment and certification

machinery. The report recommends that specific Ministries should transfer budget and personnel heads to the MSDE to take up skill development trainings rather than carry on with their work in the skilling ecosystem (Mehrotra & Pratap, 2018).

### Lack of outcome mapping

Policies are target driven in their design and often there is no provision on mapping the outcome of skill training. For instance, there is data available on the number of women beneficiaries of a particular skill training program; however, there is limited data on mapping the quality of services and how these services were used to generate wage employment or self-employment (Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship, 2018; Wheebox, 2019).

### Lack of enough resources for mobilization

Under the PMKVY there is provision to provide post placement support (INR 1450) and conveyance support (INR 1000/1500 per month) to candidates from special areas, women and persons with disabilities (Ministry of Skill Development And Entrepreneurship, n.d.). The training providers receive additional pay-outs and grade points to promote trainings in special areas/groups. Women candidates and persons with disabilities are provided conveyance allowance for non-residential trainings. There is also provision for allowances for boarding and lodging for residential trainings. Under the PMKVY Special Projects, a maximum of INR 500 per candidate is allotted to cover mobilization. This is much lower than the actual resources spent per candidate in 2016-17 by NGOs such as Samaan (approximately INR 2700) and Azad Foundation (approximately INR 5700) for mobilization, in this case for women to train as chauffeurs (Gothoskar, 2016). Linked to mobilization is the supply side factors which relate to building parents’ trust and confidence for ensuring young girls to access and complete skill training (Prillaman et al., 2017). Usually NGOs have a wider understanding of mobilization which includes members of family and community who could be gatekeepers of gendered norms like Men for Gender Justice program (Azad Foundation, 2016b). This perspective and approach to mobilization which is often not a perspective government

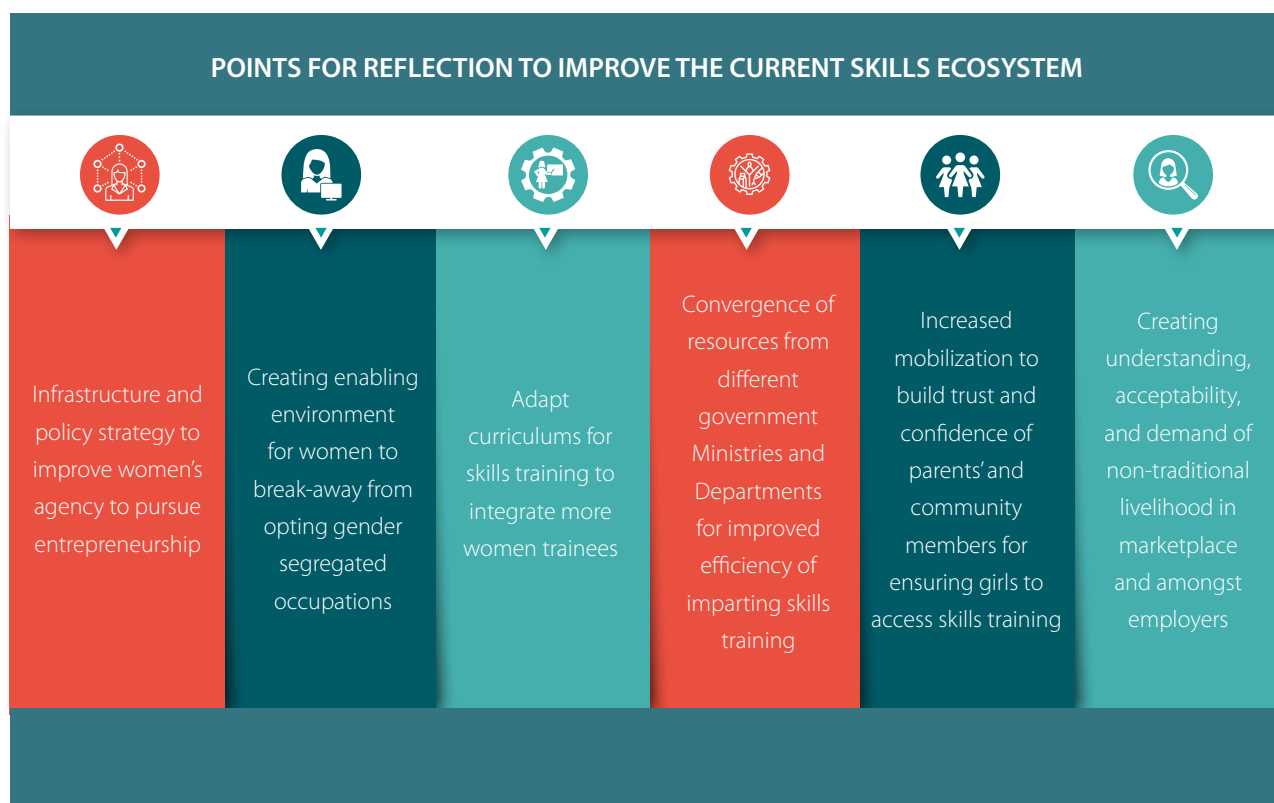


schemes and policies are designed towards. Experts who participated in the ICRW research study have recommended considering female mobilizers who have yielded better results in enrolling girls to skill training institutes.

### Limited understanding of non-traditional livelihoods and lack of infrastructure in workplaces

There are few policies that recognize NTL for women (NPSDE, National Strategy for New India @ 75, by NITI Aayog). However, as highlighted earlier, they just mention NTL and do not go on to define guiding principles or framework for the same. Mostly groups/networks focused on issues of NTL (Azad Foundation, EMpower Network) are working to create opportunities for women by means of training and facilitating their employment by linking them to employers, etc. The trades which are defined as NTL are jobs

and professions traditionally undertaken by men, for instance, taxi and auto driving, masonry, carpentry, hollow block manufacturing, LED bulb manufacturing, electrical installation and management, etc. However, since women's participation in NTL is fairly recent and relatively small in proportion, employers are yet to accept women in a workforce dominated by men. The work environment in places traditionally employing only men lacks infrastructures for women, such as rest areas, toilets, crèches, changing rooms, etc. Entry and sustenance of women in such trades has been challenging (ASPBAE & Azad Foundation, 2017). Policies, therefore, need to address creation of an enabling environment and instituting these basic and non-negotiable structures for women's entry and sustenance at the workplace considering the aforementioned concerns.



## SECTION II: **OVERVIEW OF POLICY APPROACHES IN INDIA**



India is signatory and party to global standards such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), International Labor Organization Conventions and other normative agreements specifically addressing issues of gender equality in the world of work.<sup>8</sup> In recent years, the government has also proposed consolidation of existing labor laws pertaining to minimum wages, maximum hours of work, minimum standards of safety and health at workplace, and social security within the ambit of four Labor Codes.<sup>9</sup>

The first attempt to exclusively address women workers in the Indian polycscape was undertaken during the United Nations Decade for Women with the publication of the Towards Equality Report (1974). This was followed, over the next two decades, by the Shramshakti Report (1988) and then by the Women's Component Plan. This Plan, initiated in the Seventh Five-Year Plan, was eventually adopted in the Ninth Five-Year Plan period (1997-2002), whereby funds were earmarked for women in schemes run by all Ministries/Departments prioritizing financial resources for programs/schemes for women's empowerment (Das & Mishra, 2006). Gender Budgeting or Gender Responsive Budgeting was instituted in India since 2005 for adequate budgetary allocations/commitments for women's development. In practice, however, this approach has not expanded beyond five percent of total public expenditure, which is less than one percent of gross domestic product (GDP) and remains restricted to certain sectors such as health, education, rural development and schemes under the MoWCD. This completely ignores sensitivity toward areas

such as safety of roads, better public transport, water and irrigation facilities which have gendered implications (Rudra, 2018). The 1990s formed a watershed period of globalization and structural adjustment programs leading to economic reforms in India.

The National Policy for the Empowerment of Women, 2001, urged for redesigning and implementing macroeconomic and social policies to encourage socioeconomic development of women as producers and workers both in the formal and informal sectors (Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2001). The Eleventh Five-Year Plan (2007-2012) saw two shifts in planning and policymaking; the first ever articulation of rights for women and the discourse of empowerment and agency for women as workers was established. The Report on the Status of Women in India, 2015, by the High-Level Committee on the Status of Women also reiterated this policy framework. This brings us to the current discourse on "gender mainstreaming" across sectors undertaken for the first time – the current emphasis mainly lies across four domains (NITI Aayog, 2018): skilling, entrepreneurship, microfinance for rural livelihoods and labor law reforms.

Women's movement in India demanded a national accounting of women's work (inclusive of unpaid work) that led to Time Use Surveys (TUS). TUS gained momentum after the 1995 United Nations Fourth World Women's Conference to primarily develop an approach to account for value of non-market household production by estimating the value of time spent on undertaking unpaid work. India launched

<sup>8</sup> India has ratified the following ILO conventions: Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105), Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100), Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111), Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138) and Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182)

<sup>9</sup> Labor codes (i) Wages; (ii) Industrial Relations; (iii) Social Security & Welfare; and (iv) Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions. The codes will represent following provisions as per labor legislations - Employees State Insurance Act of 1948; The Domestic Workers Welfare and Social Security Act, 2010; The Factories Act, 1948; Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013; Unorganized Sector Worker's Social Security Act, 2008; Rajiv Gandhi National Crèche Scheme for The Children of Working Mothers; Maternity Benefit Act, 2017

its second nationwide TUS in 2019 to collect data in the non-market non-Systems of National Accounts (SNA) activities, for proper quantification of the economic contribution of women in the economy. Globally, counting and valuation of work has been influenced by the International Conference of Labor Statisticians (ICLS). In 2013, ICLS redefined “work” to include traditionally excluded activities undertaken by households that produce goods and services for their own final use (i.e., performed by household members or by volunteers for own consumption like fishing, collection fuels or water, care of elderly, children) (ILO, 2013). This valuation was critical to visibilize the unpaid work undertaken by women.

There are some policy level inputs and alterations which have emphasized on women’s entry and sustenance in the workplace and economy (maternity benefit, crèche scheme, anti-sexual harassment act, working women’s hostel, social security, early childhood and care). However, policies often do not address the emerging need for infrastructural provisioning such as toilets, safe working environment, street lighting, safe transportation to enable women’s everyday necessities for participation in the workforce. They also do not address structural norms related to discrimination based on class, caste, gender, sexuality, disability. Except the Policy Against Sexual Harassment at the Workplace, there is no provision to address other forms of violence and discrimination at the workplace for women.

## Emerging Challenges

### Lack of addressal of gendered notions of work and intersectional realities

Gender norms and patriarchal roles permeate within families, communities, workplaces, markets and the state. Gendered notions of work define who engages in what kind of work. This often surfaces in terms of controlling of women’s sexuality, issues around mobility of women, where often mobility of women and girls are restricted outside of their homes/ private sphere (Afridi et al., 2016) and extends as the “male breadwinner” ideology (Bernard, 1981). In developing economies such as India, where women in urban centers are increasingly seen working in service sector roles, there also lies the assumption of “flexible aspirations” of working women (Vijayakumar, 2013). The shift from the male breadwinner paradigm shows an economy that operates on a “far, but no farther”

gendered paradigm (Raju, 2013), wherein women have been taught to embody “modern” cultural ideals alongside the “traditional” values. The status quo within the household does not shift and women bear double burden of work.

Further, there is little policy response to intersectional realities of women where occupational segregation is gendered and highly divided based on caste, class and geographical location of women. Additionally, factors related to sexualities and disabilities remain largely unaddressed in the current policies.

Some of these challenges can be addressed by investing in convergent efforts in terms of better and safe transport services, ensuring implementation of maternity benefit and adequate incentivization to markets to adopt the scheme without its perceived pitfalls (Becker, et. al., 2019) (Localcircles, 2020), making structural changes in the education system to enable enough women to graduate and avail of streams conventionally reserved for men. Some challenges need long-term change in strategies such as ensuring gender perspective building in school and college education curricula to ensure choices and mitigate risks of violence owing to economic empowerment of women, later in life.

### Social security provisions in labor codes do not account for women’s unpaid economic work or women in informal economy

Specific to the labor code on social security feminist activists and scholars have noted a complete absence and focus on women workers within the code barring provisioning for maternity benefits. It is felt that the very language of the code does not take cognizance of women workers in the production economy. The policy considers only men as workers and employers, which clearly indicates a gender bias. Apart from this, social security determination for worker or employee within the code is based on income/wages and excludes several women/men who perform unpaid work. It was stressed that for universal coverage of women workers it was important to perceive women’s work as a continuum of paid and unpaid work with multiple entry and exit points, therefore income should not become the basis of social security provisioning (Institute of Social Sciences Trust, 2018). With respect to maternity benefits for women workers in the informal sector; the code on social security proposes 26 weeks

of paid leave to pregnant women provided they have been in the job for at least 80 working days and have been contributing to the social security fund. This is challenging for women employed in the informal sector due to the irregular nature of their work. The code also proposes maternity benefits only up to two children, which is yet another limitation.<sup>10</sup>

### Low political will to formalize progressive policies

The National Policy for Women, 2016, specifies policy interventions for women in priority areas – health, education, economy, governance, decision-making, violence against women and recommends mechanisms to be placed for enabling environment for women to be equal contributors in all spheres. The framework of this policy contextualizes inter-relationships of women within family, community workplace/market and governance. However, this policy has not been formalized and is still at a draft stage with the MoWCD.

### Budgetary allocations have increased but are still insufficient

The government's budget allocation for Maternity Benefit Programme is INR 2,700 crores in 2017-18, a major increment from the budget allocation of INR 400 crores for the erstwhile *Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahayog Yojana* (IGMSY) in 2016-17. However, despite a near seven-fold increase in budget allocation, many experts claim that the scheme remains greatly under-funded (Sinha 2017). The *Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana* (PMMVY) was launched in 2017.<sup>11</sup> The allocation under this scheme has been more than doubled from INR 1,200 crores in 2018-19 to INR 2,500 crores (2019-20). The budgetary allocations of the National Crèche scheme was increased from INR 30 crores to INR 50 crores as well as tripling of the budget for Working Women's hostel from INR 52 crores (2018-19) to INR 165 crores in the current budget (PIB Delhi, 2019). However, these are still inadequate given the implementation mandated as per the policies (Thakur & Mitra, 2019).

### Implementation barriers specific to Working Women's Hostels

The scheme on Working Women's Hostel entitles working women to these hostels provided their gross income does not exceed INR 50,000 per month in metropolitan cities, or INR 35,000 per month, in any other place. When the income of the resident exceeds the prescribed limits, they are required to vacate the hostel within a period of six months of crossing the income ceiling. Also, the limit for stay under the scheme is three years. In exceptional circumstances, the District Administration can allow working women to stay in a hostel, beyond the three-year period, not exceeding five years in total. Some of the conditionalities as per the scheme make it difficult for working women to use such facilities.

### Design and implementation Challenges in Ensuring Violence Free Workplaces

Specific to the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013, several studies highlight the absence of Internal Complaints Committees (ICCs) or the dismal state of ICCs at various workplaces, (Sarpotdar, 2016). Bhavila and Beegom (2017) in their study interviewed employers, chairpersons, and members from 15 ICCs in government offices in Kerala. The study found that the ICCs were constituted as mandated by the law with both external and internal members. However, women, including the chairperson at times, were afraid of asserting themselves against senior male members. The ICCs held little to no legitimacy in a male-dominated environment fearing non-compliance to confidentiality (Bhavila & Beegom, 2017).

Implementation of the Sexual Harassment at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013, has been challenging especially related to the formation and functioning of local committees as per the legislation. A study on the Right to Information Act in 2018, by Martha Farrell Foundation, found that out

<sup>10</sup> The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 was amended in 2017, by extending paid maternity leave for women employees with less than two surviving children, from the original 12 weeks to 26 weeks. Women adopting a child below three months of age, or "commissioning mothers" have been provided 12 weeks of maternity leave. The Act mandates a crèche for establishments employing 50 or more employees. The amendment excludes informal sector women workers, who constitute 93% of India's workforce. For informal sector workers in India the scheme Janini Suraksha Yojana was instituted to encourage institutional delivery. Run on a pilot basis the IGMSY was also instituted in 2010 for conditional cash transfers to women during their pregnancy. The IGMSY was renamed as PMMVY in 2017. The cash incentives are payable in three instalments, covering women above 19 years of age and gives compensation only for the first live birth.

<sup>11</sup> PMMVY is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme under which the grant-in-aid is released to States in cost sharing ratio 60:40, for North-Eastern States & Himalayan States it is 90:10 and 100% for Union Territories without Legislature.

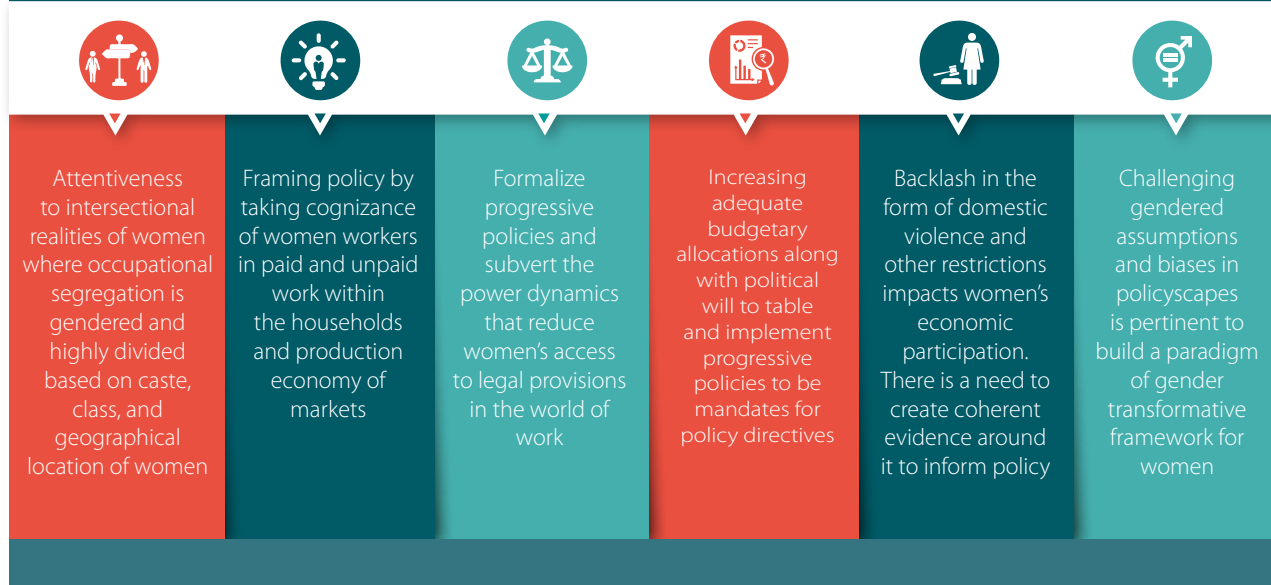
of 655 districts in the country, only 29 percent replied they had formed local complaints committees. All these point to poor implementation of the provisions of the Sexual Harassment at Workplace Act (Bhatt, 2019). One of the major critiques of the law has been the inclusion of action for false and malicious complaints and evidence under section 14 of the Act. Women are penalized and must bear the threat of punishment in case they are unable to prove the validity of their complaint. Even the Justice Verma Committee Report, 2013<sup>12</sup> had asked for its deletion, but the government was non-responsive to the recommendation and retained the provision. This often poses as a barrier for women to file complaints related to sexual harassment at the workplace.

### Linkages between paid work and intimate partner violence/ domestic violence

Evidence points to the fact that women face gender-based violence at all levels and domestic violence directly affects women's participation in the workplace (Paul, 2016). While an increase in women's income could ease the economic stress within the household leading to a reduced risk of violence, women's control over assets, increased decision making within the

house could make the husband feel threatened and thereby result in violence. On the other hand, it could also lead to greater bargaining power and a decrease in dependence, therefore the ability to leave the relationship (Bolis & Hughes, 2015). Studies which have analyzed nationally representative datasets also state that married women who experienced spousal violence are more likely to be employed and are also more likely to work for cash remuneration and be employed year-round. These results may appear to suggest that spousal violence is associated with higher likelihood of married women seeking financial self-reliance (Bhattacharya, 2015). However, evidence remains inconclusive on the relationship between violence and women's economic participation. This calls for greater efforts to understand how violence in the domestic sphere influences women's ability to participate in paid work, especially for married women. There is further lack of understanding on how violence in natal families limit women's ability to acquire the desired education and skills to enter formal and paid work. These factors could have serious policy implications. It is imperative for the discourse to account for such interlinkages while framing and designing policies affecting work or gender-based violence faced by women.

### POINTS FOR REFLECTION ON APPROACHES FOR BETTER POLICIES ON WOMEN'S WORK AND SKILL TRAINING NEEDS



<sup>12</sup> The Justice Verma Committee was a three member committee instituted by the Government of India in 2012 for recommendations on rape laws and the criminal justice system in India

## SECTION III: RECOMMENDATIONS



In line with our findings from the primary study and specifically in the context of gender transformative work and the discourse on non-traditional livelihoods, we make the following key recommendations based on the analysis above:

### Employment domain ++

Policies need to shift focus to conditions at work and terms of employment, creation of an enabling environment to enhance women's choices with respect to the kind of work they can take up, access to social security benefits, violence-free workplaces, minimal gender pay gaps and offering opportunities across sectors rather than in the gender segregated manner in some sectors and select job roles within sectors, etc. For equitable participation of women in the workforce, employers need to be held accountable in the market to ensure adequate provisioning. The state must enforce provisions such as minimum wages, equal remuneration, maternity benefit, social security benefits, crèches, working women's hostels, provision for toilets, lighting, safe transportation and anti-sexual harassment at workplace policy.

### Skills domain ++

Skills must be viewed not only as a link to employment, but as a comprehensive mechanism to enable women to make better work choices. Skilling is about building capacity for entrepreneurship as well as cater to skill demand in the wage/labor market. There is a need to realign the skill ecosystem to ensure quality, scalability and sustainability. The realignment of the skill ecosystem must be a dynamic process with periodic reviews and feedback from all stakeholders to keep up

with the changing landscape of changing skill gaps and employment scenario.

Policies should encourage integrative model of gender training and skill development for the workforce. The aim of skills development leading to employability needs to translate into sustainable livelihood options for women. Skill development training needs to also have an element of preparing women and girls for entry into and sustenance within the workforce. There is a need for an overall gender training (including gender rights, legal rights, sexuality, reproductive health, communications, first aid) of the workforce to understand the ecosystem of work and wages. The overall quality of education should be improved, given its interlinkages to skilling specifically in terms of getting post school-level adolescent girls within the sphere of employability. Lastly, skilling should be undertaken in tandem with demand generation and sensitization of market players.

### Addressing gaps in policy response to women's unpaid work

Evidence suggests (Oxfam India 2020; Gammage et al., 2018) that women are disproportionately burdened with unpaid work, leaving less time for them to engage in paid work, education, leisure, self-care, political participation and other economic activities. Gender gaps in unpaid care work tend to be greater in those countries with relatively poor infrastructure as well as educational and social security systems. Also, societies that have higher discriminatory practices (normative and legal restrictions) with respect to women and their mobility are burdened even further (Gammage et al., 2018). Specific to the issue of women's unpaid



work (care and domestic), all components of the “care diamond”<sup>13</sup> – state, market, household and not-for-profits must address it through recognition, reduction and redistribution. At the policy level, there should be a shift from assumptions placed on women’s unpaid work and thereby normalizing harmful gender norms that impede women’s participation in the workforce at the very outset.

### Expanding scope of policy directives to include women and girls in non-traditional livelihood options

ICRW research study highlights many interlinkages with respect to women’s participation in paid work –

be it within the household, community, workplace or wider labor market in both traditional livelihoods or NTLs.<sup>14</sup> There are not many differences between the status and conditions of women working in the two types of sectors; the enablers and barriers are similar; however, due to the gendered nature of the market as well as policy design and structures, barriers increase manifold for women to enter and sustain themselves in NTL. Therefore, policy discourse would benefit from reflections on what is meant by NTL sectors and roles for women not only in terms of definition but also with respect to provision of an enabling environment for their entry and sustenance in paid economic work.

## CONCLUSION

Schemes and policies need to acknowledge gender segregation and occupational rigidities in the world of work, particularly, when it comes to ensuring women’s entry into sectors where they have not been traditionally engaged. Learnings from best practices and innovative initiatives by NGOs, platforms such as the NTL network, organizations such as EMpower and private sector players should be adopted by policy measures, particularly those on conditions of work, terms of employment, skilling and changing gender attitudes within the households, market practices as well as state mechanisms.

Policies have the power to mandate change for larger good and instill progressive values in the system and in its actors. Policymakers in collaboration with various stakeholders must find ways to address implementation challenges beyond increasing budgetary allocations. One of the ways could be to rehaul policy design and implementation to critically re-examine gendered assumptions on women’s work – paid/unpaid, private/public, skilled/unskilled. The skills ecosystem should shift focus from just recruitment and retention to address some of the structural gaps in terms of challenges highlighted.

These recommendations are geared for policies, initiatives and schemes to first and foremost recognize women as equal citizens with potential to be full-fledged economic entities, and recognize the barriers faced by women workers owing to the structural context. The approach of non-traditional livelihoods for women requires the state and the market to adopt a gender-transformative approach such that it increases their value within households, visibilizes them in market spaces and strengthen tools of accountability for the state to ensure that women can enter and sustain in roles of their choice in the world of work.

<sup>13</sup> The Care Diamond is a concept developed by (Razavi, 2007) to show the different categories of actors that can provide care support, infrastructure and services. It links the roles and responsibilities of different actors in addressing the issues of unpaid care work through coordination and linkage.

<sup>14</sup> Please refer to our research study, *Vikalp: An Exploratory Study on Non-Traditional Livelihoods*.

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