

GENDER PRIMER ON DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

FOR SOUTH ASIAN ENTERPRISES

**A SUPPORT GUIDE FOR GENDER SENSITIVE POLICY AND
PROGRAM ANALYSIS**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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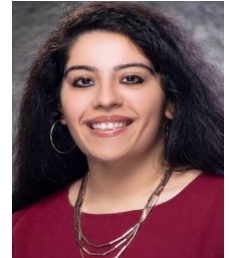
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MESSAGE FROM THE FOUNDER, NIKORE ASSOCIATES

Dear readers,

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a wake-up call for India. The imposition of national lockdowns followed by intermittent localized lockdowns, mobility restrictions, and the burden of increased care work put women's already poor levels of job security at even greater risk. Indian women's marginalization from labor markets is not new, it's a tale that stretches over several decades. In 2017, India was the fastest growing emerging economy in the world. Ironically, it was also the year when women's workforce participation hit its nadir. Women have consistently been excluded from India's growth story—they must now be placed front and center, at the heart of the post-Covid-19 recovery. This necessitates a shift in the nature of interventions—there is a distinct need to work closely with private sector corporate social responsibility programmes in order to improve the wellbeing of women workers in the formal sector.



This Gender Primer was therefore created to be a guidance document tailored to Indian organizations. It has a dual purpose: to break down diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives into a simple, stage-wise implementation framework, and to provide corporate firms with tools to collect gender disaggregated data. Furthermore, the Primer provides guidance at every stage of DEI implementation and can be used by firms at different phases of development. The Primer is a comprehensive yet practical instrument, and it is the first of its kind, allowing leaders to assess where their company policy stands in terms of DEI as well as creating genuine improvements in their company's programmes. As a first step, organizations can utilise the Primer's self-assessment tool to undertake a baseline analysis of women's representation in different job roles and verticals. As a second step, these firms can contact Nikore Associates for advisory services, wherein we can break down key concepts from the Primer and discuss company-specific challenges.

Nikore Associates' long-term vision is to continue our research into the diversity, equity, and inclusion space, so that we can posit data-driven recommendations on what policies and programs are effective in working towards gender parity. We hope our research is the first step in empowering women across the workplaces in South Asia and beyond.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mitali Nikore".

Mitali Nikore
Founder, Nikore Associates

FOREWORD

Dear Readers,

The state of women in India and participation in the workforce has been a subject of discussion for years now. However, the last 5 years there has been significant focus on Diversity and Inclusion efforts and affirmative actions by organizations on the agenda. But the journey has just begun.



As we take this focus closer to home, we are a long way. The diversity in types of institutions, the level of governance and monitoring lend it to be a ripe playground for variances in how diversity agendas are driven in workplaces. While a section of the world moves towards a very holistic approach to diversity - visible and the invisible kind, there is a strong section that is yet to understand the need for targeted processes and policies. In our effort to enable organizations - public, private, NGOs etc to take the first step in this journey this primer has been prepared.

The inception of this idea was triggered by the strong impact COVID-19 had on women in the workforce and the alarming rate at which women were choosing to sit out. The primer provides a step-by-step guide for organizations looking to embark on their DEI journey. While it is currently focused on gender diversity, we do hope to expand to other aspects in the long term. As an HR professional working in the field, I have constantly strived to look for signs on how the processes and policies that are designed to enable are performing. Quoting Peter Drucker here "what gets measured gets managed", an earnest attempt has been made to create a shift from descriptive analytics (reporting) to diagnostic analytics (getting to the why). This gender primer will bring together steps to analyze the starting point, the focus areas and the journey an organization must make in its policy formulation.

I wish organizations who are at different stages in their journey leverage the work put together by the team and enable the big shift.

With best wishes,



Kirandeep Viridi

Note: Kirandeep Viridi is an industry expert with over a decade of experience in various HRM practices and an expert in designing inclusive policies. She partners with Nikore Associates on this primer as a study lead and author to share these insights and guidance of how gender forward policies may be designed.

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR, INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR RESEARCH ON WOMEN

Dear readers,

As India prepares to heal from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, a gender-equitable recovery is paramount. Lack of women at the workplace not only harms gender parity, but also leads to loss of terms, company's productivity, motivation, and team performance. The benefits of gender inclusivity at the workplace can be seen in performance statistics, wellbeing and CROI of an organization. The Nikore Associates Gender Primer highlights the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on Indian women's labor force participation, seen in the form of immense job and income losses, mobility restrictions, an increase in unpaid care work, extreme stress, indebtedness and other gendered issues of the digital divide and the shadow pandemic. The Gender Primer performs a pertinent task of enabling corporate firms to enhance their implementation of building a conducive environment for diverse equity and inclusion policies. This document is an important step and one-of-a-kind tool for leaders in the private sector to assess their DEI profile and build gender-inclusive solutions across their value chain. This Primer fills an important gap in providing corporates with an intuitive and straightforward framework for enhancing the effectiveness of diversity, equity, and inclusion interventions. It is a useful contribution to existing literature on diversity and inclusion in corporate spaces, allowing decision-makers in Indian corporate enterprises to both self-assess their D&I priorities, and better understand the efficacy of their company's programs. This Gender Primer is a step in the right direction towards the genuine achievement of positive change with regards to women's representation and contribution to corporate spaces. As an organization, ICRW is pleased to support Nikore Associates on their Gender Primer. We hope this would lead to serious efforts in the direction towards gender equality.



Recognising the importance of direct engagement with the private sector in the struggle against gender inequality, ICRW in 2021, established ICRW Gender Advisors Private Limited, a social enterprise that aims to partner with private sector clients to provide tailored services in the form of gender diagnostic, strategic guidance, training programmes, and measuring impact. Our enterprise is embedded as a part of ICRW's broad history of collaboration with the public and private sector through evidence rich research programmes, monitoring and evaluation, tailored strategic guidance and capacity building. Promoting gender equality and women's empowerment is not only the right thing to do for today's private and public sector leaders, but it makes business sense: it can increase productivity, enhance growth, reduce risk and positively impact brand and goodwill. As such, this Gender Primer is a fantastic resource that allows our clients in the private sector to actively engage to promote gender equality and women economic empowerment.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ravi Varma', written in a cursive style.

Dr. Ravi Varma
Regional Director
International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), Asia

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1. GLOSSARY

CBA- Cost-Benefit Assessment

CCC- Community Childcare Centers

DEI- ‘Diversity, Equity and Inclusion’ usually refers to programs and policies that encourage representation and participation of diverse groups of people, across different genders, races and ethnicities, abilities and disabilities, religions, cultures, ages, and sexual orientations, and people with diverse backgrounds, experiences, and expertise.

FLFPR- Female Labor Force Participation Rate. It is the proportion of the female population ages 15 and older that is economically active.

Global Gender Gap Index- The Global Gender Gap Index, published by the World Economic Forum, is an index designed to measure gender equality. It ranks countries according to a calculated gender gap between women and men in four key areas: health, education, economy, and politics.

HIPO- High Potential Talent Segment. A high-potential employee is someone with the ability, engagement, and aspiration to rise to and succeed in more senior, critical positions.

HR- Human Resources/Talent management functions

ICC- Internal Complaints committee is an internal committee of a workplace to receive and redress complaints of sexual harassment. It is required to consist of a minimum of four members and the Presiding Officer who has to be a woman should be employed at a senior level at the workplace.

ONGC- Oil and Natural Gas Corporation

POSH- Prevention of Sexual Harassment. POSH training is one of the essential steps that organizations can take to address the pervasive problem of sexual harassment in the workplace. POSH training is also now mandatory at most workplaces.

Waterloo Horsepower- A hypothetical firm taken as an example for the Primer.

WDF - Women Development Forum

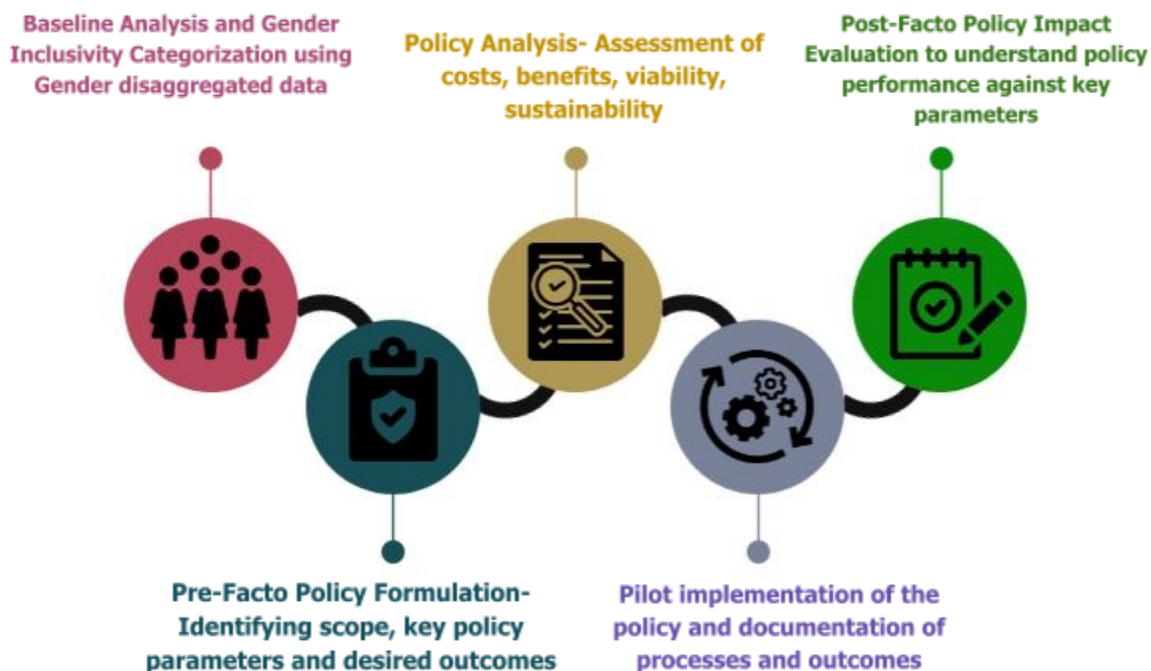
2. INTRODUCTION

Nikore Associates is an economics research group that raises questions about policies pertaining to a wide range of sectors, and our policy ideas have been published in several national and international news media. We have created this Gender Primer to help decision-makers in Indian corporate enterprises conduct a self-assessment of their priorities and gauge the effectiveness of their company programs.

We believe that the development of such a primer was essential, as various studies have shown that with increases in economic development, women have not been able to capitalize on the benefits accrued from it in their workplaces. This is not merely a 'women's issue' though - studies have also shown that less-diverse organizations are at a disadvantage, as such organizations miss out on the benefits of diverse opinions, reduced turnover, increased positivity among employees, and improved reputation – which ultimately leads to higher productivity.

A crucial point to state right at the outset, as you will also subsequently come across, is that the Indian corporate sector ecosystem presently has a paucity of gender-disaggregated data. This could probably be because of internal rules, or also a general lack of streamlined best practices that can be replicated across different firms. This being one of our constraints, we have stated some ranges that have been built by discussions and research over a period of time. However, with more traction on the primer, the subsequent versions will, we are positive, include actual voices from the industry through surveys, and other discussions that will help us solidify our convictions and arguments just a little bit more.

We thus hope that this primer helps to bridge this need, and therefore have emphasized the practicality of the same while developing it. It is divided into five major stages, enumerated as follows:



We have also tried to highlight some programs and policies in place by other organizations, which could be treated as starting points. These policies include industry practices that can help build a more inclusive and aware work ecosystem in an organization. We hope that this exercise is found helpful by the users, and helps them get closer to their diversity goals while also reaping its benefits.

3. PARTICIPATION OF URBAN WOMEN IN THE INDIAN WORKFORCE

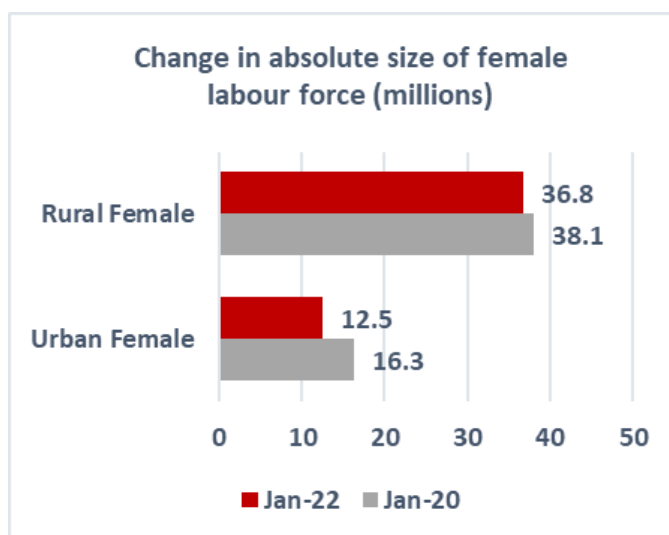
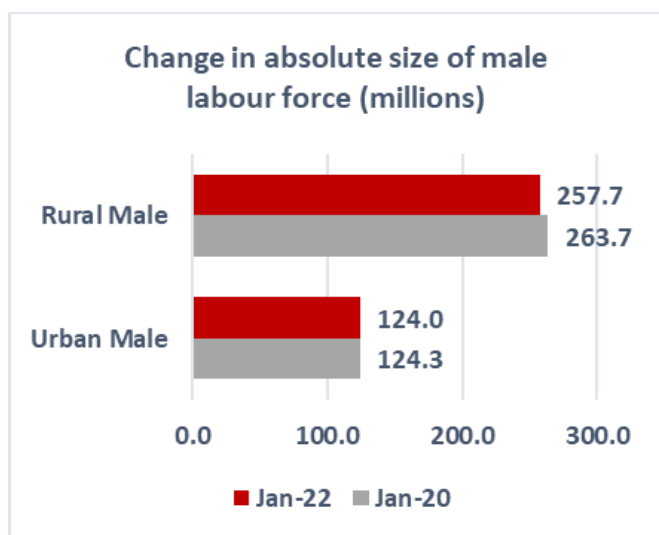
3.1 KEY TRENDS AND IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Massive job and income losses due to COVID-19, especially amongst urban women

Since Independence in 1947, India has rapidly progressed across social and economic fronts, and has continued to remain an economic powerhouse globally, even in light of COVID-19. However, the Indian economy is dealing with a unique conundrum – such that despite gains in female education and falling fertility rates, even today, only about a fourth of Indian women participate in the workforce.

Even amongst the highly educated, the workforce participation is low. The FWPR amongst graduates is only 24% and rises to 38% for postgraduates - implying that nearly 60% of highly educated women are not at work in India (PLFS 2019-20).

COVID-19 has only worsened this situation, displacing millions of women from the labor force itself. Overall, between January 2020 to January 2022, the labor force has contracted by about 11.3 million, 5.1 million women and 6.2 million men (as per data from the Centre for Monitoring the India Economy). However, while women’s labor force is 9.4% smaller, the contraction is only 1.6% for men. Most notably, about 3/4th of the reduction was driven by the fall in urban women’s labor force participation.



Source: CMIE Data

Mobility restrictions

Even before COVID-19, only 54% of women were allowed to go to a nearby market alone, and only 48% could visit places outside their village or community by themselves (National Family and Health Survey 2015-16). With COVID-19, women now require strong reasons to leave the home, inhibiting their ability to work, run businesses, study, or even avail healthcare services and government aid.

Lack of access to safe and affordable transportation adversely affects women's ability to develop meaningful livelihoods, forcing them to choose low-paying jobs and limiting their access to markets, mentorship, and informal social networks. The Census (2011) data for cities (tier I, II, and III) shows that women form only 22% of all people traveling for work across India.

Increase in unpaid care work

On average, women spend 5 hours per day on unpaid household and caregiving work, while men spend only an hour and a half. On any given day, 92% of women in the 15-59 years "working ages" demographic participate in unpaid domestic activities while only 29% of men do so. It is striking that there are almost no differences in the gender distribution of domestic work across rural and urban areas. The pandemic has only exacerbated the situation due to the closure of a range of domestic support services, such as schools, basic healthcare, and child-care centers, shifting responsibility for their provision to women, the default unpaid caregivers. As a result, women's care work has increased by almost 30%. In a recent survey, 66% of women indicated increases in unpaid domestic work, and 36% stated child/ elderly care work increased during the lockdown's first two months.

Homemakers looking for employment declined from 6.4 million to 2.5 million between March and September 2020, recovering to 5.3 million in November and then declining again to 4.4 million in December 2020 (CMIE). Cross-country evidence confirms that a decrease in women's care work by two hours can increase the FLFPR by 10 percentage points.

Based on several stakeholder consultations at Nikore Associates, it is also understood that unpaid work and lack of childcare facilities have remained an obstacle for women. Apanalaya, a community organization running Community Childcare Centers (CCC) for women in Mumbai's informal settlements shared that they had 44 functional CCCs pre-COVID-19, of which only 6 had reopened as of September 2020. As per Apanalaya's research, 79% of service users are working mothers, of which 14% had to quit their jobs owing to increased childcare demands after the closure of CCCs in 2020.

The digital gender divide

In India, only 25% of adult women own a smartphone as opposed to 41% of adult men (GSMA, 2021). Women are systematically denied access to technology, with their use of mobile phones governed by male relatives (Harvard Kennedy School, 2018). With online classes, telemedicine, and work from home becoming the norm during the pandemic, and blended modes expected to continue even after COVID-19, women are at risk of getting left behind, unable to acquire the skills required to participate in a digital economy, impacting their long-term wellbeing.

Shadow pandemic

Social isolation and mandatory confinement with potential abusers increases the risk of domestic violence. Ravindran & Shah (2020), showed evidence of a 131% increase in domestic violence complaints in May 2020 in red zone districts that saw the strictest lockdown measures relative to green zone districts with the least strict measures. Red zone districts also experienced a 184% increase in cybercrime complaints relative to green zone districts in May 2020. In addition, despite massive underreporting, the domestic violence complaints filed by women until Phase 4 of the lockdown have been at an all-time high i.e. highest ever to be recorded in a similar period in the last 10 years.

Issues at the workplace

With regard to women still employed, a recent Deloitte study highlighted that around 61% (out of 500 women surveyed) of Indian women felt less optimistic about their career prospects today than before the pandemic. Over half (52%) experienced non-inclusive behaviors over the past 12 months, and approximately one-quarter of women did not report these incidents because they were concerned about negative impacts on their careers.

As evident from the Global Gender Gap Index, India has suffered a major drop in its ranking due to the abysmal economic participation by women. While the increased care burden and job losses (especially since the sectors worst hit by the pandemic are those that employ more women viz. hospitality, tourism, and so on) have contributed extensively to women dropping out of the labor force, there are several other factors that have proven to be a deterrent to enhancing female labor force participation, particularly within the formal sector. Some of the key factors include (i) increased cost of hiring women due to the enforcement of the Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, (ii) vulnerability to mental and sexual harassment, (iii) limited female representation in senior management positions, and fewer role models, (iv) wide pay gaps and pay inequality, (v) inadequate flexible work arrangements, (vi) non-inclusive work environment and (vii) gender stereotyping, among others.

How do we address such challenges?

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed several challenges that affect women in their lives in and out of their homes. While most of these issues stem from structural gaps in policy and implementation in the country, progressive individual and institutional actions within their limited scope could help foster a more equitable ecosystem. A gender-sensitive approach can assist with a sustainable economic recovery, building resilience in the workforce. Tying this up with workplaces, a focus for this primer, we strongly believe that existing DEI practices need to be strengthened. However, even beyond the scope of DEI, every key program warrants a thorough assessment from a gender-sensitive perspective to ensure maximum benefits for all its beneficiaries.

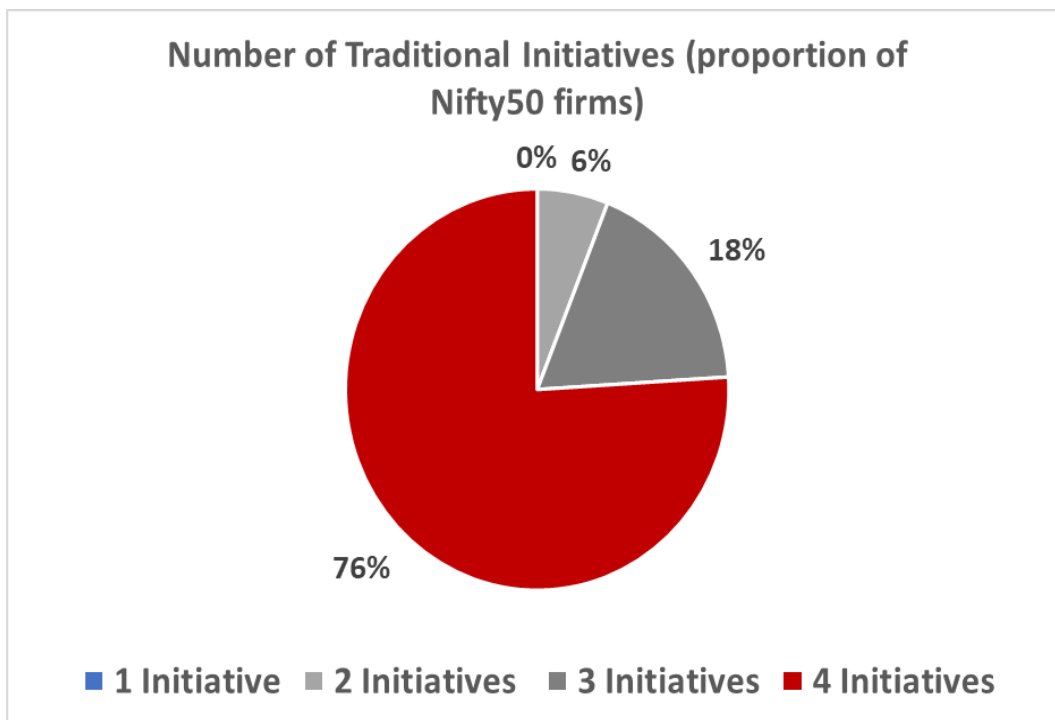
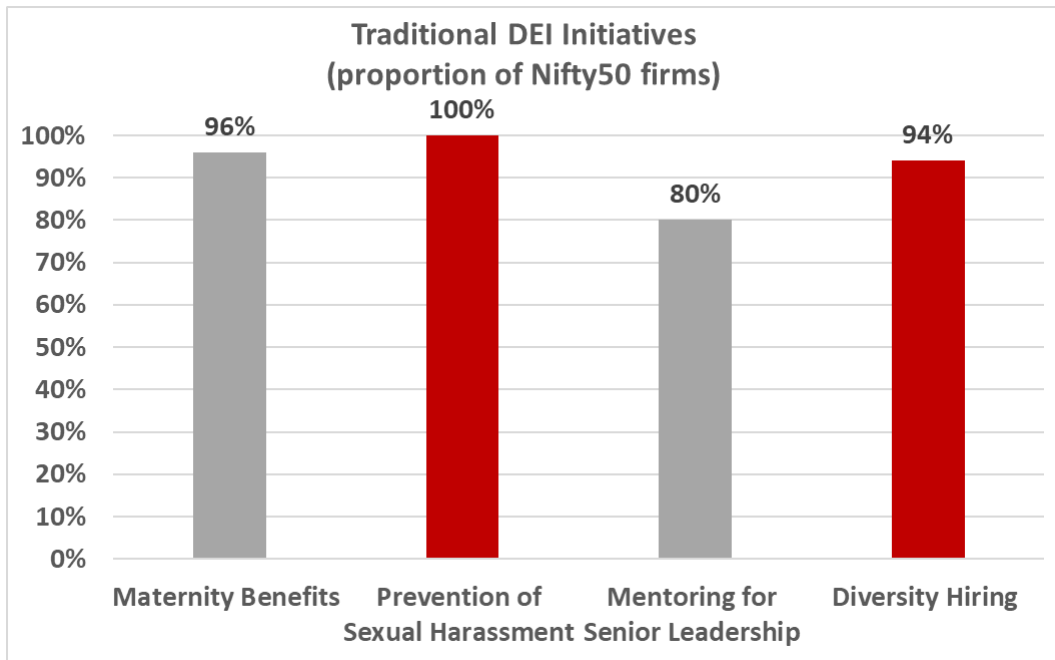
3.2 CASE STUDY OF NIFTY 50 COMPANIES AND THEIR DEI PRACTICES

Evidence from the trends mentioned in section 3.1 indicate that despite a consistent increase in the number of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives, gaps have persisted between intended and actual impact on employee satisfaction, productivity, retention, and growth of women employees.

Nikore Associates undertook an analysis of over 500 DEI initiatives implemented by Nifty 50 companies in the last two years of the pandemic as a case study in order to deep dive into these gaps.

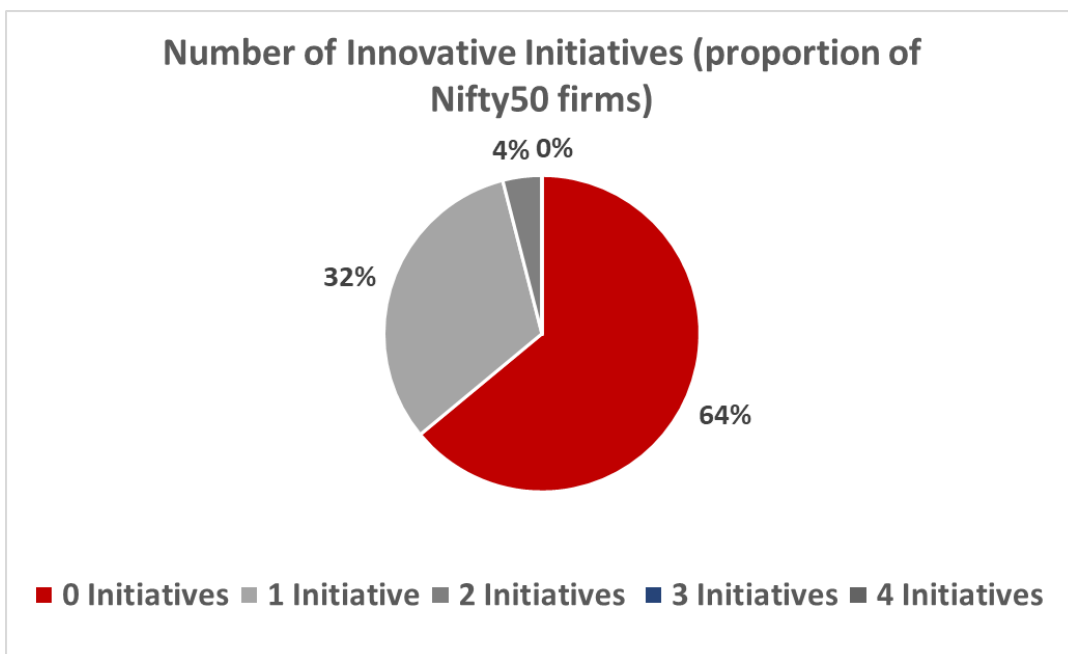
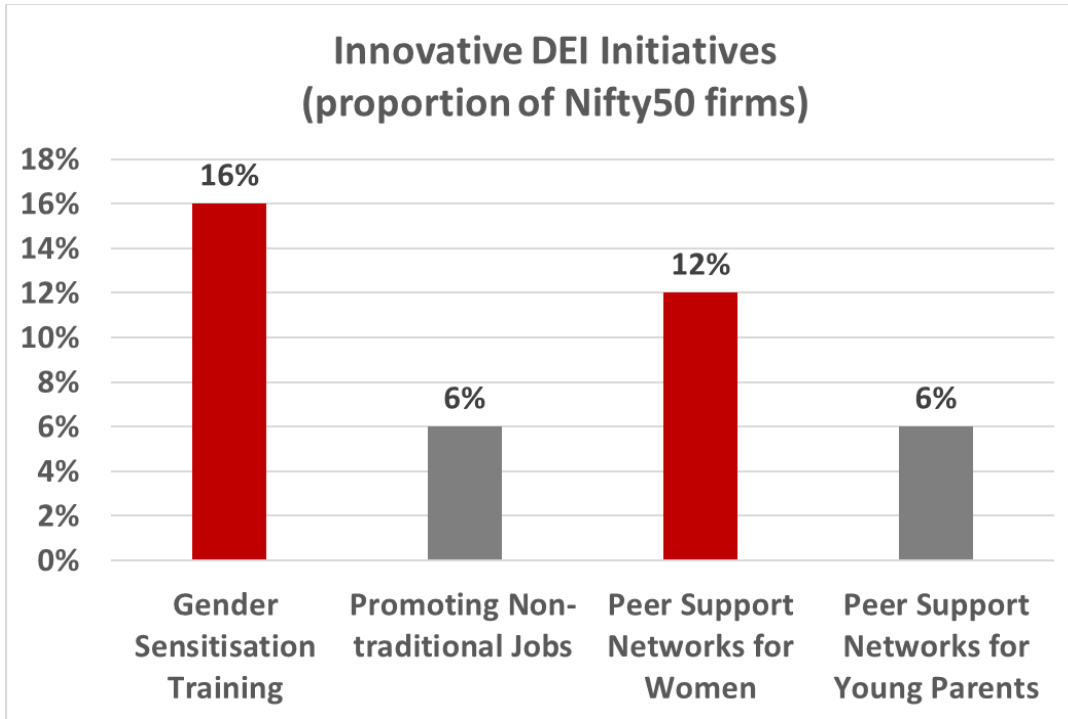
Traditional initiatives:

Our analysis has shown that DEI initiatives are largely clustered into 4 major categories – maternity benefits (offered by 96% of organizations), prevention of sexual harassment (100%), mentoring for senior leadership (80%), and diversity hiring policies (94%) with 76% of Nifty 50 companies implementing all four of these “traditional” DEI initiatives. It is also observed that a large proportion of these actions ensure statutory compliance, such as the six-month maternity leave (Maternity Benefits Act, 2017) and setting up the internal complaints committees (Prevention of Sexual Harassment Act, 2013).



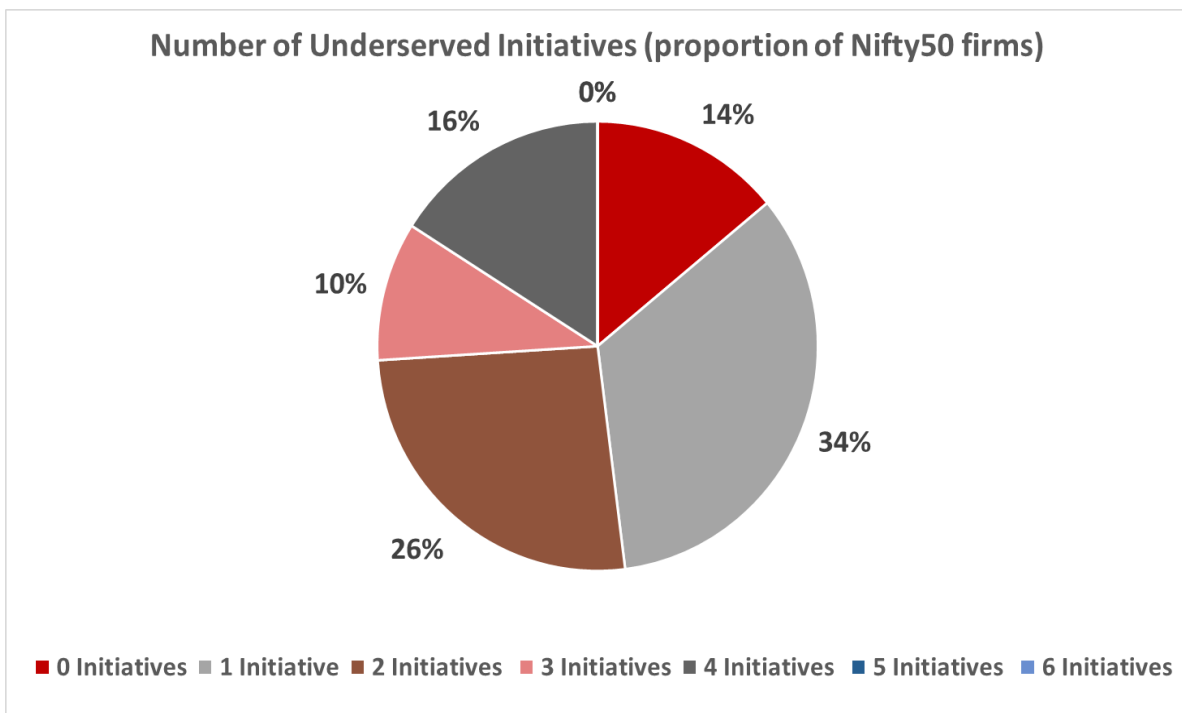
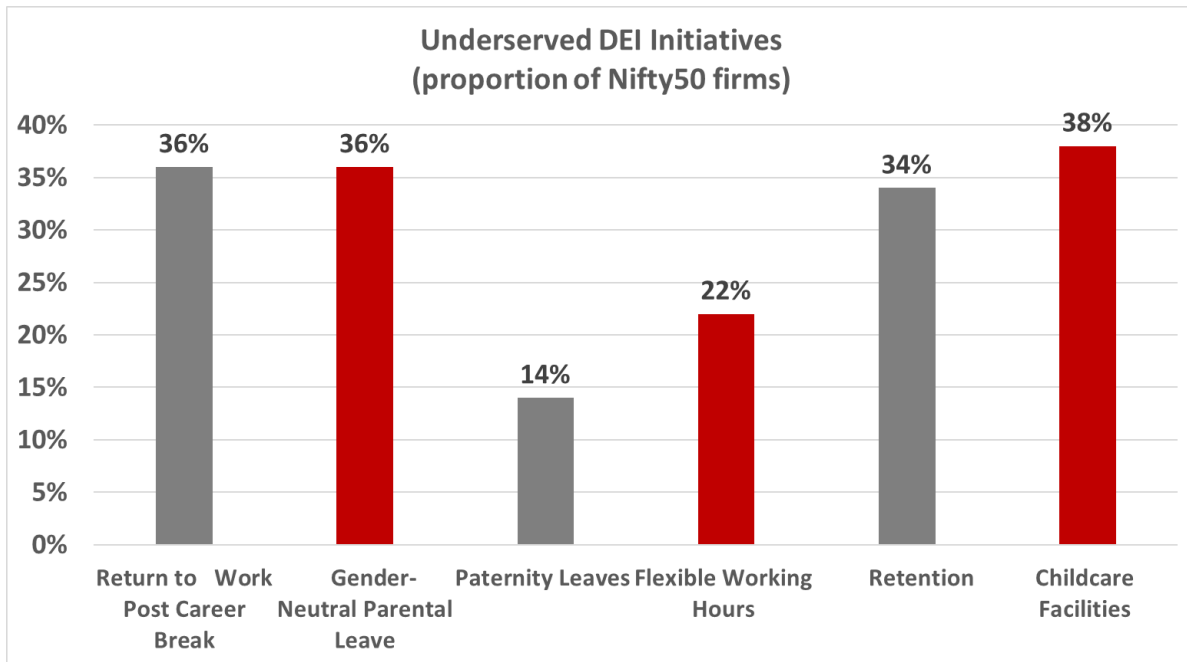
Innovative initiatives

Encouragingly, there are some early traces of innovation in DEI initiatives such as gender sensitisation training to address cultural, social, and unconscious biases (16%); efforts for women to undertake non-traditional job roles (6%); and peer support networks for women employees (12%) and young parents (6%). However, these are only offered by a small subsection of companies.



Underserved initiatives

Our analysis also looked into other DEI practices which are inadequately implemented by Nifty50 companies. While there has been an increase in programs encouraging women to return to work post-career breaks (36%), offering childcare facilities (38%) and gender-neutral parental leaves (36%), very few companies offer paternity leaves (14%), and flexible work hours for care-work (22%).



While there is evidence that Indian firms are implementing several DEI programs, there is significant potential to scale these practices across different verticals in a firm and to other similar organizations (More examples of such practices are included in Annexure 1).

4. NEED FOR A GENDER PRIMER

Women’s representation and satisfaction within the workplace can lead to improved productivity and a reduction in attrition. This can be highlighted by looking at a firm's journey towards inclusion and diversity, and tracking the effects the change/ introduction of policies has had on the financial and non-financial aspects of the company, such as Returns on Investment made, level of satisfaction among employees, general welfare, increase in participation of target groups, reduction in pay gaps, and whether industry benchmarks have been achieved.

The International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) emphasizes the benefits of greater gender inclusivity to businesses: More financial and market returns as a result of diverse leadership, enhanced team performance and motivation (team members are more likely to feel motivated when they see greater representation of people from different backgrounds, sharing different perspectives), and lower corporate risks.

With this in mind, Nikore Associates has built this **simple, short, and practical guide that will allow leaders across organizations to self-assess their firm in terms of gender inclusivity, devise programs that benefit all persons equally, and help achieve better gender representation and impact.** Such frameworks are not new – they exist in academia, business, as well as within multilateral organizations. However, there is a considerable gap, especially in India, when it comes to the on-ground implementation of such frameworks. Today, most frameworks either assist in analyzing policies that already exist, are too theoretical or abstract in nature, or are too extensive to be put to practical use – all of which have been tried to be remedied through this Gender Primer. Keeping in line with the trend in corporate firms of focusing on analytics, the primer suggests taking a lifecycle approach- from benchmarking your performance across key metrics of gender equity to actually implementing conducive policies, from hiring to retention, and professional development.

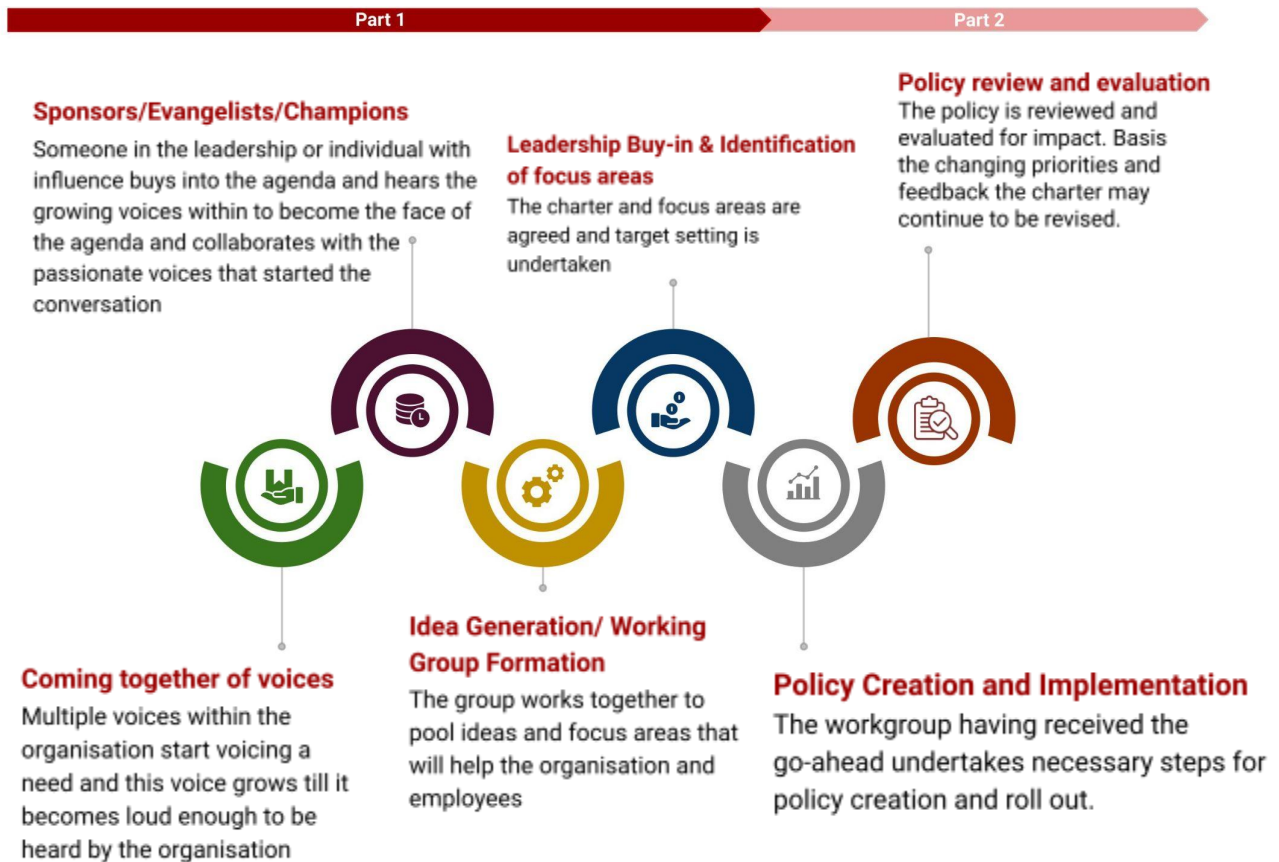
5. SETTING AN AGENDA FOR GENDER INCLUSIVITY

The gender inclusivity of a firm cannot be understood through a set of quantitative data points alone. It requires an in-depth qualitative analysis of the effect of policies on the target groups as well as other stakeholders linked to it, which is why before solving a problem, it is necessary to acknowledge that there is one. This requires discussions and dialogue on open forums in the likes of regular webinars with stakeholders across levels, leading to a consolidating of information and opinions, which we refer to as a ‘Coming together of voices.’

Once this collective has been formed, representatives from these forums can collaborate to form a smaller working group that will work on ideas that can be pitched to leadership or the key decision-makers. Firm-wide calls are often taken by these decision-makers and it is crucial for them to buy into these ideas. Developing a rationale is required for developing policies to improve gender inclusivity- “What are your core motivations as a

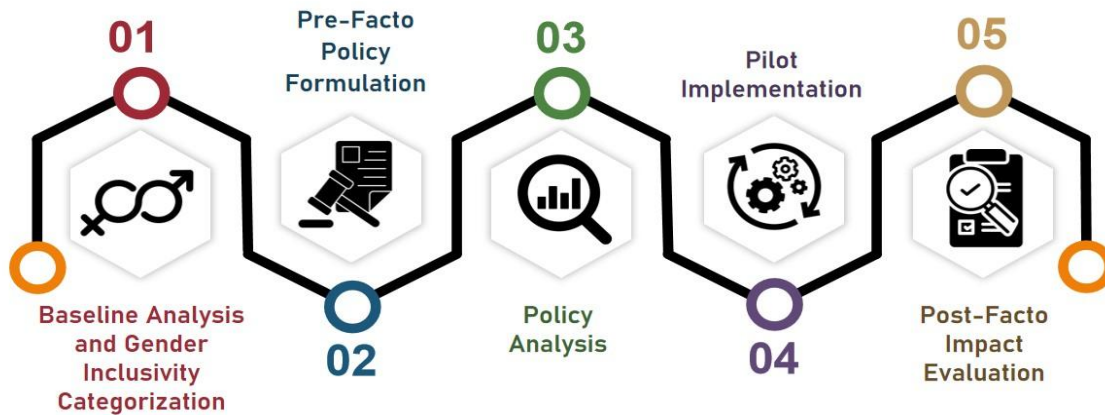
firm to have more gender-inclusive policies?” We believe this rationale is extremely contextual, and will differ by firm, and even by verticals within a firm.

Moving on, once the context has been set, the rationale aligned on, and enough traction garnered, policies can then be created and subsequently tested and analyzed, piloted, assessed, and finally implemented firm-wide. In the next section, we focus on the further nuanced phases in Part 2 and how you could use the guidelines to not only benchmark your firm across gender inclusivity standards and identify some priorities but also to crystallize your key parameters that you will hold your policy accountable to. Further, how the policy finally turns out will depend on iterations and modifications based on your initial analysis as well as feedback post-pilot Implementation.



6. A FIVE-STAGE GENDER INCLUSIVITY ACTION FRAMEWORK

The primer is divided into 5 stages, Baseline Gender Inclusivity Assessment and Benchmarking, Pre-facto Policy Formulation, Policy Analysis, Pilot Implementation, and Post-Facto Evaluation¹. Implementation varies greatly across different practices and there are several other resources that cater to it. We use a flowchart, as given above, to toggle through the key stages and the different buckets under each. Further, each bucket includes questions that are necessary to be asked throughout the process.



The primer also allows some flexibility to think across stages, making it slightly non-linear. This is because thorough policy research is dynamic and should be allowed to be molded to fit priorities and asks better.

Stage 1: Baseline Gender Inclusivity Assessment and Benchmarking

The goal in the first step is to self-assess where your firm lies in terms of gender inclusivity (Basic, Intermediate, or Advanced), what are the areas that you are performing well in, and what other areas could you improve? For better understanding, remarks have been added to the questions along with reasons over why asking them matters. By following this step, you can identify the target areas that you would like to work upon.

Stage 2: Pre-Facto Policy Formulation

Once the target areas have been identified, it is necessary to outline who the targeted beneficiaries are going to be when a new policy is implemented, and what would be the scope of the policy. This is done via the collection of qualitative and quantitative data such as topline revenues and metrics around employee satisfaction & retention; finalizing on what are the desired outcomes, and choosing indicators to assess the effectiveness of the policy.

Stage 3: Policy Analysis

The next stage involves planning, developing, and selecting policies that could be implemented to achieve the desired outcomes. This involves exploring and developing various policies, and undertaking a cost-benefit analysis to best decide a policy that allows for a healthy and sustainable structure, and results in the best possible outcomes.

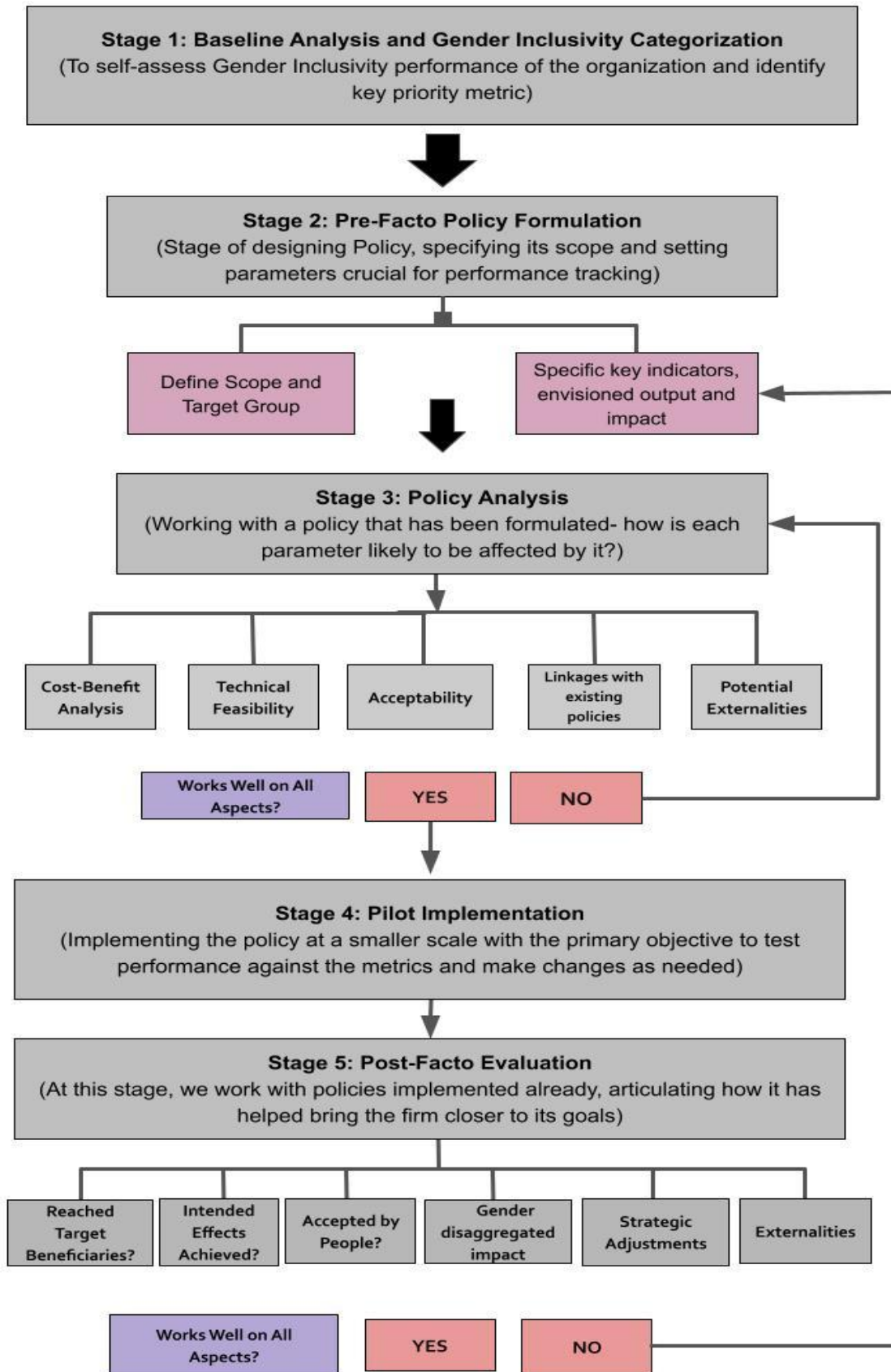
Stage 4: Pilot Implementation

Before a policy is put into actual implementation, a pilot is carried out over a smaller sample (could be a small number of people, locations, offices, or demographical groups instead of all target points). This provides an opportunity to generate evidence to inform policy formulation. As in the next stage of impact evaluation, questions are asked to assess how the pilot fared can help verify, or correct, assumptions made in the policy formulation.

In the Primer, at least for this initial version, we are not elaborating on this stage, as this would mainly require action at the end of the decision-maker. However, as we collaborate and retrieve more insights on this stage, we will be documenting key processes that broadly occur at this stage that can further help carry out better-structured pilots.

Stage 5: Post-Facto Policy impact Evaluation

Once the policy has been implemented it is highly important to compare expected results and actual results and ascertain if it has reached the targeted beneficiaries, has been accepted by people in the organization, and has not led to strategic adjustments or negative externalities. This stage could also be referred to, to assess the performance of existing policies and programs.



Having briefly summarized the role of the primer and the 5 stage gender inclusivity action framework to help with your policy approach, we now flow through stages of baseline company categorization, pre-facto formulation, analysis, pilot implementation, and then evaluating its post-facto impact. In case the policy is performing well enough on all metrics defined, the primer lets you assess how well it is performing, in case it does not, as mentioned enough, the primer calls for changes and modifications that could suit your priority goal a little better.

Stages in further detail:

a. Stage 1: Baseline gender inclusivity assessment and benchmarking

Prior to formulating policies and programs within the company, it is useful to undertake a self-assessment to locate where the firm is in terms of gender inclusivity. Company size and type-wise categorization is further mentioned below in order to have a ready reference for industry standards. While your firm could fall under the 'Advanced' category for several of the questions, it could also fall under the 'Basic' and 'Intermediate' categories for others. Therefore, while analyzing results, it is necessary to look at the overall results, along with identifying the regions for improvement and impact you wish to commit to.

Key metrics	Basic	Intermediate	Advanced	Additional notes
Gender Representation				
% Women in the organization	<30%	30%-50%	50% and above	
Women in leadership positions (as a % of all senior positions)	<20%	20%-40%	40% and above	
Women in frontline/customer-facing roles (as a % of all frontline/customer-facing roles)	<30%	30%-50%	50% and above	
Women in technical/specialized functions (as a % of all technical/specialized positions)	<20%	20%-40%	40% and above	
Women as people managers	<30%	30%-50%	50% and above	
Statutory				
ICC & POSH implemented in the organization (mandatory)	Yes	Yes	Yes	This is the minimum for an organization to implement
ICC & POSH are inclusive of both genders (voluntary)	No	Yes	Yes	
ICC includes members from external bodies (mandatory)	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Annual POSH training and awareness programs (mandatory)	Yes	Yes	Yes, at regular intervals	
POSH related research carried out at regular intervals to gauge impact (voluntary)	No	Yes	Yes	

Women's rights organizations/trade unions/ experts are a part of designing this study/ contracted with for consultations	No	Yes	Yes	
Maternity Linked				
Maternity Allowance (mandatory)	Yes	Yes	Yes	
26 weeks Maternity Leave (mandatory)	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Miscarriage provisioned for in policy (mandatory)	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Abortion provisioned for in policy (mandatory)	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Capped for number of children	Yes	No	No	
Adoption provisioned for in policy (mandatory)	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Adoption provisioned without capping of age	No	Yes	Yes	
Nursing breaks provisioned for in policy (mandatory)	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Lactation rooms (voluntary benefit)	No	Yes	Yes	
Paternity Leave (voluntary)	No	Yes	Yes	Duration of such leaves could be a key differentiator here
Childcare leave (voluntary benefit)	No	No	Yes	
Parental Leave instead of a said Maternal leave or Paternity Leave (gender-neutral)	No	No	Yes	
Men availing paternity benefits (other than/beyond statutory requirements)	No	Yes	Yes	
Women availing maternity benefits (other than/beyond statutory requirements)	No	Yes	Yes	
Continuing in the workforce post parental for a period of 2 years	<30%	30-50%	50% or more	
Flexi-work options for mothers returning to work	No	No	Yes	
Creche provisions (mandatory)	No	Yes - but not to be paid for by the employer	Yes - and to be paid for by the employer	
Recruitment (for a sample timeframe of 5 years)				
% Women hired	<30%	30%-50%	50% and above	
% women at sourcing	<30%	30%-50%	50% and above	
% women at shortlist	<20%	20%-40%	40% and above	

% women in interviewing panel	<20%	20%-40%	40% and above	
The difference in average % hike offered to women V/s men	30% and above	30-10-%	<10%	
% of women offer rejection	40% and above	20%-40%	<20%	
% women referrals received (as part of all referrals)	<20%	20%-40%	40% and above	
% women referees (as part of overall HC)	<20%	20%-40%	40% and above	
% women relocating for the opportunity v/s men	<10%	30-10-%	30% and above	
% women receiving a referral bonus	<10%	30-10-%	30% and above	
Return to Work Programs	No	No	Yes	
Workplace environment/ benefits				
Average leaves taken by men	0-15 days/year	15-20 days/year	20+ days/year	
Average leaves taken by women	0-15 days/year	15-20 days/year	20+ days/year	
Average tenure with the organization (men)	<2 years	2-5 Years	>5 years	
Average tenure with the organization (women)	<2 years	2-5 years	>5 years	
Time taken to resolve disciplinary cases initiated by men*	More than a year	6-12 months	Less than 6 months	
Time taken to resolve disciplinary cases initiated by women*	More than a year	6-12 months	Less than 6 months	
% of men exiting the workforce post raising a disciplinary case (% of total number of men who raised a case)*	60-100%	20-60%	<20%	
% of women exiting the workforce post raising a disciplinary case (% of total number of women who raised a case)*	60-100%	20-60%	<20%	
Time to promotion for a man raising a disciplinary case*	More than 3-4 years	2.5-3 years	2-2.25 years	
Time to promotion for a woman raising a disciplinary case*	More than 3-4 years	2.5-3 years	2-2.5 years	
% of women availing benefit vis-a-vis men (eg, sabbatical, entrepreneurship, etc)	<10%	10-20%	>20%	
Medical Insurance covering women-focused treatments, etc	No	Yes	Yes	
Employee led groups	No	Yes	Yes	
Leadership endorsement & sponsorship to diversity-focused initiatives	No	Yes	Yes	

Gender-based Training Programs-unconscious bias, etc	No	No	Yes	
Career/Talent management				
Average time for promotion of women at senior levels (vis-a-vis a male at the same level)	>10% lower than male colleagues	Less than 10% lower than the male colleague	Equal to the male colleague	
% of Cross-functional moves for women	<10%	10-20%	>20%	
Women in HIPO talent segmentation (as a percentage of all female employees)	<30%	30-50%	50% or more	
Women in HIPO talent segmentation (as a percentage of total employees)	<30%	30-50%	50% or more	
Women identified as successors for leadership positions (as part of all successors)	<10%	10-20%	>20%	
Company-wide Leadership Programmes	No	Yes	Yes	
Leadership Programs focused towards women in particular	No	Yes	Yes	
Company assigned Mentor/Coach for women talent	No	Yes	Yes	
Difference in ratings/distribution of performance evaluation	>20%	10-20%	<10%	
A clear policy on treatment of performance for women availing maternity leave	No	Yes	Yes	
Capability Building				
Men average learning hours per week	<1 hour	1-5 hours	5-7 hours	
Women average learning hours per week	<1 hour	1-5 hours	5-7 hours	
% of women leveraging sponsorship/certification programs	<10%	10-20%	>20%	
Average learning completion % for women	<20%	20-50%	>50%	
% of external representations by women	<10%	10-20%	>20%	
Infrastructure				
Toilets per male employee (if unisex toilets is not the norm)	<5 per 100	5 per 100	>5 per 100	
Toilets per female employee (if unisex toilets is not the norm)	<5 per 100	5 per 100	>5 per 100	
Differentiated Travel provisions for women	No	For mid-managerial to senior level	Chauffeur/ Escort or other additional provisions across hierarchies	

Disabled women in the workforce (as a percentage of the total PwD workforce)	<30%	30-50%	50% or more	
Exit				
Early exits (men) (<1 year of joining)	30-40% of total men in the workforce	20-30% of total men in the workforce	<10% Feedback tracked for all exits	
Early exits (women) (<1 year of joining)	30-40% of total women in the workforce	20-30% of total women in the workforce	<10% Feedback tracked for all exits	
Exits in the last 1 year (ratio of women to total exits)	>30%	20-30%	<10% Feedback tracked for all exits	
% of women identified as regrettable exits	<10%	10-20%	>20%	
% of men identified as regrettable exits	<20%	20%-40%	40% and above	
% of women sharing reasons other than personal for exit	<10%	10-20%	>20%	
Difference in the average time taken to process FnF (men v/s women)	30% and above	30-10-%	<10%	
Compensation				
Difference in compensation for each role-level	30% and above	30-10-%	<10%	An organization may choose the metric basis of their compensation philosophy
% of women above average salary (compare to all employees above-average salary)	<10%	10-20%	>20%	
Difference in average % increment on Y-o-Y basis between men & women	>20%	10-20%	<10%	
Standard grids on compensation increase/promotion etc	No	Yes	Yes	
% retention plans for women (part of overall)	<10%	10-20%	>20%	

Rows marked with an *asterisk* are based on general best tactics as analyzed from the present body of research on their respective topics

Here, in the first stage, the focus is on benchmarking the extent of control over resources, inclusion in

decision-making, agency to use resources, and how the existing policies have aided the personal growth and professional trajectory of each gender in the organization. As mentioned earlier, we plan to fortify these ranges with primary research through surveys and discussions with industry veterans in the subsequent versions of the primer. The purpose of this exercise is to assess where you stand in terms of gender inclusivity. Which are the areas that you are basic, intermediate, and advanced, and what should be the strategic priorities for your firm to move from basic to intermediate and intermediate to advanced?

Another point that can help steer the analysis better is acknowledging the difference in the type of seniority levels in the organization- (entry-level, mid-level, senior), as well as the different functions (HR, Administrative, IT, Management). In an ideal situation, gender equality would be recommended across each level of seniority and function; however, this is a matter that is also contingent on the requirement in the firm at that level of time and place. A chart like the one below that documents the current share of women employees (in %) engaged across these different levels and functions would also be helpful to root the analysis in the present realities of the firm. This again would include functions relevant to the firm, including finance and accounting, allied services, etc.

Seniority levels across different job roles and functions	Sales	Client Servicing	HR	Operations	IT	Advisory	Product
Board level							
Company Leadership							
Senior Management							
Mid-Management							
Entry-level							

Next, once these priorities have been outlined, Stage 2 of the framework offers assistance with a clearer list of key parameters.

b. Stage 2: Pre-Facto Policy Formulation

At this stage, we set a fundamental outline for the contours of the key policy parameters. For a well-informed policy, **emphasis on gender-disaggregated data is placed right at the outset**. The gendered break-up of the target group could further help sharpen focus on certain areas that could be missed out in a usual target group identification approach.

At an industry level, research points towards benefits (in terms of topline revenues, employee satisfaction, retention, etc.) of diversity in the long term, but as a decision-maker, **why do you want to improve representation and inclusivity at your firm? And what do you aim to achieve by it?**

Some key questions to be answered at this stage are listed below:

Sub-Section/ Bucket	Questions	Remarks
Identification of Key Parameters	What is the scope of this policy?	This would involve considering the geographical Scope of the policy and what is the overall plan of action
	What group of people does it apply to ?	The target group of beneficiaries
Defining Purpose	What is the intended effect of the intervention within the set scope?	Plan out and state the intended impact
	What are the priority metrics for measuring outcomes, as identified from the Baseline Analysis?	These could be health, productivity, employability, agency, etc. Monitoring and evaluation systems might have to be incorporated to track and document progress at a later stage as we discuss.
Looking inward and considering other factors	Who is involved in the policy formulation and implementation? Are all perspectives being taken into account? Who controls the key decision-making with regard to this policy?	While the previous questions are more external, this one aims to look inward and address biases that might drive the program a certain way. For all purposes, a more diverse decision-making team that drives the conversation is encouraged.
	Who are the other stakeholders in the implementation of this intervention?	"other stakeholders" in this case, are defined as anyone who faces some cost or benefits through this intervention even if they are not necessarily the direct target group

Once key parameters are identified along with the overall purpose of the policy, it is also necessary to be cognizant of the internal decision-making that is going on behind this policy. To ensure gender equality as one, if the only outcome, we note here that a diverse perspective on the internal processes of the policy could be beneficial in also shaping the other parameters more equitably.

This stage should help with the policy formulation while the next will help decide the key performance indicators that you would want to hold your policy accountable for.

c. Stage 3: Policy Analysis

Once a program is devised, it should be tested against some questions around Expected Costs, Benefits, Externalities, and Linkages to get a better idea about the feasibility, linkages, and externality.

First and foremost, for an economic cost and benefit analysis, which we believe is extremely crucial for a firm, to be able to invest resources into this process, we suggest following the below sources. Firms will most likely also have systems of their own through which they would carry out such an exercise.

We have, in this stage, as the first bucket, considered the softer, non-monetary aspects of costs and benefits that will be important to consider.

Sub-Section/ Bucket	Question	Remarks
Implicit Costs (In addition to an economic cost-benefit analysis)	What are the implicit costs of the policy?	These could be opportunity costs. Also important to bear in mind the implicit costs that might not always be quantifiable.
Feasibility of Design	Operational: Have infrastructural requirements been identified from a gender perspective?	For example, for a policy prescribing new vocational training centers, have separate washrooms for men and women been taken into consideration?
	Financial: Does the firm stand to benefit owing to the implementation of this policy? (Example- government subsidies conditional on the implementation)	For example, if the financing for a program for health improvement of sim card sales workers is contingent on the condition that women should form a minimum % of the salesforce- this could be highlighted as an important consideration.
	Gender budgeting: Is there a Gender budgeting mechanism in place? Have financial allocations met gender budgeting requirements?	Gender Budgeting exercise to be undertaken ¹ and financial allocation to be accounted for, under it
Acceptability	Have opinion polls been conducted on policy implementation and design with equitable representation of genders?	A good practice to assess the current scenario and get a ground-up view
	What % of the group polled are likely to adapt to the given policy?	This could potentially also help understand the perspectives of different stakeholders
	Strategic Adjustment- Any expected Chances of Strategic Adjustment?	Is there a scope for loopholes in the policy? (If yes, what are those loopholes? Can they be addressed?)
	How does the policy withstand strategic adjustments?	A good policy will have safeguards against loopholes
Linkages to existing policies	Does the new policy intervention have linkages (or conflicts) with other existing policies? How does this interaction impact the implementation and effect of this	Conflicting policies can expose faults in the system and in case there are policies that contradict each other even across timelines, it is a good practice to review and revise.

¹UNFPA- Gender Budgeting in Practice https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/gender_manual_eng.pdf

	intervention?	
Potential Externality	Does the policy lead to any externality?	An externality is a cost or benefit that is imposed on a third party who did not agree to incur that cost or benefit A good practice in such cases is to assess potential externalities and acknowledge them, and if possible, safeguard against them by taking additional measures.

This stage helps assess the suitability and efficacy of the policy at targeting the issues identified. A good policy would be able to fare well at this stage, albeit post some modifications that might be needed. The Remarks in this table are provided as possible suggestions and ways to work around the complexities that might arise while assessing the policy.

A good policy, as we see in this stage, should be beneficial, both in monetary and non-monetary terms, feasible, acceptable, and any externalities and linkages should be acknowledged.

The next stage entails a small pilot, after which another analysis – post-facto, will provide the final takeaway on how the policy has fared in terms of gender inclusivity improvement.

d. Stage 4: Pilot Implementation

The pilot of the policy, as explained earlier, is to be carried out along with process and impact documentation over the due course of the pilot. Proper monitoring mechanisms need to be put in place in order to determine and assess performance against key indicators as decided in stage 2.

Moving on, the performance can then be evaluated in the next stage. Which should provide a clearer picture of whether or not the policy has helped improve gender inclusivity.

e. Stage 5: Post Facto/ implementation/ Rollout Evaluation

This stage deals with questions that have to be asked once the pilot implementation has been carried out and the processes have been documented and key parameters have been monitored.

As mentioned earlier, for programs or policies that are already in place, this could be treated as the starting point as well.

Sub-Section/ Bucket	Question
Impact	Has the intended impact been achieved? How has it affected women involved?
	Improvement observed in the priority metric.
Beneficiaries	What percentage of the target beneficiaries has the policy affected?
	Do the target beneficiaries have control over the resource given?

Acceptability	Strategic Adjustment (Strategic Adjustment involves a conscious behavioral adjustment to bypass the policy) Have any stakeholders tried to subvert the policy for their gains? Are these gains coming at a cost to the target beneficiaries and women?
	Have women accepted the policy? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Outcome - Surveys (has this come up in an internal survey) - Has this been cited in any exit interviews/ employee engagement program
	Has a formal challenge against the rolling out of the policy been reported?

This stage should finally demonstrate both quantitatively and qualitatively how your policy has affected gender inclusivity in your firm. The next steps would then involve either proceeding with a full-scale implementation or remodeling the policy, taking it through the initial stages again, and checking where modifications can be helpful. This is all while acknowledging that all systems and data are in place. If not already, now would be a good time to recheck requirements as well.

In the next section, to illustrate one way in which the 5 stages actions framework might add value to a decision-maker at a firm, we take a hypothetical example.

7. ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE ON HOW TO USE THE PRIMER

Step 1: Baseline assessment and benchmarking of gender inclusivity

Firm type: Private sector (Name - say, Waterloo Horsepower)

Revenue: 50 -100 Cr INR

We consider the hypothetical case of Waterloo Horsepower, an imaginary firm with an annual revenue of around INR 50-100 Cr. A senior officer at Waterloo Horsepower, in order to improve Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) practices at the firm, wants to first- identify a key issue, and then take a targeted approach to resolve it. They refer to the Primer as an entry point into the potential pathways they can take in this regard.

The primer, in this case, adds value in terms of helping them self-assess where they stand today in terms of Gender Inclusivity, what metrics can be first prioritized and what key questions should be asked of the policy that is created to ensure substantial impact.

Priority metric: Increasing number of Women in the firm in leadership positions

Probable Responses are highlighted in Green below

Key metrics	Basic	Intermediate	Advanced	Additional notes
Gender Representation				
% Women in the organization	<30%	30%-50%	50% and above	
Women in leadership positions (as a % of all senior positions)	<20%	20%-40%	40% and above	
Women in frontline/customer-facing roles (as a % of all frontline/customer-facing roles)	<30%	30%-50%	50% and above	
Women in technical/specialized functions (as a % of all technical/specialized positions)	<20%	20%-40%	40% and above	
Women as people managers	<30%	30%-50%	50% and above	
Statutory				
ICC & POSH implemented in the organization (mandatory)	Yes	Yes	Yes	This is the minimum for an organization to implement
ICC & POSH are inclusive of both genders (voluntary)	No	Yes	Yes	
ICC includes members from external bodies (mandatory)	Yes	Yes	Yes	

Annual POSH training and awareness programs (mandatory)	Yes	Yes	Yes, at regular intervals	
POSH related research carried out at regular intervals to gauge impact (voluntary)	No	Yes	Yes	
Women's rights organizations/trade unions/ experts are a part of designing this study/ contracted with for consultations	No	Yes	Yes	
Maternity Linked				
Maternity Allowance (mandatory)	Yes	Yes	Yes	
26 weeks Maternity Leave (mandatory)	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Miscarriage provisioned for in policy (mandatory)	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Abortion provisioned for in policy (mandatory)	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Capped for number of children	Yes	No	No	
Adoption provisioned for in policy (mandatory)	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Adoption provisioned without capping of age	No	Yes	Yes	
Nursing breaks provisioned for in policy (mandatory)	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Lactation rooms (voluntary benefit)	No	Yes	Yes	
Paternity Leave (voluntary)	No	Yes	Yes	Duration of such leaves could be a key differentiator here
Childcare leave (voluntary benefit)	No	No	Yes	
Parental Leave instead of a said Maternal leave or Paternity Leave (gender-neutral)	No	No	Yes	
Men availing paternity benefits (other than/beyond statutory requirements)	No	Yes	Yes	
Women availing maternity benefits (other than/beyond statutory requirements)	No	Yes	Yes	
Continuing in the workforce post parental for a period of 2 years	<30%	30-50%	50% or more	
Flexi-work options for mothers returning to work	No	No	Yes	
Creche provisions (mandatory)	No	Yes - but not to be paid for by the employer	Yes - and to be paid for by the employer	
Recruitment				

% Women hired	<30%	30%-50%	50% and above	
% women at sourcing	<30%	30%-50%	50% and above	
% women at shortlist	<20%	20%-40%	40% and above	
% women in interviewing panel	<20%	20%-40%	40% and above	
Difference in average % hike offered to women V/s men	30% and above	30-10-%	<10%	
% of women offer rejection	40% and above	20%-40%	<20%	
% women referrals received (as part of all referrals)	<20%	20%-40%	40% and above	
% women referees (as part of overall HC)	<20%	20%-40%	40% and above	
% women relocating for the opportunity v/s men	<10%	30-10-%	30% and above	
% women receiving referral bonus	<10%	30-10-%	30% and above	
Return to Work Programs	No	No	Yes	
Workplace environment/ benefits				
Average leaves taken by men	0-15 days/year	15-20 days/year	20+ days/year	
Average leaves taken by women	0-15 days/year	15-20 days/year	20+ days/year	
Average tenure with the organization (men)	<2 years	2-5 Years	>5 years	
Average tenure with the organization (women)	<2 years	2-5 years	>5 years	
Time taken to resolve disciplinary cases initiated by men*	More than a year	6-12 months	Less than 6 months	
Time taken to resolve disciplinary cases initiated by women*	More than a year	6-12 months	Less than 6 months	
% of men exiting the workforce post raising a disciplinary case (% of the total number of men who raised a case)*	60-100%	20-60%	<20%	
% of women exiting the workforce post raising a disciplinary case (% of the total number of women who raised a case)*	60-100%	20-60%	<20%	
Time to promotion for a man raising a disciplinary case*	More than 3-4 years	2.5-3 years	2-2.25 years	
Time to promotion for a woman raising a disciplinary case*	More than 3-4 years	2.5-3 years	2-2.5 years	

% of women availing benefit vis-a-vis men (eg, sabbatical, entrepreneurship, etc)	<10%	10-20%	>20%	
Medical Insurance covering Women-focused treatments, etc	No	Yes	Yes	
Employee led groups	No	Yes	Yes	
Leadership endorsement & sponsorship to diversity-focused initiatives	No	Yes	Yes	
Gender-based Training Programs-unconscious bias, etc	No	No	Yes	
Career/Talent management				
Average time for promotion of women at senior levels (vis-a-vis a male at the same level)	>10% lower than male colleagues	Less than 10% lower than the male colleagues	Equal to the male colleagues	
% of Cross-functional moves for women	<10%	10-20%	>20%	
Women in HIPO talent segmentation (as a percentage of all female employees)	<30%	30-50%	50% or more	
Women in HIPO talent segmentation (as a percentage of total employees)	<30%	30-50%	50% or more	
Women identified as successors for leadership positions (as part of all successors)	<10%	10-20%	>20%	
Company-wide Leadership Programmes	No	Yes	Yes	
Leadership Programs focused towards women in particular	No	Yes	Yes	
Company assigned Mentor/Coach for women talent	No	Yes	Yes	
Difference in ratings/distribution of performance evaluation	>20%	10-20%	<10%	
A clear policy on the treatment of performance for women availing maternity leave	No	Yes	Yes	
Capability Building				
Men average learning hours per week	<1 hour	1-5 hours	5-7 hours	
Women average learning hours per week	<1 hour	1-5 hours	5-7 hours	
% of women leveraging sponsorship/certification programs	<10%	10-20%	>20%	
Average learning completion % for women	<20%	20-50%	>50%	
% of external representations by women	<10%	10-20%	>20%	
Infrastructure				

Toilets per male employee (if unisex toilets is not the norm)	<5 per 100	5 per 100	>5 per 100	
Toilets per female employee (if unisex toilets is not the norm)	<5 per 100	5 per 100	>5 per 100	
Differentiated Travel provisions for women	No	For mid-managerial to senior level	Chauffeur/ Escort or other additional provisions across hierarchies	
Disabled women in the workforce (as a percentage of the total PwD workforce)	<30%	30-50%	50% or more	
Exit				
Early exits (men) (<1 year of joining)	30-40% of total men in the workforce	20-30% of total men in the workforce	<10% Feedback tracked for all exits	
Early exits (women) (<1 year of joining)	30-40% of total women in the workforce	20-30% of total women in the workforce	<10% Feedback tracked for all exits	
Exits in the last 1 year (ratio of women to total exits)	>30%	20-30%	<10% Feedback tracked for all exits	
% of women identified as regrettable exits	<10%	10-20%	>20%	
% of men identified as regrettable exits	<20%	20%-40%	40% and above	
% of women sharing reasons other than personal for exit	<10%	10-20%	>20%	
Difference in average time taken to process FnF (men v/s women)	30% and above	30-10-%	<10%	
Compensation				
Difference in compensation for each role-level	30% and above	30-10-%	<10%	An organization may choose the metric basis of their compensation philosophy
% of women above average salary (compare to all employees above average salary)	<10%	10-20%	>20%	

Difference in average % increment on Y-o-Y basis between men & women	>20%	10-20%	<10%	
Standard grids on compensation increase/ promotion etc	No	Yes	Yes	
% retention plans for women (part of overall)	<10%	10-20%	>20%	

As we see here, while WH has several fields where it performs well, it has many other fields in which performance could be improved. One of the strategic priorities the decision-maker wants to focus on is increasing the representation of women in its leadership.

WH will now aim at creating programs that support women throughout their career span at WH- whether it is greater hiring, better support through training, leaves, coaching, reducing attrition, etc. Once again, this will also have to be a call taken by a team that must itself be diverse and has a key interest in focus.

Next, we see how WH’s policies could be shaped by asking questions at the formulation stage.

Step 2: Pre-Facto Policy Formulation

Sub-Section/ Bucket	Question	Probable Responses
Identification of Key Parameters	What is the scope of this policy?	Leadership Representation, Company Office
	What group of people does it apply to ?	Women in mid-managerial positions
Defining Purpose	What is the intended effect of the intervention within the set scope?	Increase in the number of women in leadership positions. (move from basic <30% to intermediate 30-50%)
	What are the priority metrics for measuring outcomes, as identified from the Baseline Analysis?	-Number of women in leadership positions across functions -Productivity
Looking Inward and considering other factors	Who is involved in the policy formulation and implementation? Are all perspectives being taken into account? Who controls the key decision-making with regard to this policy?	DEI Team in the Talent management function with 50% women. Short online surveys have been conducted with most staff members in mid-managerial members to factor in their opinions and concerns.
	Who are the other stakeholders in the implementation of this intervention?	All staff members across seniority levels and functions stand to be affected

As was the purpose for this stage, the key contours for the policy have been aligned. Purpose and desired outcome in terms of priority metrics have been defined. At the outset, again, inward reflection helps acknowledge biases while considering the overall impact that the policy stands to have besides its confines on the target group.

In this case, an improvement in gender representation in the leadership, along with a goal of productivity increase will benefit the firm at large.

Step 3: Policy Analysis

WH consequently carries out an Economic Cost-Benefit analysis internally and finds that economic benefits from its new policies stand to offset the investment made into it. To complement this finding, the questions listed below can help attain a clearer understanding of the key factors WH wants to hold the policy accountable to.

Sub-Section/ Bucket	Question	Probable Responses
Implicit Costs (In addition to an economic cost-benefit analysis)	What are the implicit costs and benefits of the policy?	Costs: Funds that would otherwise be used differently, have to be funneled into training and retention purposes Benefits: The number of women in leadership might lead to more inclusive decision-making Higher Revenue performance ²
	Operational: Have infrastructural requirements been identified from a gender perspective?	No explicit infrastructural requirements
Feasibility of Design	Financial: Does the firm stand to benefit owing to the implementation of this policy? (Example- government subsidies conditional on the implementation)	Yes. Better Diversity could lead to better performance and greater employee retention (thereby saving resources spent on repeated hiring). In this case, no government subsidies are linked
	Gender budgeting: Is there a Gender budgeting mechanism in place? Have financial allocations met gender budgeting requirements?	Not yet
	Have opinion polls been conducted on policy implementation and design with equitable representation of genders?	Yes, with current leadership and mid-management
	What % of the group polled are likely to adapt to the given policy?	78%
	Strategic Adjustment- Any expected Chances of Strategic Adjustment?	None identified

Acceptability

²A Boston Consulting Group study found that **companies** with more **diverse** management teams have 19% **higher revenues** due to innovation. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/04/business-case-for-diversity-in-the-workplace/#:~:text=A%20Boston%20Consulting%20Group%20study,is%20the%20key%20to%20growth.>

	How does the policy withstand strategic adjustments?	
Linkages to existing policies	Does the new policy intervention have linkages (or conflicts) with other existing policies? How does this interaction impact the implementation and effect of this intervention?	None identified
Potential Externality	Does the policy lead to any externality?	None identified

As the team conducts the analysis and how the policy performs against these key parameters- it becomes clearer that it makes sense to proceed with it to the next stage, which is the pilot. It is feasible, very likely to be accepted and abided by if implemented and representation at the initial stages has been ensured through polls and employee discussions.

Step 4: Pilot Implementation

Waterloo Horsepower conducts a pilot over a year and documents the process and outcomes observed. For example, it conducts leadership development training programs for women managers, tracks progress on a bi-monthly basis, introduces flexible working hours, and proactively promotes deserving female candidates to leadership positions.

This pilot is conducted in one vertical of the firm in a regional office with a small working population which helps ensure quality monitoring and tracking of the metrics identified in the previous stages.

These outcomes will be then assessed in the next stage.

Step 5: Post Facto Policy impact Evaluation

Inputs at this stage come post the pilot implementation, as decision-makers at WH take the call on whether this policy works, whether it needs to be modified and how, or a different approach might be needed.

Sub-Section/ Bucket	Question	Probable Responses
Impact	Has the intended impact been achieved? How has it affected women involved?	Number of women in leadership has increased to 40%
	Improvement observed in the priority metric	Productivity improvement, better retention of female employees
Beneficiaries	What percentage of the target beneficiaries has the policy impacted?	<i>Here, it would be the % of women in mid-managerial positions who have been able to be promoted to leadership positions or are in the pipeline</i>
	Do the target beneficiaries have control over the resource given?	Yes

Acceptability	Strategic Adjustment (Strategic Adjustment involves a conscious behavioral adjustment in order to bypass the policy) Has any stakeholder tried to subvert the policy for their own personal gains? Are these gains coming at a cost to the target beneficiaries and women?	No
	Have women accepted the policy? - Outcome - Surveys (has this come up in an internal survey) - Has this been cited in any exit interviews/ employee engagement program	Internal surveys show an increase in employee satisfaction
	Has a formal challenge against the rolling out of the policy been reported?	No

Waterloo Horsepower initially scoped out the problem of having fewer than the prescribed number of women in leadership. Through the Baseline Assessment, the company found itself in the “Basic” range in the criteria “number of women in leadership positions”, and in the “Intermediate” range for the criteria “ratio of women to men in the firm”. After identifying its relative position for other policies and practices as well, Waterloo Horsepower proceeded with formulating a policy to achieve its target of increasing women in leadership positions. This involved defining key beneficiaries, stakeholders, and priority metrics for the policy. Using the Primer, the organization conducted an analysis of the policy and chalked out its costs, benefits, feasibility, acceptability, and linkages. Once the policy was piloted, the company also used the Primer to conduct a Post-Facto Evaluation. The evaluation revealed an increase in productivity, with the number of women in leadership positions in the pilot office having increased to 40%.

This short example is meant to help users navigate through the primer and gauge potential value addition at each stage. Priorities will differ for each organization basis and potential responses will change accordingly, however, questions outlined in this primer could still be referred to in order to keep the process grounded in gender-disaggregated data, gender-sensitive practices, and implementation.

8. CONCLUSION AND LIMITATIONS

The gender primer attempts at aiding corporate decision-makers in conducting a self-assessment of their priorities and gauges how effective the program is, particularly from a gendered lens. It is now in the public domain and can be freely deployed by firms of all sizes in the private or public sector, including MSMEs, to conduct a self-guided gender diversity assessment and take action accordingly. Although we do not claim that this primer will be able to help resolve your key issues end to end, we do believe that it could be a potential entry point to get the discussion started around better DEI practices and outcomes.

It is also fair to mention that some gestures such as the period leave have intentionally been left out from this primer as it still stands controversial.³ Additionally, as research competency and expertise for Nikore Associates focuses on women, female employment, and the labor force, the primer does not cover Trans issues, issues of LGBTQ+ employment, or other facets of intersectionality in its first version.

Nikore Associates has, in the past, and at the current time, advocated for evidence-based decision-making in public policy. During the multiple research and review cycles carried out for this primer, we also noted the lack of authentic and reliable data around gender inclusivity in the workspace. We believe that in this case, better foundations for employee data management and transparent communication by firms can further accelerate impact in the DEI space.

Lastly, we also believe that although this primer along with its arguments, and frameworks would be most suited for gender-based policies, a gender-sensitive approach can be taken for any policy decision- gender-focused or not. Whether it is improving topline figures for the firm, increasing efficiency, or even building new office spaces in new locations- everything can have a gendered approach that ensures overall beneficial outcomes.

The primer welcomes suggestions, opinions and affirms to upgrade itself as and when required. It is dynamic and allows flexibility of modifying as per the needs and suitability of an organization. The primary goal of the primer is to allow the decision-maker to self-assess and take actions, however, Nikore Associates welcomes collaborations and discussions pertaining to specific issues which might need our support with customized interventions.

It is also important to note that some of the questions asked in the baseline assessment grid are estimates devised by the existing body of research. They are suggestive but not binding and can be amended as per organizational priorities, and as we progress with subsequent versions, will represent voices from the industry- to which we look forward.

³ Due to the explicit term "period leave" creating a demarcation, rather than allowing it to be a type of sick leave — thereby allowing a judgment to be passed on the severity of the "sickness" or as many women experience in domestic spaces, legitimate complaints getting passed off as "pre-menstrual syndrome". More on this- <https://www.hindustantimes.com/analysis/designing-a-new-framework-for-paid-period-leaves-analysis/story-fHAzp65zaoNfxw7NxALRxN.html>

9. ANNEXURE 1- SOME INDUSTRY BEST PRACTICES

While we know that the COVID-19 pandemic has affected women more severely than men, it has also provided the Indian corporate sector with a unique opportunity to experiment with increased flexibility and create an output and deliverable-based work culture, as opposed to one based on input and work hours alone. Firms must now strive to create gender-inclusive hybrid workplaces post-COVID-19 and one good way to start, besides thinking of key issues pertinent at their own workplace, would be to look outward at actions already taken by other firms.

The below examples are in no way the end-all or neither is the list completely exhaustive. However, throughout our research process, we identified some of these practices as suitable DEI policies and recommend that some, if not all, of these ideas, can be considered as best practices.

A. Professional development programs

Companies like ONGC and WIPRO have respectively set up Women Development Forum (WDF) and Women of Wipro Programme (WoW) to train mid-managerial women staff on leadership, promote gender inclusivity through training and create other innovative initiatives to support women. These initiatives benefit families and communities by empowering those in the workplace and at home.

B. Parental leave policies

In general, a parental leave policy consists of 180 days maternity leave (which can also be availed by unmarried women) and 15 days of paternity leave, 730 days of childcare leave till the child attains the age of 18 years along with a 6-month long orientation after onboarding to enable a strong career journey for women. Companies like ONGC have adopted the parental leave policy.

P&G's 'Share the care' is an inclusive policy that aims to enable all new parents working to avail of parental leave irrespective of their gender or marital status. It entitles all new parents — including biological parents, domestic partners, adoptive parents, or parents in same-sex couples — to 8 weeks fully paid leave. It is a step towards shifting cultural norms in India by making child caregiving unbiased.

Deutsche Bank India offers 26 weeks to primary caregivers irrespective of gender. Zomato also came up with a progressive leave policy by giving 26 weeks paternity leave. Levi Strauss added a new paid family leave benefit amidst COVID-19, providing eligible retail and corporate employees with up to eight weeks of paid time off to care for an immediate family member with a serious health condition.

C. Programs for mothers returning to work

Career Reboot for Women by Accenture is an exclusive program focused on women returning to work after a break. Accenture has more than 1100 maternity leave coaches as part of this program. In its new 2.0 avatar, they have introduced a 6-month long orientation after onboarding to enable a strong career journey for women. In 2018, more than 95% of new mothers at Accenture, India returned to the workplace.

Infosys India has child care centers and Mum's Net to support new and returning moms. This program helps young mothers to build peer support networks or a "Buddy" to facilitate integration at work. It also ensures that business units deploy women returning from maternity in their core areas of work as quickly as possible.

D. Ensuring safety and security of staff

Some companies have given supreme importance to the safety and security of women employees. Wipro has well-defined policies and an SOP (Standard Operating Procedure) to ensure the safety of women employees inside and outside the campus. Some of the initiatives include Safety Awareness Programs for women employees, Global 24x7 Security Command Centre, cab pickup/ drop facility with an escort, Mobile apps to confirm “Safe Reach”.

Announcements in June 2021 from Zomato to increase the number of women in its delivery service to 10% by the end of 2021, as well as providing women delivery personnel with work and safety training, and an option to rate restaurants on ‘ease and safety’ metrics, might also be one of the many frontrunners for much needed practical DEI practices at work not only for ensuring greater safety of personnel, but also encouraging inclusion via conscious hiring.

E. Life Insurance benefits

Life insurance benefits were previously restricted to the employee’s spouse and family members. However, new policies suggest that employees who identify themselves as LGBTQ+ can nominate their partners as well. This policy focuses on caregivers rather than gender or marital status. Accenture India is the first company to come up with this policy to ensure their employees feel valued and included and break the gender stereotypes.

F. Flexible Work Options

Ford Technology Services India extends its Transitional Work Arrangement program to employees whose other responsibilities take up a bulk of their time. Registering with this program gives the employee the option of working either 60% or 80% of the expected 45-hour week with a corresponding decrease in salary.

Fidelity Investments offered employees a new benefit during COVID-19, that provides greater support for workers who are also caregivers. This included time to deal with unexpected life events and benefits for working parents like childcare reimbursement and access to child care coordinators who can connect parents with nannies and tutors.

G. Gender sensitization training

A unique portal on Gender sensitization to impart training on Prevention of Sexual Harassment (POSH) at the workplace has been launched by ONGC. An online Gender Sensitization training program on POSH was organized for corporate-level executives, and around 2200 officials from different work centers participated in it.

The Population Foundation of India boasts 43% women employment with a very strong women leadership at the top. Five women as Governing Board members and ten as members of Advisory Council. It has also been reported that there is no salary disparity for women at PFI and both men and women are considered at par across the board for any position with a bias towards women. PFI also came up with an awareness campaign impact, where they have launched a multimedia edutainment initiative called Main Kuch Bhi Kar Sakti Hoon: Telecast of two seasons in 50 countries; on 16 regional Kendra of Door Darshan and 12 languages. It aimed to lead to a positive shift in knowledge, attitude, and perception among viewers on issues related to family planning, age at marriage, gender equality, and agency. Programme Viewership was 58 million for Season 1 and 60 million for Season 2.

I. Other innovations

Some benefits like IUI/ IVF, egg freezing discounts, and lactation rooms have been implemented by organizations like Facebook and Apple. These progressive policies have also been implemented by Bumble where women hold most of the leadership positions. The company also offers free breast milk shipments for traveling mothers. There is 100% health care coverage, a \$401(k) matching, 100 monthly wellness benefits. Companies like Google, Adobe, Tesla, and Amazon are also implementing paid parental leaves and different wellness benefits. Although unique, these measures could often also be deemed controversial in nature which is why a wider acceptance has not been observed in this case.

J. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Practices

Lastly, Besides creating policies meant to cater to its own employees, CSR Projects hold importance for several large corporate firms in ensuring equity beyond the workplaces. Some innovative health, financial literacy, livelihood programs run by firms in India stand to create impact at scale.

HUL's sustainable community development initiative Prabhat through its Poshan Saathi program is building a cadre of women who are budding rural women in their nutrition journey. The program adopts a life cycle approach where Poshan Saathis are trained to complement the work of the ASHA & ANMs to educate adolescent girls, women & Pregnant Lactating Women on nutrition literacy. The long-term objective is to enable behavioral change to reduce infant mortality & morbidity, maternal mortality and improve health outcomes of women and children under five. HUL's initiative has thus far enabled advocacy among close to 1,00,000 women across 300 villages, 3 districts, and 3 states through 100 Poshan Saathis. The initiative has not only led to an increased awareness around the consumption of IFA tablets but has also seen early initiation of breastfeeding increase by 9% within a year.

ITC Limited initiated a Women Empowerment Program as its CSR project. This initiative provided a range of gainful employment opportunities to poor women supported with capacity building and financial assistance by way of loans and grants. To date, 29,184 ultra-poor women in the core catchments have access to sustainable sources of income through non-farm livelihood options. The financial literacy and inclusion project, in partnership with the Madhya Pradesh State Rural Livelihood Mission (MPSRLM) and CRISIL Foundation, was rolled out in 15 districts during the year. 1,062 Super Trainers were trained directly and they, in turn, trained 2,592 Master Trainers who cascaded the training to 19,267 Self Help Groups (SHGs) covering 1,94,433 women across 1,703 villages. 98,441 women of those trained have been linked to Government social security schemes.²⁴ Other companies like Tata Steel, HDFC, Hero Motocorp Ltd are also implementing women empowerment schemes as a part of their CSR activity.

10. ANNEXURE 2- EXISTING THEORIES STUDIED

We began our research by studying the below 10 existing frameworks that have influenced a lot of the questions we have asked and continue to be important canons with respect to studying policy systems and analyzing them through a gendered lens. We also mention some of the issues we saw with them, which prevented them from being very practical or concise in other cases.

I. Naila Kabeer's Social Relations Approach

The SRA focuses on gender biases and norms at the institutional locations of the state, market, community, and family/household. It emphasizes the need to focus on change over time and encourages reflection on the immediate, intermediate, and structural causes of inequalities at the different institutional levels.

The approach uses five concepts to analyze gender inequality:

- Development as increasing human well-being
- Social Relations
- Institutional Analysis
- Institutional Gender Policies
- Immediate, underlying, and structural causes

The Social Relations Approach reframes the analysis from individual experiences of inequality and power differentials to understanding the systemic causes and structures of gender inequalities. This deeper analysis can then inform policy or program planning and guide social change interventions and larger advocacy efforts. The focus on identifying spaces where inequalities are constructed and reproduced allows for dynamic analysis of gender relations. Despite its scope, the Social Relations Approach does not include multiple voices and experiences in the analysis because of its structural bias – e.g., this approach uses an institutional lens to assess and improve policies, which may not fully account for grassroots’ experiences or the contextual specificities of particular minority groups within an institution. Participation of grassroots actors and voices is limited compared to organizational staff or others with the formal skills required to use this approach.

II. Sara Longwe’s Women’s Empowerment Framework

The tool postulates an ascending level of equality impacts that can be tracked and assessed over time to see if progression or regression is taking place. It examines a program, such as a health or education intervention, to assess how it influences the following five levels of empowerment:

- **Welfare:** Improvement in socioeconomic statuses, such as income, better nutrition, etc. This level produces nothing to empower women.
- **Access:** Increased access to resources. This is the first step in empowerment as women increase their access relative to men.
- **Conscientization:** Involving the recognition of structural forces that disadvantage and discriminate against women coupled with the collective aim to address these discriminations.
- **Mobilization:** Implementing actions related to the conscientization of women.
- **Control:** Involving the level of access reached and control of resources that have shifted as a result of collective claim-making and action.

The Women’s Empowerment Framework may assist organizations in developing more explicit programmatic strategies that aim to fundamentally shift the bases of gender inequality. Gendered assumptions of equality are made explicit. This provides an excellent opportunity for a feminist context analysis, highlighting the political dimensions of gender inequality. The three levels of a program effect, e.g., positive, neutral, or negative impact, can be easily compared across programs.

Although, the Women’s Empowerment Framework is not designed to explain how or why a program works, exploring the contributing or causal factors that led to the progression from one level of impact to the next. The assumption that there is a hierarchy of gender equality levels suggests a somewhat more linear change trajectory than is often found in practice.

III. 4R Method

The 4R method is articulated in four steps:

- **Representation:** How are different sexes represented in various parts and processes in the organization?

- Resources: How are resources (Money, Time, Information) distributed between the sexes?
- Realia: analyzing conditions to understand reasons behind the gendered distribution of representation and Resource Allocation.
- Realization: Formulating new objectives and measures to achieve gender equality.

IV. Moser Framework

The Moser Framework is based on the concepts of gender roles and gender needs. Through this framework, one can take into consideration the degree to which interventions aim to simply meet practical gender needs or challenge gender inequalities by meeting strategic gender needs. Gender needs are classified as:

- Practical Gender Needs: Those related to women’s daily lives but maintain existing gender relations.
- Strategic Gender Needs: Those that potentially transform existing gender subordination.

The process for implementation of this framework includes gender-role identification, i.e., the differences in the roles of women and men in production, reproduction, and community management. This is followed by a gender needs assessment and disaggregating control of resources and decision-making within the household.

The Moser Framework has certain limitations: The framework looks at the separate activities of women and men rather than how these activities interrelate, which can hamper analysis. It also suffers from a lack of intersectionality. Other forms of inequality persisting in relationships between genders, such as race and class are not addressed. The framework assumes a strict division between practical and strategic needs, which is unhelpful. There is often a continuum from practical to strategic, as opposed to the two being totally separate concepts.

V. Levy Framework

Also called the web of institutionalization, the Levy Framework looks at 13 elements under 4 spheres related to the conditions needed for effective gender mainstreaming and institutionalizing gender in policy planning.

1. Citizen’s Sphere (Women’s and men’s experience and their own interpretation of reality, pressure of political constituencies, representative political structures/ formal (anticipated and existing) structures)
2. Policy Sphere (Political commitment, policy, conceptual clarity, resources)
3. Organizational Sphere (Mainstream location of responsibility for stakeholder participation, procedures, staff development)
4. Delivery Sphere (Methodology, delivery of programs and projects, research – learning activities (including evaluation))

Despite its comprehensive approach, the Levy Framework faces certain criticisms. It is more oriented towards macro projects, due to which it requires a large sample to understand the structures and institutions in place and cannot be used at the micro-level to analyze policy impact. Moreover, many elements in the framework are quite interrelated, which makes it difficult to isolate the impact and influence of each element.

VI. Harvard: Gender Roles Framework

This framework, also known as The Harvard Analytical Framework, is employed to determine the type of work done by each gender in various spheres like households, farms, communities, and more. Identification of such roles is necessary for developing policies that cater to the specific needs of individuals in specific spheres,

especially women. This model consists of four tools, namely, The Activity Profile, The Access and Control Profile, Influencing Factors Tool, and the Project Cycle Analysis Tool.

1. **Activity Profile:** This involves identification of the activities undertaken by each gender and determining its specifics, such as how much time is dedicated to each activity, where it is done, and the like.
2. **Access and Control:** This involves identification of the resources required to perform the tasks in the activity profile, the gender-specific access to such resources, as well as the control possessed by each gender over derived benefits of the task.
3. **Influencing Factors:** This involves the identification and assessment of the factors which influence gender-based differences across activities identified in the previous two profiles. Both past and present influences are taken into consideration to undertake a prediction of potential future shifts.
4. **Project Analysis Cycle:** This consists of certain questions aimed at ensuring the inclusion of a gendered perspective to potential policies and interventions. Gender disaggregated data is employed to identify the differential impacts of social change.

VII. Centre for Disease Control (CDC), US Government

The framework takes into consideration the following criteria and lists out certain questions to assess the policy in question:

- **Impact:** The intended outcome of the policy.
- **Feasibility:** Likelihood of the successful adoption and implementation of selected policy.
- **Economic and Budgetary Impacts:** Comparison of costs of enacting, implementing, and enforcing the policy with the value of benefits derived.
- **Positive/Negative Externality:** Unintended outcomes of the policy that may or may not be in line with the initial intention of the policy.

VIII. National Collaborating Centre for Healthy Public Policy, Quebec- Dimensions for analyzing Public Policy

Acknowledging the need for incorporating a public health perspective in policy-making, this analytical framework provides two categories of considerations to be addressed while designing policy:

- Effects
 - **Effectiveness:** This takes into consideration the impact on groups targeted by the policy.
 - **Equity:** This focuses on the effects the policy has on groups other than the targeted groups.
 - **Unintended Effects:** This focuses on the unforeseen effects of the policy.
- Implementation
 - **Cost:** This includes the financial cost of the policy.
 - **Acceptability:** This explores the acceptability of the policy in the eyes of the stakeholders.
 - **Feasibility:** This focuses on the technical feasibility of the policy.

IX. GENDER TOOLKIT: Integrating Gender in Programming for Every Child in South Asia, UNICEF

UNICEF advises assessing the integration of gender in programming based on the following parameters:

- **Relevance:** This includes assessing the policy on the basis of awareness about and responsiveness to the needs of the stakeholders. This also takes into consideration whether the policy reinforced gender equality dynamics.
- **Effectiveness:** This focuses on the inclusion of gender in all partnerships and processes, changing practices, behaviors, and power relations between genders, and advancing equality.
- **Connectedness:** This evaluates the policy on the basis of the inclusion of men and boys in the gender equality efforts and integration of genders across functional areas like health, education, and nutrition.
- **Efficiency:** This evaluates the policy on the basis of the resources used to equally respond to the needs of all genders as well as resources allocated (and expended) for gender equality activities, outputs, and outcomes.
- **Impact:** This includes impacts of the program in daily life – intended, unintended, positive, and negative, as well as the changes in power, resources, and workload caused by the policy.
- **Sustainability:** This assesses whether the policy achieved enduring change in attitude and behavior surrounding gender equality and permanently increased women’s and girls’ access to resources.
- **Appropriateness:** This determines whether the policy addressed the specific needs of all genders in the context/ community where it was implemented.
- **Coverage:** This includes equitable targeting of genders based on context and objectives and addressing implications of such targeting. It further includes an assessment of whether the policy addressed access and exclusion.

X. OECD- Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development Analytical Framework

The framework consists of five main elements, namely Actors, Policy Inter-Linkages, Enabling and Disabling conditions, Sources of Finance and Transboundary, and Intergenerational Impacts. Each element addresses certain aspects and puts forth some questions to facilitate the analysis of policy coherence.

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