

Challenges for Women in Modern India

in Workplace and Society
July 2013



Dr. Harbeen Arora, Global Chairperson, ASSOCHAM Ladies League with Ms. Yashodhra Rajee Scindia, Member of Parliament; Dr. Pinky Anand, Senior Advocate, Supreme Court; Ms. Urvashi Butalia, Director & Co-founder, Kali for Woman; and Ms. Alka Lamba, Chairperson, Go India Foundation releasing ASSOCHAM Ladies League report on "Rising Youth Intolerance?"



Ms. Ritu Beri, International Fashion Designer, delivering a moving address at the release of report on "Women's Safety: Reality Check and Recommendations."



Dr. Harbeen Arora, Global Chairperson, ASSOCHAM Ladies League with John H. Lienhard V., Professor of Mechanical Engineering, MIT, Prof. Arundhati Banerjee, Director, Global Initiatives, MIT; Prof. Sanjay Sarma, Director, Digital Learning, MIT, and Dr. Vinay Rai, Chairman, ASSOCHAM National Council on Education, Employability and Social Justice at an interactive session organised by ASSOCHAM Ladies League.



Dr. Harbeen Arora, Global Chairperson, ASSOCHAM Ladies League with Ms. Yashodhara Rajee Scindia, Member of Parliament at the release of report on "Rising Youth Intolerance?"



Chief Guest Dr. Kiran Bedi, a Social Activist & Retd. IPS Officer and Dr. Harbeen Arora, Chairperson, ASSOCHAM Ladies League (ALL) at a peace initiative by women from India & Pakistan.



Dr. Harbeen Arora, Chairperson, ASSOCHAM Ladies League (ALL) on the occasion of ASSOCHAM Ladies League Ludhiana Chapter Launch

About ASSOCHAM Ladies League

ASSOCHAM Ladies League (ALL) has a most unique vision of connecting women across the globe and strengthening them in as many ways as possible. ALL has India's ace women leaders and entrepreneurs as members who have come together to build a foundation of support and empowerment for every women in every part of the world. ALL follows a model of distributed leadership so that every lady member can contribute and create, thus bringing new dimensions, directions and diversity in women's leadership. The overarching aim of ALL is to create a world wide web of women to support and empower one another, beyond boundaries.

Presently ASSOCHAM Ladies League has 25 Chapters in:

- Ahmedabad
- Alabama
- Boston
- Bucharest
- Chicago
- Colombo
- Delhi
- Gurgaon
- Hyderabad
- Islamabad
- Kolkata
- Ladakh
- Los Angeles
- Ludhiana
- Manila
- Miami
- New York
- Noida
- Ottawa
- Port Louis
- Ranchi
- Toronto
- Uttarakhand
- Vancouver
- Washington, DC

(For more details about ASSOCHAM Ladies League, visit: www.aall.in)

INTRODUCTION

As per 2012 Census, the total population of India is 1.22 billion out of which 591.4 million are females. The number certainly indicates that these people are invaluable assets to the country, thus making it necessary to empower them to contribute to our national economy. Making higher education a mass movement and providing greater opportunities in higher education for girls and women would certainly help the country to progress and develop.

Women are the wealth of India and they have contributed in almost every field and made country feel proud at every occasion. However, another reality of Indian society is that there is systematic discrimination and neglect of women in India, vis-a-vis denial or limited access to education, health and property rights, child labour domestic violence, rape, abuse and sexual harassment at workplace. The fear of sexual violence has been a powerful factor in restricting women's behavior and sense of freedom.

India is fast emerging as a global power but for half of its population, the women across the country, struggle to live life with dignity and freedom. Women are facing problems in every sphere of life whether employment, access to health care or property rights. India may be fast growing but women in India continue to be discriminated. The declining sex ratio in India amply portrays the discrimination shown towards them that starts even before they are born.

Around 40 per cent of married women in India are victims of domestic violence. The increasing violence against women shown in television and films and their vulgar portrayal as objects of sex is also an important contributing factor in the escalating violence against women in India. The crimes against women in India are growing at a rampant speed. Women, irrespective of their class, caste and educational status, are not safe. The lack of any serious effort to rectify the weaknesses in dealing with the crimes against women further compound the situation and result is that the conviction rate remains abysmally low.

Hillary Clinton, US secretary of State, while addressing the Delhi University students said that “women’s roles and rights are as important as any issue we can list. Women are the key of economic growth. It's been established through research”. Men should perceive women not as subservient being but as empowered individuals who are equal partners. Women are not only entitled for survival but also to a life with dignity, grace and equal opportunities so that they can grow to their full potential. There is an urgent need to pay attention to the issues that concern this section of population. The focus should be on poverty reduction, gender justice, health, nutrition, sustained awareness of rights and redressal, eradication of social evils etc.

Crimes against women are of various natures. It include crimes involving sexual exploitation for economic gains like prostitution & trafficking, adultery, abduction, rape, wrongful confinement, and

murder etc on the one hand and crimes related to women's property like dishonest misappropriation, criminal breach of trust, domestic violence, dowry extortion and outraging the modesty of women etc on the other. These crimes are not only injurious and immoral for the women but for the society as a whole.

Female Infanticide and Feticide is yet another challenge that women are facing in India and it is playing a significant role in lop sided sex ratio in India. Sex selective abortion has also been common in the country.

Dowry, rape, human trafficking and sexual harassment are other issues and challenges that women have to face.

Workplace sexual harassment is another emerging challenge for female employees working across the country. Women working at odd hours are prone to professional, personal and health hazards that need to be addressed by the government and the private sector. There should be awareness among women about workplace sexual harassment policies and regulations so that they can stand up for themselves and not get sidelined by their male counterparts.

India has laws against rape and molestation but the recently passed law for sexual harassment at workplace is the nation's first one dedicated to this issue. The law defines harassment as unwelcome physical contact, making sexually colored remarks and any behaviour that creates offensive or hostile work environment for a woman.

The following document is a report on the reality check on challenges for women in modern India vis-à-vis the workplace and society. In the end there are some recommendations and concrete steps to address the crisis.

DATA SURVEY & ANALYSIS

We interviewed and surveyed a cross-section of women from different strata of society. The aim was not only to get out of them the answers to the questions we had drafted, but to strike a conversation with them and build a rapport so that they are able share their day to day experiences freely with us. After the questionnaires were completed, the next task was to analyze the data in a form that it can be easily shared with the world in order to bring about the true picture of the women in India.

PURPOSE OF STUDY AND SURVEY

The purpose of this extensive exercise was to determine the challenges in society, mindsets, and institutional set-ups that give rise to or foment the crisis in which women find themselves today. Whether educated or illiterate, empowered or not, women in all strata had inputs and insights that gave us ample ground to investigate a multitude of factors that shape the weakened, exploited and violated status of women in our society today. By understanding the ground of the problem, and the

multiple vectors emerging from it, we were able to offer recommendations to improve the status quo, keeping the current issues in perspective, and the future vision in sight.

PHASES OF DATA RESEARCH

Phase 1: Determining the research objectives.

Phase 2: Conducting secondary research from the various reports produced by ASSOCHAM, inputs of ASSOCHAM LADIES LEAGUE, and various NGOs related to the same goal.

Phase 3: Designing quantitative parameters against which we can map the present status of women and customizing the parameters according to our needs and then preparing a questionnaire.

Phase 4: The survey in Delhi covered Delhi-NCR based 10,000 women, working, housewives and college students from the middle and upper economic and social strata. See **Fig A** for detailed profile of women surveyed.

Phase 5: Analyzing and drawing inferences on the information collected.

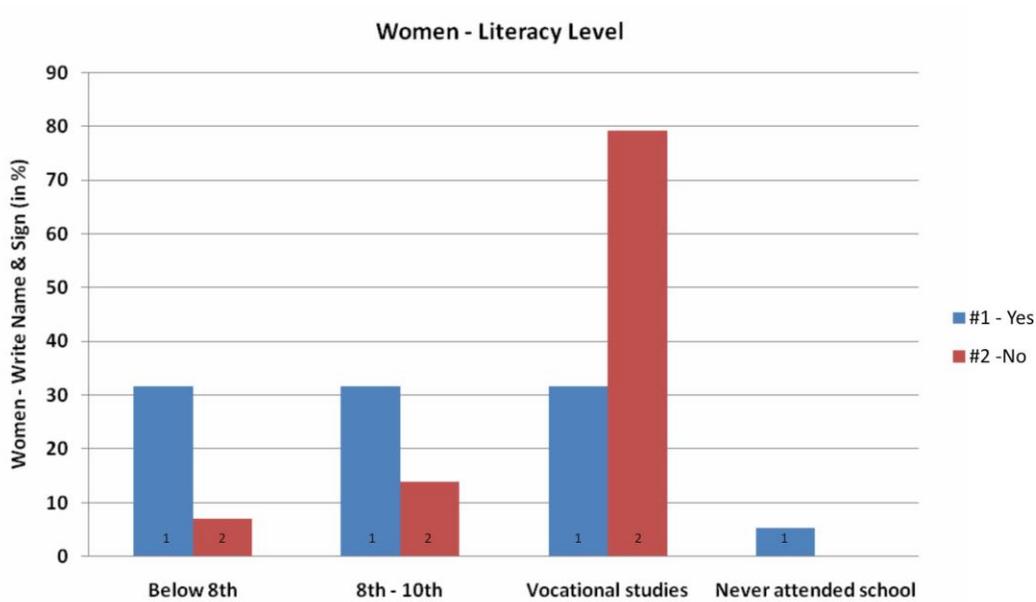
Phase 6: Drawing conclusions and giving recommendations to improve status quo and address major challenges.

Phase 7: Submitting the report to ASSOCHAM for its further discretion.

CHALLENGE 1: LOWER LITERACY LEVEL

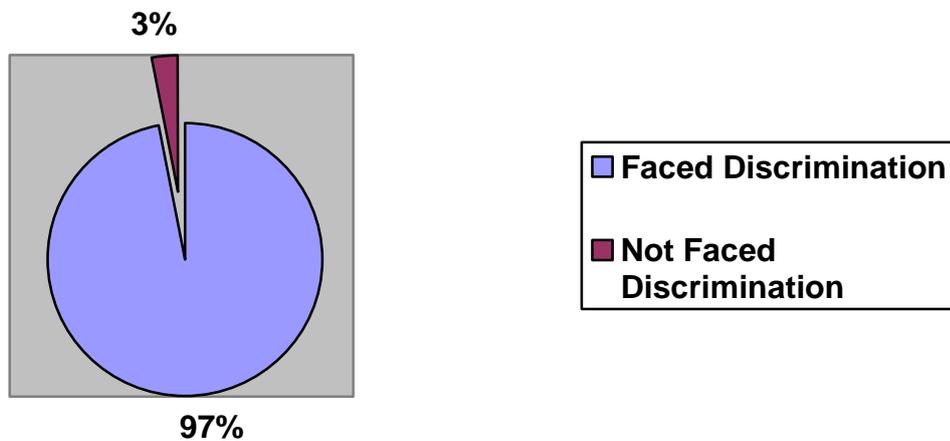
Literacy Level

The survey found that 30 % women have studied till class 8th but more than 70% have undergone vocational training.



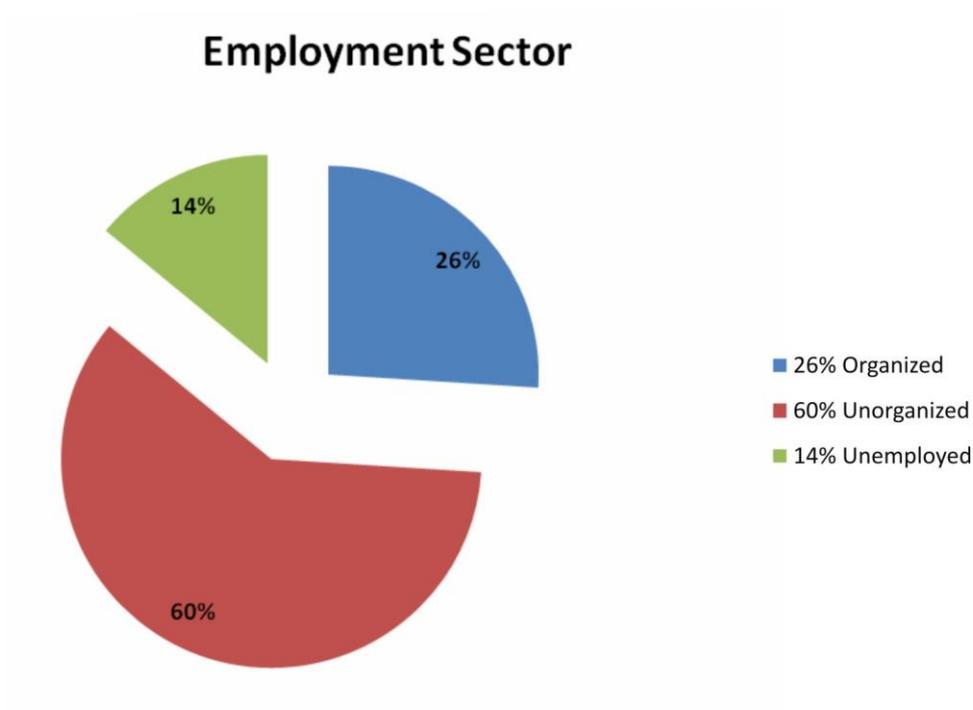
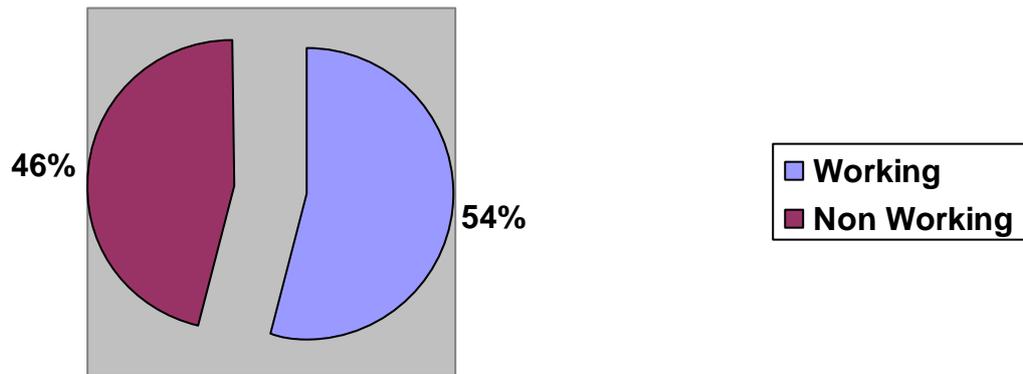
CHALLENGE 2: DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

Most of the women surveyed said that they had faced discrimination for being a woman at some point in their life, be it being at home, school, college or at work place.



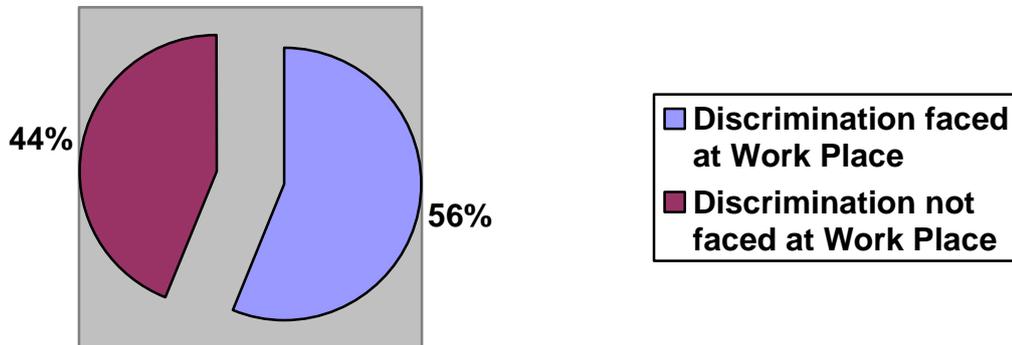
CHALLENGE 3: EMPLOYED IN UNORGANIZED SECTORS

We found that amongst the women surveyed, more than 50% were working. The women were spread across the section from being a professional to being employed as a daily wage earner. But ironically, most of them were involved in unorganized sector. In our survey, we found that out of the women working more than 60% were working in the unorganized sector.



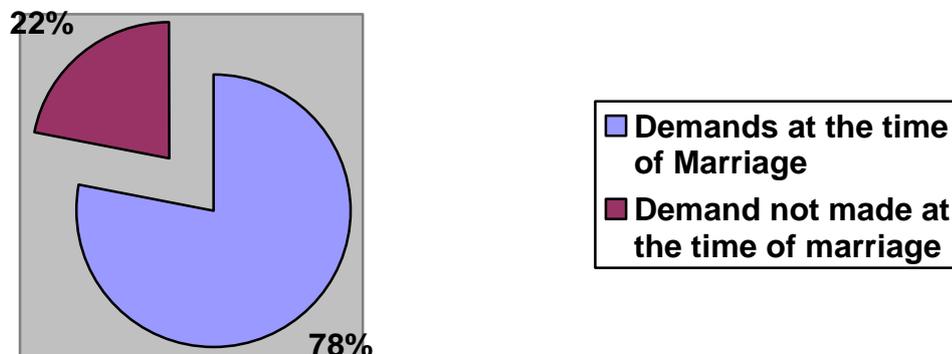
CHALLENGE 4: DISCRIMINATION AT WORK PLACE

Almost 55% women felt that there is discrimination at work place and their male colleagues get better paid than them.



CHALLENGE 5: DOWRY

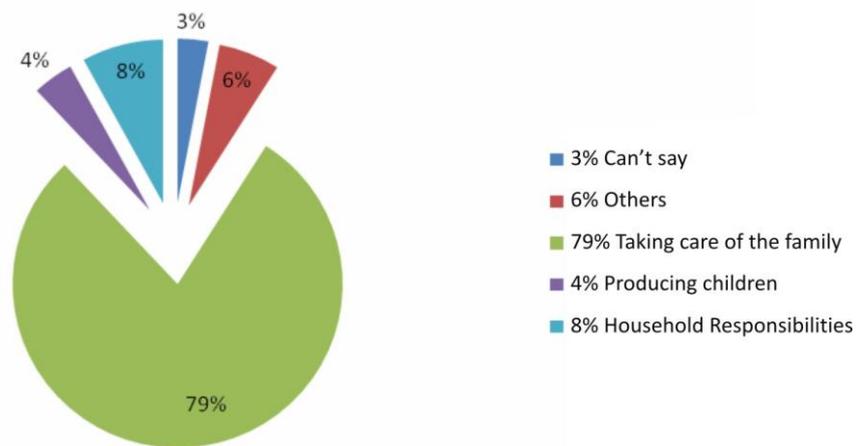
Most of the women said that demands in the form of cash and kind were made at the time of marriage and most of them considered it to be unjust.



CHALLENGE 6: GREATER FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES

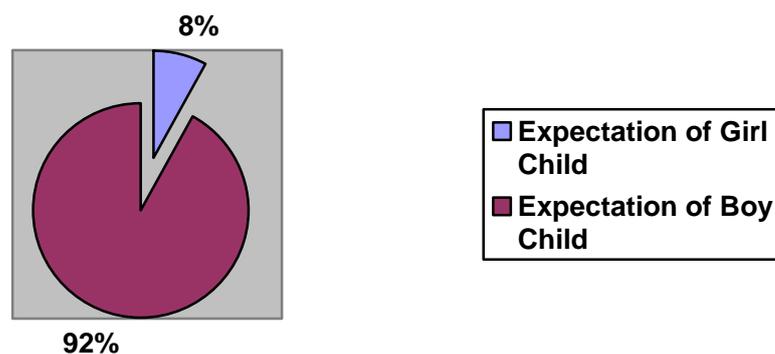
The survey showed that the responsibilities of a married Indian woman are countless. 79% of the married women consider taking care and supporting their family as a prime responsibility. On top of that, in the face of negligence or less attention to family duties – like looking after in-laws, cooking at home, serving guests, maintaining family facilities and housekeeping, caretaking of children and serving their demanding needs also – the woman faces the brunt of criticism and is often asked to give least importance and low priority to doing activities that give her personal joy, like pursuing her own aspirations and fulfilling her own talents. Little do families realize that an empowered woman will first and foremost think of sharing her empowerment with both her families.

Responsibilities of a Married Woman



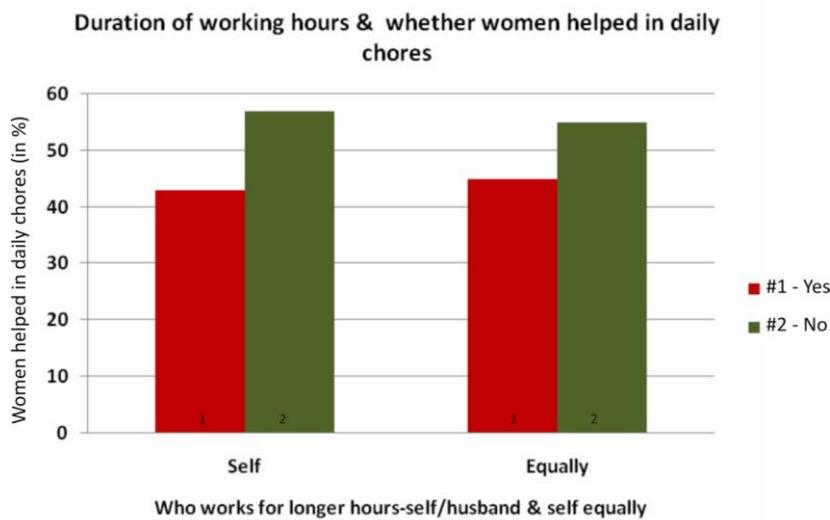
CHALLENGE 7: DISCRIMINATION AGAINST GIRL CHILD

Most of the women agreed that they were expected to give birth to a boy than a girl. Wherever girls were born then the girl child faced discrimination against the boy.



CHALLENGE 8: LONG WORKING HOURS AND DAILY CHORES

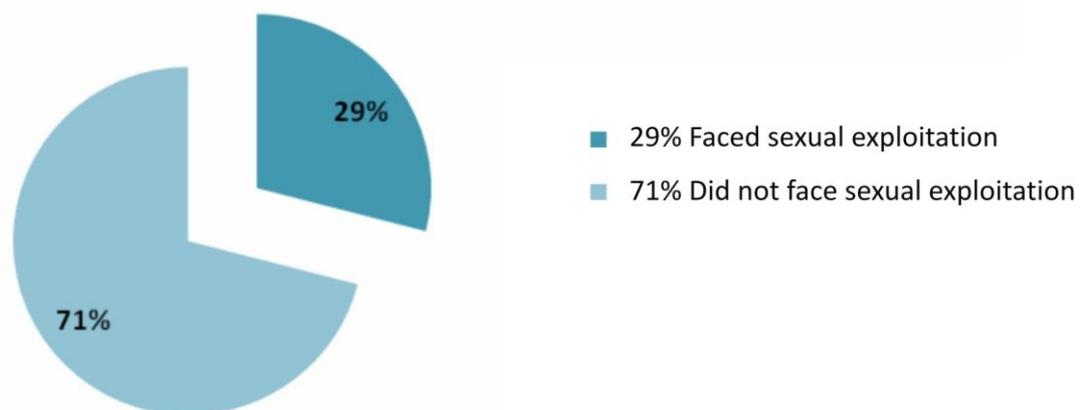
The survey showed that there is a slight difference between the women who are helped by their family members in daily chores and those who are not helped. Women working longer hours than their husbands or equally are now increasingly helped in their daily chores but most of them still perform these responsibilities single handed



CHALLENGE 9: SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

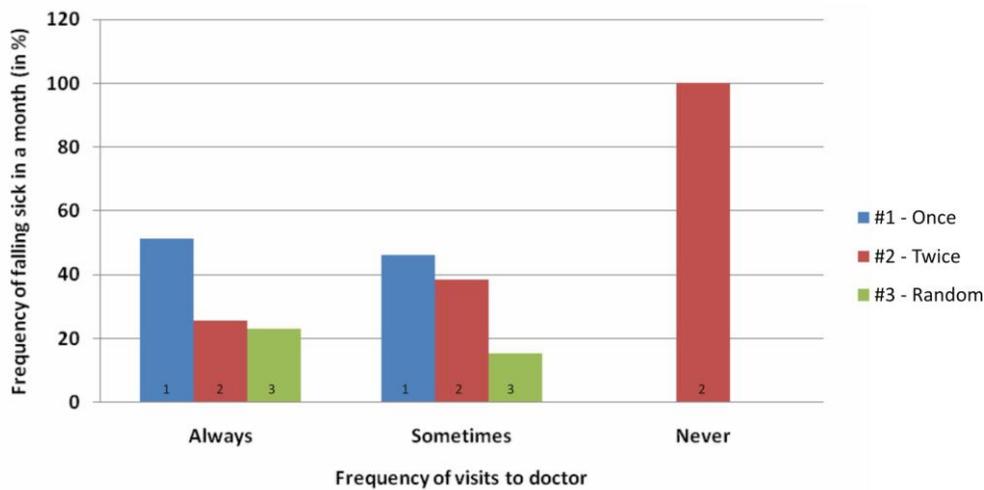
A shocking fact shows that 29% of the women still suffer sexual exploitation and majority of them have faced exploitation by those who are known to them. Many of these women are silent sufferers and accept it as a part of their life.

% of empowered women faced sexual exploitation



CHALLENGE 10: HEALTH ISSUES

The survey shows that on health issues also women face discrimination. Women who fall ill or suffer injuries as a result of abuse are incapable of visiting a doctor which is majorly due to their financial crunch or the family does not give any importance to their health.



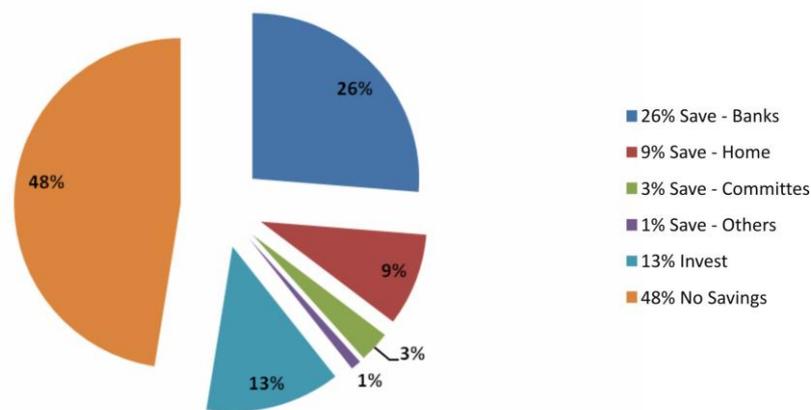
CHALLENGE 11: LACK OF FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE

Most of the women surveyed did not have financial independence. The money that they earn is deposited in the family kitty and they do not have any control over it.



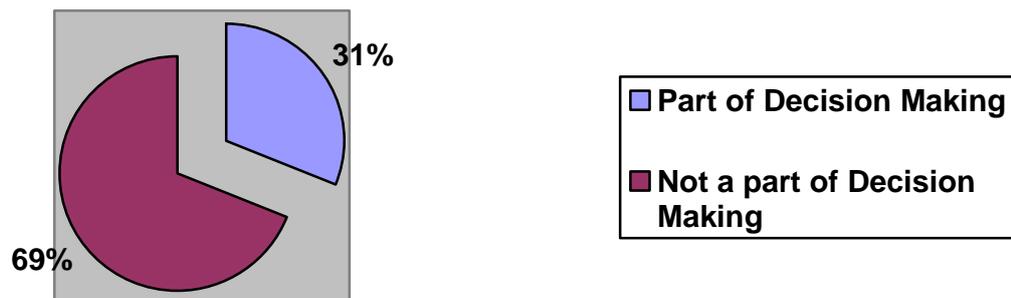
The survey shows that while 48% of the women are not even able to save (as most the women have to forcefully give money to their husbands for consuming alcohol), on the other hand, 54% of women are able to save and invest in various forms like banks, committees and other schemes. Else they spend their all money on the education of their children, which is a great form of investment in building human capital.

Future Security - Save



CHALLENGE 12: FEWER ROLE IN HOUSEHOLD DECISION MAKING

The survey shows that almost 30 % women are a part of the decision making process in households whereas 70 % are not involved and their say does not matter.



SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

ASSOCHAM Ladies League (ALL) survey reveals the following:

Data Findings

- The survey found that 30 % women have studied till class 8th but more than 70% have undergone vocational training.
- Most of the women surveyed said that they had faced discrimination for being a woman at some point in their life, be it being at home, school, college or at work place.
- We found that amongst the women surveyed, more than 50% were working. The women were spread across the section from being a professional to being employed as a daily wage earner.
- Out of the women working we found that more than 60% were working in the unorganised sector.
- Almost 55% women felt that there is discrimination at work place and their male colleagues get better paid than them.
- 69% of women interviewed are married. 14% are divorced, but not all of them are legally divorced, and thus deprived of support from her in-laws, and cannot also expect much support from her maiden family. 17% of the women interviewed are widow and 14% are divorced, as a result they are under a compulsion to support their respective families monetarily as well as emotionally.
- Most of the women said that demands in the form of cash and kind were made at the time of marriage and most of them considered it to be unjust.
- The survey showed that the responsibilities of a married Indian woman are countless. Taking care and supporting family still remains a prime responsibility of majority of women. Education of children especially girls is still not considered to be a responsibility whereas it is a compulsion, according to the Government of India.
- Most of the women agreed that they were expected to give birth to a boy than a girl. Wherever girls were born then the girl child faced discrimination against the boy.
- 29% of the women still suffer sexual exploitation and majority of them have faced exploitation by those who are known to them. Though sexual exploitation has decreased by several basis points but the family members of those browbeaten do not help them to recover from this state. Most of the families ignore or refuse to help the exploited, thus, ignoring their misery.

- Most of the women who have been exploited said that exploitation happens in offices, homes and on streets, in trains buses etc.
- The survey shows that on health issues also women face discrimination. Women who fall ill or suffer injuries as a result of abuse are incapable of visiting a doctor which is majorly due to their financial crunch or the family does not give any importance to their health.
- Most of the women surveyed did not have financial independence. The money that they earn is deposited in the family kitty and they do not have any control over it.
- The survey shows that while 48% of the women are not even able to save, on the other hand, 54% of women are able to save and invest.
- The survey shows that almost 30 % women are a part of the decision making process in households whereas 70 % are not involved and their say does not matter.
- Another positive finding is that education of women is directly related to their decision-making power. Almost 90% of women who had some form of education have their say in decision-making.

CONCLUSION

In India, women who contribute half of the world's population perform two-third of the world's work, receive one-tenth of its income and owns less than one-hundredth of its property. There is a growing realization that women have been underestimated and discriminated against all walks of life, despite their substantial contribution to the household economy and in turn, the national economy as such.

Education of women plays a pivotal role in developing the socio-economic conditions of any country. In India, promoting girl education especially at higher level is the need of the hour and would certainly bring positive changes to the society in terms of growth and progress. Government as well as private sector needs to focus on girl education in terms of access, schooling, teaching facilities, enrolments and retentions.

Educating girls and women will help the nation to achieve objectives like increasing economic efficiency, ensuring awareness about health and sanitation, creating knowledge about marriage and child bearing, encouraging political participation and investing in the future generation. The reason behind this is that education of girls has either direct or indirect effect as well as impact on all these factors.

A nation must provide education to all its citizens irrespective of caste, color, creed or even gender. The Indian National Policy of Education recognizes this when it states 'Wider women's access to vocational, technical and professional education at all levels, breaking gender stereotypes, will

ensure better financial stability for women and lead to national development.’ Education will help women face the challenges in their surroundings and fight for their rights.

The empowerment of women and improvement of their status and economic role needs to be integrated into economic development programs, as the development of any country is inseparably linked with the status and development of women. Given the gender division of labor that prevails in India, Nutrition, Child health, and related matters typically depend mostly on women’s actions and decisions. Experience has shown that promotion of enterprise creation and income generating activities among women would transform them from ‘being alive’ to ‘living with dignity’.

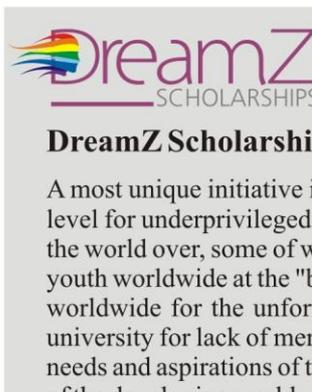
Women should be aware of their rights and educating them is one of the effective solutions to the challenges faced by them in their families, workplace and society at large.

Along with stimulating changes in policies through government and other corporate endeavors, we need individual efforts in our day to day lives to overcome the fetters of illiteracy, ignorance, stereotypical thinking, feudal mindsets, and need to see positive and concrete action to respect women in every sphere of our living.

ASSOCHAM Ladies League (ALL) RECOMMENDATIONS

- Women can excel as entrepreneurs. Given the fact that women have to play multiple roles and they have to deal with several day to day challenges in society, it has been increasingly found that women are taking much more entrepreneurial opportunities. This is a very encouraging trend as Indian growth story also needs robust entrepreneurial energy. Therefore, it becomes even more necessary for industry, government, and women organizations to put together a platform that enables and inspire women in to become entrepreneurs. In this way their challenges can be constructively transformed into new opportunities for their growth as well as the growth of the nation.
- Sensitize staff regarding gender-respectful conduct and communication.
- Make safe transport to available to female staff.
- Enforce strict rules against sexual harassment and gender prejudice at the workplace.
- Give employment to women and share awareness of their rights in society, and also help inculcate in them self-esteem and sense of self-worth; for many of them have accepted social, emotional and physical abuse as their fate.
- Donate professional services to underprivileged sections of society, in case you are a lawyer, doctor, teacher, counselor et al through volunteering time at NGOs.
- Work towards creating awareness campaigns regarding illiteracy, early marriages and dowry system.

- Encourage your neighborhood to celebrate key festivals together through innovative outreach programs like street plays, uplifting songs that highlight concern for our larger social responsibility and help shape a new, progressive consciousness.
- Empower all-women forums and associations with the backing of government and industry so that they can take the lead in helping women live with awareness and empowerment.
- Sponsor education for girl-children in NGOs, schools and colleges.
- The underprivileged and illiterate sections of society do not follow rules regarding family planning, legal age of marriage, right to education for the girl child, laws against sexual harassment, etc. Thus they should be made aware of the need to adhere to the well-thought rules made in the interest of balance and harmony in society, and also be made aware of legal repercussions in case of lapse.
- Most families prefer male child over girl child for perceived reasons of a son being an asset for the family, and a daughter being a drain on resources. We need a widespread mindset-change of seeing the girl-child as an asset rather than a liability. The way toward this is job-oriented education and employment for girls.
- Most of our women population is working in the unorganized sector due to lack of education. Government should offer job oriented courses to them so that they can move to organized sector and get fixed earning to improve their standard of living to some extent.
- In cases of crime and violence against women, statements of women complainants should only be attended by women police constables. As far as possible, in judiciary too, their cases should be tried by women magistrates. To reduce stigma and harassment in public, evidence of women should be taken in-camera.
- Much can be achieved by making young women and young men aware of women's rights from a young age itself. This will instill self-confidence in women and will increase the deterrent for young men to not take advantage of women, and not make the mistake of seeing them as the weaker sex. When women are aware, they will stand up for their rights and be able to reach out to suitable institutions, with knowledge of their legal rights and provisions in law.



DreamZ Scholarships: empowering women worldwide through philanthropy

A most unique initiative is our "Dreamz Scholarships," offering totally free university education at undergraduate and graduate level for underprivileged girls from the world over. It is a one-of-its-kind yet massive effort to educate less privileged girls from the world over, some of whom are first-generation college-goers. Our vision is to provide access to quality education to girls and youth worldwide at the "bottom of the pyramid." While much has been done for those with proven merit and means, little is done worldwide for the unfortunate that were denied access to good quality school education and thus denied entry into a good university for lack of merit. Many of these children, if given equal opportunity would have excelled. This program addresses the needs and aspirations of this segment of society which actually forms the majority of the young, in not just India but in most parts of the developing world.

Over 2000 girls from 22 countries in Asia and Africa are educated annually free of cost at the member universities of our Innovative Universities Consortium (IUC). Through these scholarships coordinated by the Rai Foundation and given by the member-universities of the consortium, these girls get to study and live in a supportive and inspirational environment alongside our other students who come from more fortunate backgrounds. We also recently produced a feature film in English, "Dreamz—true stories that touch you", highlighting issues faced by women globally. For this, actors from 5 continents came together at our consortium-member NIILM University in Haryana to shoot gratis for this socially-conscious movie and 250 of our girl-students worked tirelessly in all aspects of production. This movie is now in the running for key film festivals globally. Today, many of these girls are working and earning with leading companies globally. Educated and empowered, they are bringing lasting change in their own lives and that of their families.



ASSOCHAM CORPORATE OFFICE

5, Sardar Patel Marg, Chanakyapuri, New Delhi-110021, India
Tel: 46550555 (Hunting Line) | Fax: 46536481/46536482, 46536497/46536498
E-mail: assocham@nic.in | Website: www.assocham.org

STATES COORDINATION & TAXATION DIVISIONS

5, Community Centre, Zamrudpur
Kailash Colony, New Delhi-110 048
Tel: 46550555 (Hunting Line)
Fax: 46536481/46536482, 46536497/46536498
E-mail: assocham@nic.in

AGRI & EXHIBITION DIVISIONS

27-J & 27-K, Zamrudpur
Kailash Colony, New Delhi-110 048
Tel: 46550555 (Hunting Line)
Fax: 46536481/46536482, 46536497/46536498
E-mail: assocham@nic.in

ASSOCHAM REGIONAL OFFICES

ASSOCHAM Southern Regional Office

3524, First Floor, 17th Main, Service Road,
HAL 2nd Stage, Indiranagar, Bangalore – 560 008
Mob: +91-09844369755 (Mr. Asad Wasi)
Landline: +91-80-40943251-53,
Fax: +91-80-41256629
E-mail: events.south@assocham.com,
events@assocham.com, director.south@assocham.com

ASSOCHAM Western Regional Office

4th Floor, Heritage Tower,
Bh. Visnagar Bank, Ashram Road,
Usmanpura, Ahmedabad-380 014
Tel: + 91-79- 2754 1728 / 29, 2754 1867
Fax: + 91-79-30006352
Email: assocham.ahd1@assocham.com
assocham.ahd2@assocham.com

ASSOCHAM Eastern Regional Office

88A, 3rd Floor, Sarat Bose Road
Kolkata – 700026
Tel: +91-33-66141600/1601
Fax: +91-33-66141601
E-mail: kolkata@assocham.com

ASSOCHAM Regional Office Ranchi

503/D, Mandir Marg-C
Ashok Nagar
Ranchi-834 002
Email: Head.RORanchi@assocham.com
Phone: 09835040255

ASSOCHAM Bhopal Office

C/o PR Solution, 157, Fortune House
2nd Floor, M P Nagar, Zone 1, Bhopal (MP)
Tel: 0755-4094031

ASSOCHAM OVERSEAS OFFICES

AUSTRALIA

Chief Representative
ASSOCHAM Australia Chapter
Suite 4, 168A Burwood Road
Burwood | NSW | 2134 | Australia
Tel: +61 (0) 421 590 791
Email: yateen@assochamaustralia.org
Website: www.assochamaustralia.org

JAPAN

Chief Representative
ASSOCHAM Japan Chapter & President
Sun and Sands
EGG Japan, 10F, Shin Marunouchi Bldg,
Marunouchi 1-5-1, Tokyo 100-6510
Phone: +81-3-3287-7360
Fax: +81-3-3287-7359
Email: sanjeev.sinha@SunAndSands.com

UAE

Chief Representative
ASSOCHAM – Middle East
India Trade & Exhibition Centre
M.E. IBPC-SHARJAH
IBPC-SHARJAH
P.O. Box 66301, SHARJAH
Tel: 00-97150-6268801
Fax: 00-9716-5304403

USA

Chief Representative
ASSOCHAM – USA Chapter
55 EAST 77th Street
Suite No 509
New York 10162