VIKALP: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY ON NON-TRADITIONAL LIVELIHOODS

Research Report

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Cover Photo

Neighborhood women gather outside their homes to discuss the area upkeep and work issues. As organized home-based workers, the women associated with the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) and Mahila Housing Trust (MHT) have led slum upgradation programs in their area and also received training on working from home and how to market their products.

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

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASER	-	Annual Status of Education Report
DDU-GKY	-	Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana
EUS	-	Employment and Unemployment Survey
ICC	-	Internal Complaint Committee
IDI	-	In-Depth Interview
KII	-	Key Informant Interview
MSME	-	Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship
NGO	-	Non-Governmental Organization
NTL	-	Non-Traditional Livelihoods
NTLN	-	Non-Traditional Livelihoods Network
NWC	-	Non-Women Concentrated
OECD	-	The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PMKVY	-	Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana
TAG	-	Technical Advisory Committee
TL	-	Traditional Livelihoods
WC	-	Women Concentrated
WCSC	-	World Class Skill Center
WEE	-	Women's Economic Empowerment

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Research Team Members Srishty Anand, Sharmishtha Nanda, Poulomi Pal and Sneha Sharma

SECTION 1: Introduction and Methodology

This study proposes an understanding that the world of work for women is not organized in the binary of traditional livelihoods (TLs) and non-traditional livelihoods (NTLs), sectors, or occupations, but is determined by existing gender norms reflected across the three pillars of social organization - households, markets and the state. From any perspective that we adopt to view "non-traditionality", it will not be an exaggeration to observe that all the barriers are enhanced when women try to move into domains of work that are considered non-traditional. Similarly, enablers in the form of social sanctions are far and few when we consider non-traditional domains of work. The definitions of non-traditionality are determined by women's social location and hence, the enablers and barriers they grapple with are highly sensitive to their positioning in social and economic hierarchies. To understand how work can achieve transformative potential in women's lives, it merits inquiry in more comprehensive ways, which amplify the voices and narratives of women workers.

In this report, we begin with an overview of women and work, and unpack the conceptual comprehension of embedding NTLs within this understanding. We then present the guiding theory of change for this study, followed by the research findings. We end with a suggested framework for transformative work emerging from the narratives and recommendations.

Locating the study in the world of women and work

It is critical to unpack gender assumptions and stereotypical expectations for understanding the roles that people perform in the society and how these are mirrored in the economy. In development theories, enough evidence exists to establish that benefits of gender equality lead to improved social and economic outcomes for everyone. However, for the inverse to be positive, the process must be accompanied by public action to remove gender-related barriers (Kabeer, 2012). Programming on women's economic empowerment in low-and lower-middle income countries has used an integrated approach between skill building, capacity building, providing financial services and enhancing employability (Dickson & Bangpan, 2012). Broadly considering the current economic status of women, this research was located to focus on women who are already part of the workforce, and learn from their experience and perspectives. The study engages with their experiences and adopts an intersectional lens, attentive to multiple vulnerabilities of women by virtue of their social location.

India is ranked among the ten lowest countries (136 out of 144 countries covered) for women's workforce participation.¹ The continuous decline in female labor force participation rates² in India has been well documented. This decline is paradoxical in the context of an average growth rate of 6 to 7 percent per annum. More recently, the severity has been compounded with a scenario of growing unemployment (Klasen & Pieters, 2015), rapid urbanization and disproportionately high domestic duties for women (OECD, 2018). There is rich literature on the analysis of this trend by labor rights theorists, feminist economists, social scientists, demographers in India, who explore the set of underlying social, economic, and political barriers that limit employability and employment opportunities for women (Abraham, 2013; Chatterjee et al., 2018a; Gothoskar, 2016; Klasen & Pieters, 2015). Women also often concentrate on distress driven work, which is typically semi-skilled, low paid and offers no growth. The increasing absence of women from the workforce, some have argued, is due to increased participation of women in educational institutions or withdrawal of women from the labor market as a result of upward mobility of households; others have focused on the non-availability of jobs that are suitable for women in terms of skills, location, timings and so on (Sinha, 2019). This explains why mechanization leads to women dropping out of the "usual" sectors as well (Chaudhary & Verick, 2014). This study, therefore, does not directly address the question of decline in women's work force participation rates and presupposes a context where

the male breadwinner ideology (Bernard, 1981) is nearly universal.

Rather, the learnings from this study are in form of enablers and barriers to women's work, especially for them to be transformative, with some understanding of occupational patterns in women's employment. The inquiry into these enablers and barriers is based on the gendered consciousness presupposed in the structure and organization of the labor force; in which some jobs are perceived to be better suited for women and others for men. The perceptions of gendered roles in the economy have historical, cultural and socio-economic connotations, and are nearly normalized. These gendered roles are entrenched in gendered division of labor, wherein women's paid work is consistent and simultaneous with unpaid reproductive and domestic work such as running the household, involving cooking, cleaning, and caring for the elderly and children. This continues to inform studies working with the distinction between productive and unproductive work, public and private, and so on (Azim Premji University, 2018; Sreerekha, 2017).

In this context, the International Center for

Research on Women (ICRW), with support from the **Ford Foundation,** conducted this study to unpack the barriers women face in access to work, particularly with respect to NTLs. The study objectives and methodology are highlighted in *Figure 1*.

Methodology

The research study comprised five phases. However, one of the key steps undertaken before the beginning of the study was to form a technical advisory group (TAG). All research activities were completed over a period of 24 months. The TAG consisted of prominent experts in the field, economists, policymakers and practitioners to advise and enrich the research at different stages.

 ¹ World Economic Forum. (2017). The Global Gender Gap Report. Retrieved from http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2017.pdf
 ² Labor force participation rates includes those who are "active" in the labor market i.e. those who are employed as well as those who are "seeking employment" (unemployed). Workforce participation rates on the other hand, include only those who are currently employed.

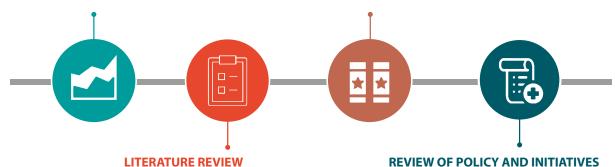
Figure 1: Objectives and Methods of the Study

TRENDS ANALYSIS

- NSSO data from three labor surveys 1993-94 to 2011-12 analyzed
- Sectors selected for the study

QUALITATIVE STUDY

- Interviews with women in selected sectors
- Interviews with their male co-workers
- Interviews with other stakeholders



- Relevant programmatic and academic literature reviewed
- Key definitions, concepts and standpoints incorporated

- Policies relevant for women's work
- Key initiatives focused on NTLs or on creating an enabling environment for women's work

Study Objectives

- Understanding the status of working women in India
- Identifying enablers and barriers for their entry and sustenance
- Documenting and analyzing relevant policies, schemes and initiatives
- Developing a framework to guide research, policy and practice on women's work

Three consultations were held with the TAG in August 2018, March 2019 and February 2020. Details on each phase of the study are provided in **Annexure 1**.

The first two phases (trends analysis and review of literature) illustrated the nature and extent of gender segregation within the labor market, across sectors, industries and occupations, and also provided information on where women have been consistently and "traditionally" employed, as compared to their presence in non-traditional sectors. This exercise contributed to reformulation of NTLs to understand the characteristics of employment for women already part of the workforce through an analysis of women's employment data with respect to the sectors of employment, mode of transport, marital status, number of children, occupational categories, and so on (refer to Annexure 4).

We found that women constitute 27.6 percent of the workforce and the five sectors where women's participation is higher than this average are agriculture, manufacturing, education, health and paid domestic work. Even within these sectors, there is visible occupational segregation – women are concentrated in low-paying and low-skilled jobs. We also noted that there was gendering of roles where women's participation was less than 27.6 percent. For example, in the field of retail, which is an upcoming sector with jobs and income potential, a majority of women (52 percent) are employed in gender stereotypical roles as models, demonstrators and salespersons. Please refer to findings from the trends analysis in *Figure 3*.

Hence, we reconceptualized NTLs and reframed them as "non-women concentrated" jobs, and TLs as "women concentrated" jobs. Based on this rationale,

we used the female workforce participation figure of 27.6 percent to define "women-concentrated" (i.e. sectors that were above this cut-off) and "nonwomen-concentrated" (lower than this cut-off). Please refer to **Annexure 3** for detailed analysis of women's employment data in terms of the sectors of employment, nature of employment, educational levels of working women, overlaps between marital and work categories, and so on. Based on these characteristics and purposive sampling, finally, the following sectors were selected as the sampling framework for the study:

Table 1 : Sampling Framework for the Primary Qualitative Research

	WC se	ectors	NWC sectors	
	Health	Apparel manufacturing	Retail trade	Information and communication
WC roles	Anganwadi workers		Salespersons, Demonstrators	
NWC roles		Corporate managers		Computer programmers

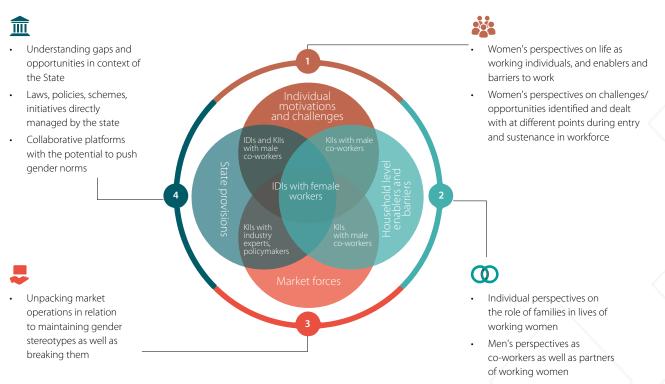
* WC - Women Concentrated; NWC - Non-women Concentrated

Within the selected sectors, we interacted with following groups of participants:

(a) In-depth Interviews (IDIs) - women working in traditional and non-traditional livelihoods: **10 participants** (interviewees' profile attached in *Annexure 4*), (b) Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) - community of male co-workers³ : **6 participants,** and

(c) KIIs - representatives from the selected sectors; state/government actors, employers, private sector and industry associations, skilling and training institutes, trade unions and activists: **18 participants**.

Figure 2: Visual Representation of Thematic Areas Covered in Various Interviews⁴



³ The primary participants – working women and men – are not part of any livelihood or employment implementation programs by civil society organizations (CSOs) or non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

⁴ The components of individual, and household, market and state provisions are detailed in Figure 5.

Limitations of the Study

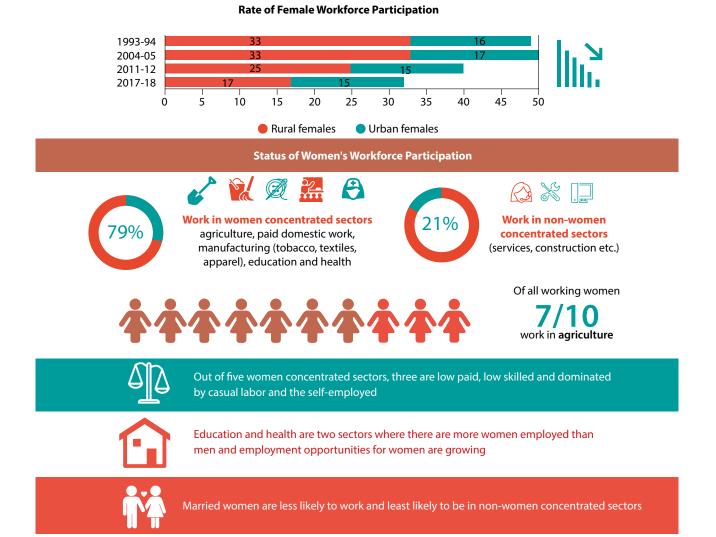
The study is limited in its scope and approach in the following ways:

- The scope of the study is limited by its focus on formal, paid employment. Given the paucity of large-scale data on informal sectors and challenges of classification, the study could not incorporate the same. However, in future, we hope to be able to expand our work to include informal workers.
- 2. The study looks at women's work within the heteronormative matrix of gender. The questions and analytical lens of the study currently do not consider the realities of other gender and sexual identities.
- 3. The study is limited to Delhi NCR and hence, resonates with attitudes of workers in urban

Figure 3: Some Findings from the Trends Analysis

centers within NCR. The four sectors chosen are not representative of the entire female workforce in the market or a universal perspective on these sectors. However, the study does shed some light on sectors that are expanding opportunities for women workers and can be explored further.

- 4. The policies and schemes referred to in this document are those that have been implemented at the national level, not at the state level. Therefore, the understanding of policies, schemes and initiatives is not exhaustive.
- 5. The study does not delve into barriers women face resulting from pressures to bear children and other related challenges in their professional lives. This is a critical element for understanding the narratives of working women and merits greater focus.



SECTION 2:

Unpacking Non-Traditional Livelihoods and Conceptual Framework for the Study

NON-TRADITIONAL LIVELIHOODS: WHY DO THEY MATTER?

The concept of NTLs may be understood as emerging out of a collectivized developmental response to unpack and tackle barriers faced by women while aspiring for, securing and sustaining livelihood⁵ opportunities through certain occupations within the Indian economy.

In this context, a few organizations and individuals created a coalition in 2016, known as the Non-Traditional Livelihood Network (NTLN).^{6,7} The NTLN aims at generating livelihoods, particularly NTLs, for socially and economically marginalized women in urban and rural India. As per the network, NTLs intend to challenge gendered division of labor⁸ and gender stereotypes by exemplifying women in typically maledominated roles, for example, women as e-rickshaw drivers or four-wheeler drivers, mechanics, masons and so on. At present, efforts are focused on the supply side of the equation, i.e., training women and equipping them to join some of these roles identified (by the members of this collective) through scoping of opportunities. Organizations and initiatives have defined their respective pathways to the NTL approach by center-staging opportunities for training and access to labor market, specifically in non-traditional skills for

⁵ Livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stress and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resource base. (Chambers & Conway, 1991).

⁶ About the Non-traditional livelihood network. https://www.ntlnetwork.in/about-us/ accessed on December 10, 2019

⁷ Members of non-traditional livelihood network in India. https://www.ntlnetwork.in/members/ accessed on December 10, 2019.

⁸ The gender division of labor is fundamentally allocation of work between men and women (Gender Division of Labor. https://www.sciencedirect. com/topics/social-sciences/gender-division-of-labour women accessed on February 24, 2020.) Work includes that which is considered productive and paid for (included in the national accounts) as well as that which is unpaid and used for domestic consumption (excluded from the national accounts) between men and women as appropriated by culture and society. It heavily influences women's (disproportionate) burden of unpaid work and care work in the household leading up to (limited) participation in the labor market in India (Pandey, 2000).

women from resource poor backgrounds. However, the definitions do not clearly identify the selection criteria for these skills and trades. Some of the existing definitions (Azad Foundation, 2016a; EMpower, 2010) conceptually state the idea and need for NTLs:

- EMpower uses "non-standard income" and "nongender normative" to imply non-traditional. The emphasis is on women breaking the normative expectation of what they can do, allowing *"young women into new public spaces, even if they continued* to work in familiar and more traditional sectors", away from the domestic and home.
- The Azad Foundation defines NTLs as "livelihood practices that help women break stereotypes and challenge the gender division of labor emerging from the intersections of gender, caste, class, religion, sexual orientation, disability and other marginalities and oppressive structures, with a dynamic context of space and time. NTLs increase the set of viable livelihood choices available to women and give them access and control over skills, technology, market, mobility and resources. They create economic stability along with psychological, social and political empowerment."

Although there is a similarity in the core ideas, their operationalization varies in real life contexts. However, these approaches may not focus beyond individual women to shift the status quo maintained by market demand and supply systems as well as policy mechanisms, which are inherently gendered. This leads to a situation of lopsided participation of women in certain sectors and roles within those sectors. Further, training and skilling in particular trades may not change the functioning of systems.

Historical essentialization of the social location of women within the domestic sphere (Raju, 2013a) and in unskilled, low paid and low productivity roles in the labor economy (Kannan & Raveendran, 2012; Sinha, 2019) has been well researched. A closer look at the operationalization of the organizations and programs working on NTLs reveals that they problematize gendered structures by integrating women into male-dominated jobs/ roles with high visibility in the public domain through an extensive training program. Some examples of these roles are e-rickshaw drivers, carpenters, cab drivers, electricians, two-wheeler repair services and so on.9 Training is a comprehensive effort that equips women with technical skills (British Council, 2016) and life skills¹⁰ (Gothoskar, 2016). It simultaneously builds capacities of the women to question their subjective position in socio-economic hierarchies as their location in the labor market is not insulated from this positionality. Research in the skilling landscape also reveals that recent initiatives in breaking the gendered division in skill development demonstrate a potential for success-"... young women trainees in non-traditional trades and skills seemed to have gained a great deal of selfconfidence from engaging in the training process: from negotiating with their family to enrolling in a program to postpone marriage and to actually participate in a course. Even the questioning of gender-based binaries in the skillstraining opportunities (by participating in non-traditional trade courses) has made it easier for them to question other stratifications and exclusions" (Gothoskar, 2016). To further understand the importance of this approach, we asked experts to reflect on what "traditionality" and "non-traditionality" imply. Some reflections have been shared below:

 The traditionality of gendered roles is an extension of distribution of labor within the household, which feminizes and endorses stereotypes about the ability of women and influences their roles in labor market. It is crucial to challenge the intra-household division of labor and the perceptions that it creates in the market, for both men and women. Often, these roles and division of labor are also permeable and fluid.

"Regarding the gendered nature of work/ roles which women undertake, there are examples from the

⁹ The trainings offered by Archana Women's Center consists of masonry, carpentry, woodcraft training and so on. http://www.archanawomencentre. com/archana-womens-center-page.php?page=training accessed on January 14, 2020. The trainings offered by CARM-DAKSH are motor mechanic, e-rickshaw driving, mobile repairing http://www.carmdaksh.org/carmdaksh_news.php?n_id=16&secfun=c74d97b01eae257e44aa9d5bade97baf accessed on January 26, 2020.

¹⁰ "Life skills" are defined as psychosocial abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. They are loosely grouped into three broad categories of skills: cognitive skills for analyzing and using information, personal skills for developing personal agency and managing oneself, and inter-personal skills for communicating and interacting effectively with others. URL: https://www.unicef.org/lifeskills/index_7308.html accessed on January 13, 2020

construction sector where women undertake a lot of load bearing (working as head-loaders) as well as unpaid work at construction sites like cleaning, and arranging spaces and tools before and after the day's work"- KII

Expectations related to what kind of work women can do are mostly rooted in anatomical differences framing the "biological basis" (body strength, reproductive roles of childbearing and childcare), and in appropriation of roles based on gendered perceptions of competitiveness, ambitions, skillsets in emerging markets. This is particularly demonstrated in jobs that witnessed mechanization overtime and have been masculinized (Kulkarni & Hatekar, 2013).

"Despite the participation of men or transgender persons in say sex work or women in the automated heavy engineering sector, which precludes the use of muscular strength, these continue to be viewed as feminine and masculine occupations."- KII

"The first thing that comes to mind when I think of traditional or non-traditional are the stereotypes and the gender barriers that women face, girls face. A huge variety of employment opportunities are inaccessible to them. You look at farming, the moment machinery is introduced women are no longer counted as farmers, and this is a man's job."- KII

 The discourse on non-traditionality must encourage a shift from insecure to secure, devalued to valued and from hazardous to safe work, and focus on not just where women are working, but on the conditions of their work, i.e., "decent work".¹¹

"The labor market is characterized by capitalist extraction, which leads to 'insecure work', 'devalued work' and 'hazardous work'. Therefore, the critical question is not where the women are working, but what are the conditions of their work. 'Decent work' must be the basis of any transformative process." - KII

• In case of intergenerational transfer of skills like in weaving, small scale industries, it is important that the skills are well-linked to the markets by dissociating from traditional forms of recruitment (involving middlemen) and payment (piece-wage and contractual work). These means of trade practices have exploited workers by inadequately compensating them for their effort and time. So, while these skills continue to be non-traditional by uniqueness of the method or raw materials, there are few incentives to continue in the market without fair compensation.

"Existing traditional skills and knowledge, which are also community and region based like weaving, traditional medicinal cures, printing, etc., are passed on from one generation of women to next but without adding to their economic status because there is little policy initiative to connect them to the market." - KII

 Traditionality has an element of temporality suggesting that it emanates from the past. On the contrary, upcoming job roles in manufacturing and expanding services (including those offered by the gig economy¹²) are witnessing genderspecific career paths undergirded by discriminatory perceptions and beliefs prevalent in the market and in industries. For example, women in the hospitality sector are usually designated housekeeping jobs.

"Most women prefer joining salon and spa services. Stereotypes affect the kind of job that men and women select and/or are already trained for. It is expected from customers too. It is assumed that part-time jobs like paid domestic help will be fulfilled by women whereas deep cleaning and car cleaning by men, mainly because latter involves machinery." - KII

While reversing some of these trends in male dominated jobs and create visibility for alternative occupations for women, some trades have gained more popularity over others as non-traditional for women, but the rationale behind the selection of these trades has not been clarified.

"Our approach is also to motivate them to be 'changemakers' apart from being able to earn. Entry of

¹¹ ILO defines decent work as sum of "... the aspirations of people in their working lives. It involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men." https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/decent-work/lang--en/index.htm accessed on December 6, 2019.

¹² Gig economy or platform refers to a work arrangement and earning from such activities outside of traditional employer-employee relationship prsindia.org/sites/default/files/bill_files/Code%20on%20Social%20Security%2C%202019.pdf accessed on February 20, 2020

women in specific workspaces also changes the culture of the place. For example, when women are repairing bikes it changes the perception as well as the behavior of customers as well as other male co-workers." - KII

NON-TRADITIONAL LIVELIHOODS: THEORETICAL CONSTRUCT APPLIED IN THIS STUDY

One of the objectives of this study was to unpack NTLs, not just through a developmental approach, but also by understanding the meaning derived when applied to the context of the alarming decline of female labor force participation in the economy. This study was informed by ICRW's earlier research on understanding and measuring women's economic empowerment (Golla *et al.*, 2018) that recommends interrogating underlying factors shaping norms and institutions in order to analyze the nature of women's participation in an economy. For this study, traditional and non-traditional are also understood through organizational and social systems that govern activities, and mediate relations between individuals and their social and economic environment within the institutions of

household, market and state (ICRW, 2018). These institutions are critical nodes that influence the distribution and use of resources such as human (e.g., education, skills), financial (e.g., loans, savings), social (e.g., networks, mentors), and physical (e.g., land) (Golla *et al*, 2018). Therefore, this study complements the existing grasp on what non-traditionality signifies along the continuum of these different institutional nodes.

The study also inquired into factors or conditions that improve or impede the position of women in the labor market, irrespective of the roles and sectors they are in. These factors and conditions are not necessarily informed by any intervention, but are identified by different participants in the study as potentially transformative for working women. This study in its inquiry into the concepts of TLs versus NTLs gathered responses from trade unionists, representatives from government departments, policymakers, members of the NTLN, and bilateral agencies and foundations (donors) in India. The responses suggest that there is a predominant preoccupation with the declining workforce participation of women. In line with the three structural nodes of households, markets and the

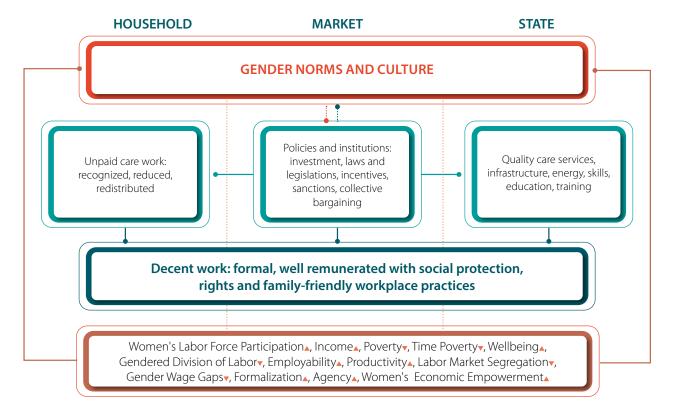


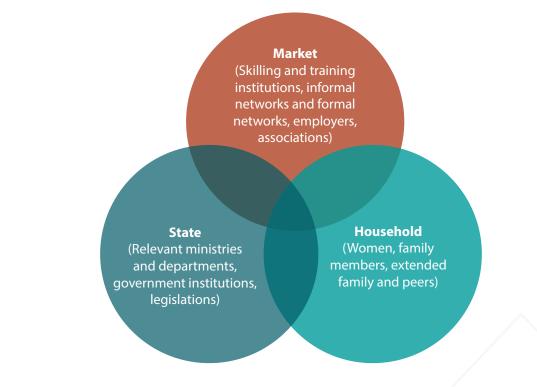
Figure 4: Theory of Change for Women's Work

state that determine women's work, as described in the preceding sections, we referred to the following theory of change to situate our research questions. This theory of change was developed by ICRW¹³ as part of its work to deepen the understanding of gender in the discourse for women's economic empowerment and livelihoods.

Among other constructs, this theory of change recognizes that the disproportionate representation of women in certain sectors and occupations contributes to labor market segmentation as well as gender wage gaps that undervalue women's labor and inflate the numbers of the working poor. It also states that securing a pathway to decent work and addressing unpaid care work is fundamental for women's economic empowerment (ICRW, 2018). It has also been postulated that gendered relations in various domains create a dominant model of "femininity" and "masculinity" (Paechter, 2006) based on the division of roles and responsibilities, and values associated with them. These are reinforced by markets and the state. Therefore, they are termed as bearers of gender as "they reflect and reproduce preconceived notions about masculinity and femininity as routine aspects of their rules, procedures and practices" (Kabeer 2012, 13). The ICRW framework also suggests an interconnectedness between these domains strung together by gender norms, and cultural factors.

This exercise helped in reformulating NTLs to understand the characteristics of employment for women already part of the workforce through an analysis of the women's employment data with respect to the sectors of employment, nature of employment, demographic characteristics, and occupational categories (refer to **Annexure 4**). The two conceptual standpoints that must be foregrounded to explain this approach to NTLs are as follows:

Figure 5: Intersections of Enablers and Barriers to Women's Paid Work



¹³ICRW's Theory of Change on Women, Labor and Livelihoods is an unpublished manuscript.

These new categories are not meant to subsume or substitute NTLs. On the contrary, WC/NWC form a prism through which we reformulate the meaning of NTLs. This situates NTLs in the wider economy, removed from their preordained domains/trades. We make a shift from building an understanding of women's participation in the economy from the binary of traditional and non-traditional. Hence, stepping away from the common consensus of the NTLN collective that categorizes roles and jobs as male-dominated and therefore, non-traditional for women. In its stead, the theory of change assumes that livelihoods or economic enhancement of women serve as an entry point into gender equality. This recognizes an improvement in "capability" (Nussbaum, 2011) aligned to agency, strengthening and supporting "decision-making" aligned to relations for making their negotiations, and "enabling environment" aligned to structures that improve and sustain conditions of work (Tibi & Kittaneh, 2019).

Further, we replaced the binary of non-traditional versus traditional as located in the larger economy by center-staging women's paid work in relation to the common cores of the household, the state and the market (ICRW, 2018), where several shifts in capabilities, decision-making and enabling environment occur to make women's paid work sustainable. Kabeer (2012) differentiates between the three domains on the basis of how the gendered constraints play out in each of these. She categorizes the norms, beliefs and practices that emerge from the household, family and kinship relations as intrinsically gendered.

We apply this understanding in our analysis of the narratives of women working in select sectors and within them, select roles, to understand where in these three domains lies the impetus for change starting from voice and agency of individual women to responses from the household, the market and the state - for women to make non-traditional choices. The sample of working women interviewed in this study is situated in different "intersectionalities" (Shields, 2008) marked by their social identities of class, caste, geographical location, and so on. These different and overlapping social identities operate beyond the segmentation of work between men and women in the economy. These sources of discrimination and disadvantages affect the choices and opportunities available to individuals - both women and men even before they are working entities. (Gopal, 2013). The research team was cognizant of such differences between the participants and refers to them while elaborating on findings from the study. However, the focus remained on the narratives of women that were punctuated with choices and decisions that hint toward potential shifts or persistence in the structural constraints faced by them in these domains.

It is important to note here that presentations of caste and class hierarchies within the selected sectors and job roles have not been assessed as this was beyond the scope of the current study. We, however, are cognizant that specific job roles are accessible to women from specific socio-economic backgrounds. For instance, the profile of respondents who were corporate managers is very different from the profile of respondents who were frontline health workers. Despite this wide range of profiles, many influencers for women's entry and sustenance in work remain rooted in similar contexts of harmful gender norms. While subjective experiences vary for each of these respondent groups, we present aggregated findings representing the most critical elements from our narratives.

SECTION 3: Narratives and Experiences: Study Findings

ENABLERS AND BARRIERS IN WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT

Existing literature explores factors affecting women's employment such as rising household incomes, a lack of opportunities commensurate to educational attainment (Das, Deb Kusum, Choudhury & Singh, 2015; Klasen & Pieters, 2015), increase in education of young females (Chatterjee et al., 2018b), patriarchal norms and cultural practices (Hirway, 2012), very low rate of growth of employment (Azim Premji University, 2018), and unaccounted care work. The qualitative nature of the study highlights an interplay between these factors in lives of working women. This interplay throws open common points of friction and that of congruence between the household, the state and the market, and the working the lives of women. These negotiations are embedded in a myriad of social locations and intersectionalities, where these working women are situated. The factors influencing women's entry and sustenance in paid work have gradations and contours. In the sections that follow, enablers and

barriers are intertwined in their presentation. Hence, the findings, as informed by the experiences of women, do not emphasize enablers and barriers as standalone categories. Working women position the self, situated in different domains, accessing different levels of support or deterrence that they experience. Therefore, these findings attempt at representing this complexity yet bring to the fore patterns of commonality from these varied individual experiences. Subsections with the findings in each domain are followed by key takeaways that highlight some of the trends.

3.1. ENABLERS AND BARRIERS: INDIVIDUAL AND HOUSEHOLD LEVEL

1. Entering the workforce: The following section discusses the pathways connecting women's journey from households and training/skilling/educational institutes to the labor market. Women's participation in education and employment is driven by a separate set of factors (Klasen & Lamanna, 2009), given that there is an increased impetus on skilling and training in India

(Ghosh, 2015). In our study, the *entry points of women* in the workforce seem to be facilitated by skills training and a distress-driven need for additional income within the household.

1.1. Graduate level education followed by

skills training: Most of the women workers who participated in the study were graduates. As part of their endeavors to join the job market, nearly all of them were enrolled at specialized training and skilling centers, which ranged from central and state initiatives such as Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY), World Class Skill Center (WCSC) to courses in private colleges. These institutes channelized job search strategies, job openings and opportunities for the job seekers (Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL), 2018), which improved their motivation and access to the market. These women joined the skilling and training institutes immediately after or during their graduation degrees. This is in congruence with literature positing an increase in the probability of employment at higher levels of education, especially after the completion of graduation (Chatterjee, Desai, & Vanneman, 2018). The additional gap between the youth seeking jobs and the employers seeking skilled professionals can be resolved by the institutes, particularly for formal jobs. The study found this to be successful, irrespective of the quality of formal education. Notably, women's choice of enrolment in skilling institutions or employment is often controlled and sanctioned by male members of the household; thus, becoming a site of control on women's lives.

Anganwadi workers¹⁴ (in the health sector) did not enroll in any training or skilling institute, but joined the workforce for additional household income. This kind of employment is distress driven and compels women to work to support themselves and their families (Chaudhary & Verick, 2014). There is also an undercurrent of class when access to education and skilling are considered. One of the ways of measuring class is "capital" (Vaid, 2014). Even though no direct questions were asked to determine levels of capital, access to resources and time available for women to substitute household tasks with paid work, opportunities were proxy variables that played out in deciding their education and skill levels.

1.2. Need for additional income at home:

Anganwadi workers were graduates, but did not enroll in skill training prior to joining work. The women's decisions with respect to education and skilling were controlled by male members of their natal families before marriage and marital family after marriage. An Anganwadi worker, who wanted to study nursing, was discouraged by her family: "my mama (maternal uncle) was adamant about not sending me there, saying the environment there isn't good. It is a gents' department and doctors are not good to women. My parents also got influenced by that. They thought it's a long course of 3-4 years and sending me away for so long *might spoil me."* These women were married during or after their graduation. They joined the workforce in need of an additional income in their respective marital homes. There was a noticeable gap between their last educational degree and them joining the workforce. Often, a key outcome of marriage for women is concession of control to their marital family. This, combined with a lack of understanding of skills required and appropriate channels to approach the market, adds to the barriers for entry into the labor market - to access formal jobs. When asked about why she chose the job at the Anganwadi center, another worker responded, "This was it. My husband said that there are vacancies here [at the center near her house]. So, he got the forms and we filled them up. Everything is so difficult in our country, getting a job here [at Anganwadi *center] is difficult as well."* In this case, work-life choices were made by a male member of the household reinforcing the male breadwinner ideology that extends to not only providing for the family, but also to making decisions around allocation of women's labor.

¹⁴An Anganwadi worker (AWW), a woman selected from the local community, is a community-based frontline honorary worker of the Integrated Child Development Services program (ICDS) in India. Their understanding, communication skills, and approach are needed to implement the grand projects of the state and central governments, making them the most vital link in delivering the "health for all" mission. Accessed from https://www. semanticscholar.org/paper/Profile-of-Anganwadi-workers-and-their-knowledge-in-Sondankar-Kotnis/bd1888c6e87811c62e6318c2d9b4c865ad1f7bfc on March 21, 2020

A male data operator in the IT sector, while explaining the circumstances that led his wife to work, shed light on exercise of similar forms of control: "Like I told you, my salary was delayed by six months or so, how could I manage my family without salary and for so many months? My wife was interested in bridal makeup during marriage season (she was not interested in studying) so, she requested to pursue a beauticians' course. After a discussion with my parents, we helped her take admission at a beauticians' training institute. After a year's training, she started working at a nearby beauty center. It is because of her job we can save some amount regularly, we weren't able to do that before." These conditions related to the nature of work and location of the workplace allow gender roles and norms to persist. For instance, Anganwadi work is socially sanctioned because the occupation is rooted in care of children, pregnant women and their health. It is also a part-time role, often closer to their place of residence.

There is evidence that indicates a possible relationship between the economic status of women participants, and them striving to earn supplementary income during their graduation. The research did not enquire about the social class of the participants, but their subjective reflections during interviews suggested that women in WC sectors were mostly first-generation working women from their respective families. Their supplementary income from part-time jobs enabled them to join the market in small ways – filling application forms, applying for courses and take entrance tests, etc., – shifting the decision-making within the household away from the male providers.

The barriers for entry to jobs in traditional roles such as tutoring, Anganwadi center, part-time teaching, etc., are lower in contrast to formal jobs in the workforce. This is because these conform to the prevalent social and gender norms – in naturalized care-based work and in distress driven work. Usually, these TLs are also located closer to the women's residence. These role perceptions and constraints have led to creation of occupational segregations in the labor market.

PARTICIPANT

Sana¹⁵ travels 3 hours every day, from Shahdara to Noida, to her workplace (approximately 30 kilometers one way). She works as a sales executive in a retail store at a prime location frequented by customers. Sana joined this store after two short stints of paid internships a year and a half ago. She was introduced to such workplaces by her training institute, WCSC. WCSC is a Delhi government skilling initiative, which began in 2012. Training in retail is one of the four courses available with them, besides hospitality, digital marketing and finance. Sana delightfully described her training and mentorship experience. She learned about the center when it was brought to her notice by her father, who insisted that she should give this a shot after she graduated. Her first choice was finance, but she did not qualify in two subsequent selection rounds, and thereafter, decided to join retail. A deciding factor for Sana to continue training with WCSC, though with a different course, was the alumni's testimonies of good placement post the course.

Highlights of the training institute that made a lasting imprint on her were the state-of-art training infrastructure with mock setups, trainings facilitated through technical and interpersonal skills, and continued mentorship from the master trainers. When she finished the course, she was equipped to

¹⁵ The names of participants and other identifiers have been changed to maintain anonymity under the confidentiality clause of the consent process.

deal with customers and trained to represent the brand values of her workplace as a salesperson. The training period was also her first time travelling independently using the metro. As part of her training, she was initiated into the labor market with paid internships, followed by formal placement as a sales executive at a retail store.

This job has been an enriching experience for Sana as she considers herself to be a representative of the brand she works for and enjoys dealing with a range of customers in a professional workspace. She shares a healthy work relationship with her co-workers and managers. She is free to discuss tasks and workload with her manager, and any other discomfort she faces at work. Positive exposure from working comes in many forms such as her interaction with customers, behavioral changes, engagement with different kinds of knowledge systems – finance, accounting, etc.; this motivates her to continue working. Training and working are accompanied with her freedom of mobility to meet friends and visit places, for which permission had to be sought earlier. Further, having an income saves her the stress of asking for money from her father, which was burdensome.

While discussing the demand side of the market for salespersons, she observed that the overall, percentage of male salespersons exceeds females. The composition was similar during her training at WCSC, where only 32 percent of her batchmates were women. The market demand for male salespersons is higher because the footfall in the stores increases evening onward and the requirement of staff is higher in those hours. Women are often unable to work during the late slots for a variety of reasons related to safety and other responsibilities at home. For similar reasons, only 2 out of the 9 staff members at her workplace are females. She confided that she understands this because she is also responsible for making breakfast at home before she leaves for work and helps her mother with dinner when she returns home around 9 pm. This has changed since before her training course started, when she was responsible for all domestic chores along with taking tuitions. Her two brothers have a choice with respect to fulfilling a task given to them, but for her it is a non-negotiable because she considers it to be her responsibility. Household-related work is a constant tussle which she describes as:

"If you are unmarried, then you get support from your parents in everything. For example, if I do not help my mom because I am tired, then she manages it herself. She understands my problem and she will not bother or taunt me. But after marriage, you will find very few people who are going to support you; if my in-laws allow me to work it will be on the condition that I manage the house because nobody is going to fill that gap, everyone thinks that it's my work and it's a choice to work outside. So, I will have to take that burden."

At work, the two provisions that she thinks could make working more conducive are transport facilities that can make the commute back to home in the evenings easier and enable women to manage evening shifts too. Currently, evening shifts begin at 12:30 pm and end at 9 pm, for which women employees are not appointed. Secondly, a washroom inside the store would be favorable. The one they use now is outside store premises.

2. Sustenance in the workforce: Following are the factors that affect sustenance of work for women at the household level.

2.1. Women's work and intersections with marriage

Between men and women workers, the proportion of economically productive and unproductive activity (unaccounted production for consumption within the family) is starkly different. This pattern of activity directly impacts the time spent at home and outside of home, i.e., at the workplace. A segment of Indian women's movement (1970s onward), for instance, had pushed against ignoring unpaid economic work that women perform within the household. It was also emphasized in Towards Equality (Guha, 1974) and Shram-Shakti (National Commission on Self-employed Women and Women in the Informal Sector, 1988), to underscore that paid and unpaid work co-exist for women. Therefore, this study probed both working women and their male co-workers to understand how women maneuver the continuum of work.

2.1.1 Balancing paid and unpaid work: As per study participants, there are three ways through which families manage unpaid work. First, working women perform a huge share of household chores before they leave for work and after they reach home. Second, in the absence of working women at home during work hours, other female family members often attend to the remaining household tasks. Third, the family hires paid domestic help (women, mostly) to take care of household chores. As discussed above, these vary depending on family structures and resources available to substitute the unpaid care and domestic work.

The implications of such an arrangement are: a) the role of men as caregivers/ nurturers or sharing joint responsibility of domestic chores is not mainstreamed or a viable alternative is not available. Similarly, the role of caregiving, especially for children, is redistributed intergenerationally among women (mother or mother-in-law) in both nuclear and joint families. b) For working women, the fulfilment of household tasks is articulated in terms of glorified values of adjustment, cooperation and so on. The values are expressed as a principle of femininity, "Women should be responsible toward their household work. When one does not do her household work, that's when problem arises." -Participant working as a computer operator in the Information and Communication sector

The burden of household work rests on women, with or without marriage. Marital status, combined with reproductive duties, is navigated considering these roles and responsibilities that have, culturally, gained primacy in women's lives (Sudarshan & Bhattacharya, 2009). The state and private sector are not committed or accountable for provisioning care roles in terms of crèche, community kitchen and so on, making the household and women in it, default custodians for these responsibilities. This is widespread in the cultural context where the social location of women within the domestic sphere is essentialized. So, marriage and provisioning of care roles affects the choices of roles/sectors where women work. In a study on women workers in Delhi (Neetha, N., Mazumdar, 2010), it was found, "the service sector in Delhi was composed of 70 percent unmarried women, of the age demographic below 26 years (concentrated in sales), while women above 36 years of age were seen concentrated in managerial and clerical non-customer oriented jobs" (2010, 46). They study concluded that the only professional category, where married women outnumbered unmarried women, was the managerial category. Marriage and childbearing affect both - women's participation in the labor force and their choice of work – the limitations amplified due to lack of provisions and services to alleviate their reproductive roles.

Marriage affects women's work in different ways to create sectors that can be divided based on gender and choices available for unmarried or married women. These practices inform perceptions and notions about women's work (essentialized notions of womanhood; compatible with married women working as Anganwadi workers, teachers, etc.).

Childcare has been an ever-present concern. However, women from different social locations and sectors managed paid work and childcare in varied ways depending primarily on different care arrangements within the household.

2.1.2 Marriage and flexible aspirations: Given that the norm for women in India is to be married, there are several negotiations with different stakeholders in marital homes, with in-laws and the spouse, for women to work. In the shifting structure of the market, where educated women in urban centers are increasingly working in service sector roles, there is an underlying assumption of "flexible aspirations" of working women (Vijayakumar, 2013). The shift from male breadwinner standard operates on a "far, but no farther" gendered paradigm (Raju, 2013b), wherein women have been taught to embody modern cultural ideals alongside the traditional values. The status guo within the household does not shift, which leads to a double burden of work for women.

"We are called superwomen, you know. We do work at home as well. We make breakfast and prepare lunch before leaving since my mother is elderly, so they can eat whenever hungry. I reach home by 2, then heat the food, and prepare some more."- Participant working as an Anganwadi worker

"We are in the 21st century, everything gets decided before marriage. What are your expectations from the daughter-in-law; like will she go for job or will she stay at home? If these things aren't pre-decided then, for example, boy's family can say why didn't you tell us that you want to work or the girl can say why didn't you tell me [the girl] not to go for a job after marriage? Sometimes, the boy and the girl agree about her working, but if it is not discussed within the family, it creates an issue later. So, it is better to clear everything before marriage."- Male co-worker working as a sales executive in the retail sector

Working women can pursue their career while prioritizing and seeking acceptability from their families. In our conversation with working women and their male co-workers, it emerged that there is an understanding of what is "respectable" and "acceptable" in terms of work for women. Women, who identified themselves as middle class and aspiring to work, found it easier to make a case with their household members for paid work/jobs in the government or public sector such as Anganwadi worker and IT data operator. In another example, women in retail, mostly unmarried, were made conscious of how their femininity is incompatible with that of respectable working women because of their interaction with customers - who are strangers. A participant working as a salesperson in the retail sector said, "teaching, engineering, doctor etc., are respectable jobs. But if a girl is working as a sales girl in a retail shop, then they consider it disrespectful. Because in sales, one has to interact different kind of people, everyday, which they don't *like."* There is literature (UNICEF & ICRW, 2011) that suggests that educated women are better at articulating terms of their marriage; however, the evidence was not conclusive.

2.2. Women's income and bargaining power within households

To discuss women's paid work, we begin with an understanding that nature of women's paid work is dependent on their burden of unpaid domestic and care work. According to OECD data, women in India spent an average of 352 minutes a day in unpaid work, compared to 52 minutes a day for men. On the other hand, the proportion of paid work by women is 185 minutes per day as compared to 391 minutes for men (OECD, 2018). Summing up the paid and unpaid work for men and women, respectively, the total work done by women exceeds work done by men and a huge chunk of unpaid work is fulfilled by women. When women enter the domain of paid work, the first set of barriers lie in negotiating their traditional role of primary caregiver. As per the women interviewed, their income was generally allocated to negotiate the burden of unpaid care, even if not it does not completely offset it. This, combined with the rising household income, increases "the opportunity cost of domestic activities for women. Additionally, as the financial necessity of women to engage in outside work drops, most families are keen for women to stay at home as it is reflective of a rise in social status." (Ghai, 2018). There is extensive literature on how women's employment and earnings increase their bargaining power within the household (Acharya & Bennett, 1985; Klasen & Lamanna,

2009; The World Bank, 2001). In this study, we found that women's income may be viewed as a resource that supplements the household's pool of income. This does not necessarily imply greater control for them with respect to intra-household decisions on allocation of resources (The World Bank, 2001). While it is difficult to measure the change in bargaining power owing to an increase in the contribution of women's earnings in the household income, we looked at how the income earned was instrumentalized to negotiate different aspects in varying degrees. The two common threads captured in our interviews were as follows:

2.2.1 Contributing to the pool of income within the household: Some women draw a proportion of money to use for their personal consumption, and the remaining income is pooled with the family income. A participant working in the IT sector as a data collector said, "I do some selective work like getting groceries, dusting floors or, sometimes, I prepare the curry and they [in-laws] make chapatis themselves. *So, things are easier for me and I hand over my salary* to my mother in law." This choice and control of what to do with her income was higher when she was unmarried, "Before marriage, I sometimes gave some money to my mother." An unmarried salesperson shared, "There is no compulsion to contribute money to my family, but I contribute whatever I feel. All my brothers and sisters have started earning and they manage their own expenses."

The allocation of income to the household, natal and marital, differs before and after marriage. Unpaid care continues to burden women in natal or marital households, but the income is leveraged differently by women to continue their paid work, sometimes just to sustain working. This reflects the level of internalization of norms around women's primary duty toward their household. Their choice to engage in paid work must be balanced by a contribution to domestic chores as well as other responsibilities. "I think, typically, I run the kitchen, because the minute you get married the responsibility of food and running the kitchen is there, including ensuring that your house is clean... those things are primarily there" – Interview with a corporate manager in the manufacturing sector

2.2.2 Deciding the allocation of income:

The rising income effect (Chatterjee et al., 2018c; Ghai, 2018) is postulated to have a drastic impact on female labor force participation rate. Interviews hinted toward working women contrasting their income with their family income, i.e., the income of the male counterparts (husbands) in this study. We also found that when income of women is equivalent or higher than their male counterparts (in marriage), there is an increase in bargaining power over allocation of income by women. There is considerable literature that links women's employment and earnings with an increase in their bargaining power at home (Klasen & Lamanna, 2009; The World Bank, 2001).

While it is hard to measure the bargaining power by different members of the household, the interviews pointed toward measurable contribution made by working women by means of asset creation, paying off debts, rent coverage and education related expenses, i.e., toward the well-being of the family. It indicated their increased control over decisionmaking and bargaining power within the family. A woman working with a gig economy platform as a salon trainer confided, "With my salary, I was able to purchase a home, and car for the family, and spend money on jewellery. My husband is willing to cook and take care of children. He even left his low paying jobs to assist in pick up and drop for me between jobs, to reduce the time spent in travel". This was seen in a few cases, but across different sectors and roles independent of educational attainment.

Factors that bring about a change in the status quo of the family in aspects of women's role in decisionmaking and share of household chores between men and women are: conditions of work for women that incorporate policies like flextime, paid leaves and income commensurate to work done without devaluing it, and create a culture of dignity for workers (taking measures to ensure safety, respectable work environment). In this particular instance, when the woman shifted from being employed at a salon to platform economy, she was incentivized. "The flexible work hours allow [them] to be part of [their] children's lives, i.e., attend parent-teacher associations, make sure the children are well fed, etc." Such workplace policies are explicit in recognition of women's unpaid work, giving them more control over their time and labor, especially in the near absence of public provisioning of care. Similarly, another salesperson sustained her employment so far because of better working conditions, "usually, this market remains closed on Wednesday, so on that day the shop remains closed. But during exhibition days, our store remains open on all days, in which case we get compensation, including 12 leaves annually. They [employers] have provided medical insurance."

3. Desirable conditions at workplace and work for women

The macro data suggests an increase in women's demand for regular salaried work¹⁶ as opposed to selfemployment or casual employment. Additionally, with the increase in educational attainment, the probability of women seeking salaried or white collared positions increased with a simultaneous decline in other kinds of work like self-employment and casual employment (Chatterjee et al., 2018a). The increase in white-collar jobs, which are the only jobs likely to pull in highly qualified women in the labor market, has not kept pace with the increased supply of gualified women (Klasen et al, 2013). The share of white-collar services in urban employment fell from 19 percent in 1987 to 17 percent in 2009, while the proportion of graduates in working age population has increased precipitously from 11 percent to 21 percent (Ghai, 2018). Therefore, one of the reasons for decline in women's participation in the workforce can be attributed to the mismatch in jobs available. Some of the discussions on desirable conditions to continue working are directly linked to workplaces and manifested in two distinct forms.

3.1 Intangible benefits of employment

One of the direct and obvious reasons for employment is income. While this is an important consideration for employment for women, there are other values that they draw from their work - recognition and identity within the household, and in the public sphere (Talukdar & Linders, 2013). Despite the gendered ideology being reinforced by the market in terms of job creation and degree of equality in opportunities (Vijayakumar, 2013), these women candidly expressed their improved self-perception. A participant employed as a data collector in the IT sector stated, "I told them [her inlaws] that the job is not just for money, one can learn many things, for example, I learned how to deal people which I couldn't before joining." Similarly, a salesperson in retail emphatically stated, "I like to work, and I cannot sit idle. You can earn name, fame and money, but I think name and fame matters more if people know that this girl is a manager or store in-charge at XYZ store with a job title." Another participant employed as computer programmer added, "once you start a job, you meet people alongside work, that's the mindset which one develops over the years." Anganwadi workers, though critical of their status as workers, suggested, "the good thing is that Anganwadi work has made us leaders in the community. We have learnt to speak in public without fear" (Sreerekha, 2017, p. 192).

The interviews with women raised questions about "self-worth" (in an occupation that is stigmatized as "women's work" on account of being traditional and the gendered market ideology) reflected in the sense of self they derive from this work.

3.2 Visibility of employment

There is further evidence to suggest that educated women aspire for white-collared jobs in the economy, the decline of which has corroded the aspiration of working women. Congruent to studies that marriage is considered an alternative to the labor market (Ghai, 2018), the expectation to give up education and career prospects for marriage and reproductive roles had to be resisted. The decision to be employed, especially after marriage, is a household decision and does not pivot around individual choice and aspirations of women. Therefore, to sustain working; the place of work, conditions of work, and the benefits are intrinsically tied to legitimacy derived from

¹⁶ The participation of women in regular/salaried employment has increased at a higher annual rate (4.7 percent) compared to men (2.9 percent) from 1993–94 to 2011–12 (International Labour Organization, 2018).

work, especially within the family. These conditions are, undoubtedly, iterative of some dimensions of decent work (ILO, 2008), if not all, like "security in the workplace and social protection for workers and their families" and "prospects for personal development". The interviews show that these are combined with their aspiration to be employed in sectors that give them a sense of pride and conviction as well as social legitimacy. Apart from public sector jobs, there was evidence that other terms and conditions that have ascribed social legitimacy to women's work. In urban Delhi, women across sectors described that their bargaining power to enter and sustain themselves in jobs was enhanced by the degree of "professionalism" offered by the jobs. Professionalism was signified by public sector jobs, specified hours of work and provisions of choice of work-slots and flexi-timings, established codes of conduct, regulated implementation of such codes and grievance redressal, an opportunity for professional growth, brand value, and accountability of employers. These terms and conditions fit the demands of the market and have greater acceptability associated with them.

"Professionalism is quite important. In fact, when we are appointed by any brand, we act as the face of the brand and represent the whole brand. So, it is quite essential. In addition to that, everybody has an equal task to do at the store. The morning shift is from 10 am to 7 pm."- Interview with a woman employed as a sales executive

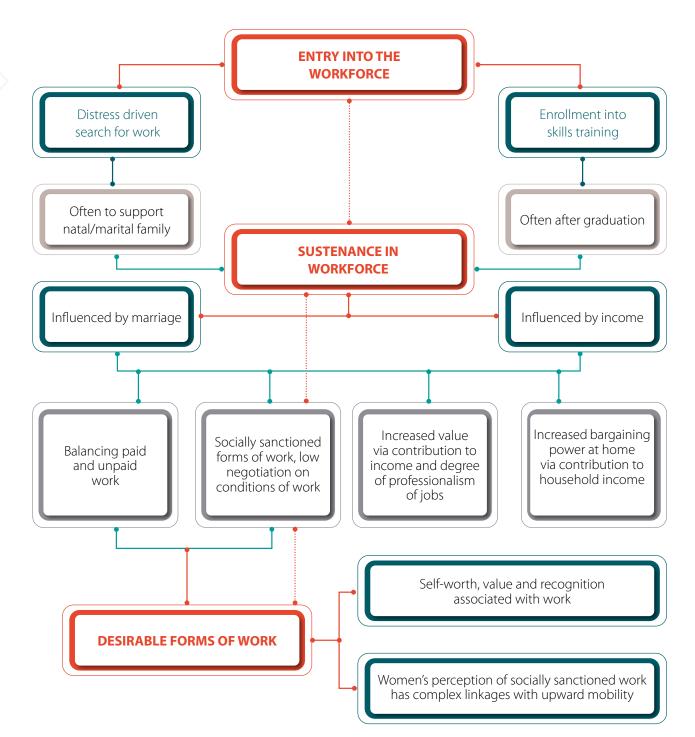
This is not removed from the imagination of belonging to a certain class of workers by differentiating themselves from the femininity that is considered domesticated or "older, parochial" (Radhakrishnan, 2009, p. 197). It is also interesting to note that male co-workers' interviews did not make a reference to professionalism or its role in their career ambitions. But they held an implicit expectation for women to fit into some of the attributes of professionalism listed above. A male co-worker working as a sales executive in retail said, *"My sister completed diploma in accounts and worked as part time employee in BSNL just to learn and have some experience. She is now preparing for a government job."* With regard to his brother's career, he said, "I suggested to him [his brother] that a degree is proof of your capability, but if you want to earn money then you should think beyond your field of study and keep an open mind". This offers a glimpse of gendered conditioning of career ambitions entangled with the gender segregated approach in the labor market.

- For working women, the benefits drawn from economic prosperity are more than mere income, and they challenge the assumption that self-worth can only be derived from individualized notions of aspiration and ambition.
 - Better condition of work translates into improved status in the household and the community.
- Professionalism is a combination of different aspects of "decent work" and expressions of social mobility. This social mobility is not just intergenerational redistribution of economic opportunities, but also an expression of upward class mobility.

3.2. ENABLERS AND BARRIERS: MARKET AND EMPLOYMENT RELATED

1. Skills training: Benefits and links to markets

Skilling and training are found to introduce women to employability opportunities in formal jobs and initiate them into new social networks. Skilling and training institutions are also the point at which their lives intersect with others outside their families and kinship ties, away from the household or domestic realm (Neetha, 2004). The mentorship and guidance available in these spaces are strengths that encourage trainees. This is combined with their emerging social identity as job seekers and an economic entity is shaped here. The informal and social networks facilitate it further. Women reported that their participation training helps them to comprehend the demands of the market and supports their future growth and professional development. "WCSC helps a lot, particularly girls; they provide placements to students. I was placed for my hard work and my tutors have guided me throughout, and I carefully followed their instructions. They even made us



SNAPSHOT OF FINDINGS FROM INDIVIDUAL AND HOUSEHOLD DOMAIN

do role plays. In practice sessions, they taught us all about customer service such as how to behave with customers, how to tackle an angry customer, etc. It was a good experience for me, and I can say if I act as a professional then it is just because of WCSC." - Interview with a woman employed as salesperson This study highlights skill development as a key policy issue, with a renewed push on existing schemes by the central and state governments in recent times. In our discussions with training institutes, two recurring problems were noted: an overall lower utilization of seats at training centers and dropouts during the course period. According to administrative staff at these institutes, this is on account of asymmetry of information between demand and supply; and dropouts occur because the trainees are unable to gauge the time and effort that is required for the course. The enrolment of female trainees is low across courses. This was corroborated by a study on Industrial Training Institute¹⁷ (ITI) graduates (CENPAP, 2012) across all Indian states that indicates a consistent increase in overall dropout rate from 2005 to 2011 compounded with the decline in graduate rates in the same period. The study states, "A significant proportion of women graduates were not available in labor market due to various personal reasons related to their stereotyped gender roles assigned to them... monthly wages were significantly higher for males in comparison to female graduates." (CENPAP, 2012, pp. xiii-xiv).

These stereotypes are being addressed by individual initiatives such as those by the NTLN through investment in resources not only to skill women in certain trades but also to provide a focus on life skills (Adler & Stewart, 2004; Azad Foundation, n.d.), along with community mobilization to facilitate their entry and sustenance in skilling programs as well as in the labor market. Bilateral agencies have made efforts to hold dialogue with industrial clusters and employers to push for attitude changes. As per an expert, "they [employers] are happy being away from women employees because they will have to create structures within the factory or within the work space where they have to accommodate rights of women worker, which they want to avoid as much as possible. The boys in ITIs are getting placed at bigger companies like Maruti, Voltas etc. In girls' ITIs, employers do not even step in for placement."

The dimension of occupational segregation was noted in the difference between the courses offered to men and women. Women's ITIs by and large offer "only non-engineering courses, especially women-oriented trades such as tailoring, embroidery, stenography, etc.," (CENPAP, 2012, p. 11). According to the study, there is a clear distinction between male and female graduates from engineering and non-engineering courses, respectively. There seems to be a clear gender divide in the preference of trades. Although, what leads to such preferences must be explored to understand this trend further. One plausible reason for lower demand for women trained in these trades can be explained by the missing thrust on creating demand for work environment that absorbs the female workforce. The market, both ideologically and physically, is structured to accommodate the male workforce. The expert added, "traditionally, factories had no toilets for women, so the first thing we asked was to create a women-friendly infrastructure."

2. Formal and informal associations: Women's bargaining power and voice

People associate with their workplaces in a wide variety of ways, from informal networks to discuss daily dilemmas to formal unionization that manifests in seeking structural change. These associations and networks often act as support systems. Often, when there are issues at work, women prefer discussing and consulting with their friends and peers. Women have reservations about disclosing issues to family members. One working woman participant stated, "if they [family members] come to know about these incidents, then they will not allow me to do this job. They will say better to stay at home and there is no need for this kind job." Another explained, "what happens when you speak to your own family or parents is that they get stressed and their biases obviously come to play, there are emotions attached. If you are lucky to have friends, they can give you unbiased suggestions... and sometimes, just talking can help."

While multiple studies (Donald et al., 2017; International Institute for Population Sciences, 2015-16) and national level data have documented restrictions on women's freedom of movement and their impact on women's ability to work, lesser evidence is available on the influence of women's networks and social support groups outside of the household once they start working. Drawing from limited evidence (Golla

¹⁷ "The main institutions under the craftsmen training scheme in India are public ITIs and private Industrial Training Centers (ITCs). The aim of the ITIs and ITCs is to provide skilled workers to the informal sector; however, evidence shows that both institutes have performed poorly on their mandate. ITIs have been criticized for offering training in trades that are outdated and not relevant for the modern day employment requirements." (Bala & Singhal, 2019, p. 14)

et al., 2018; Pavanello et al., 2015) on the significance of women's groups and networks at the community level, mostly from the context of self-help groups, we triangulated our findings and noted that formation of informal networks for women outside the homes is linked to their increased mobility and negotiation, and decision-making skills obtained in the process of training, skilling and education.

Sometimes, the line between informal and formal associations may get blurred, especially at the workplace where co-workers may be part of both. The former serves as means to access help, resources, opportunities, support, and provide a sense of belonging; while the latter are formalized forms of collectivization like workers' unions that give women a platform to voice their concerns, ability to assert their negotiations more effectively, and "negotiate the marginalizing structures" (Purkayastha & Subramaniam, 2004, p. 122). An example of one such process would be when the Anganwadi Union rallied for an increase in pay with the state government. "The honorarium paid to about 22,000 workers and helpers at Delhi governmentrun day-care centers under the Anganwadi scheme was doubled. The revised honorarium of Anganwadi workers and helpers is INR 9,678 and INR 4,839 per month, respectively, and an additional INR 500 and INR 250 per month, respectively, for mobile/internet charge as compared to INR 5,000 and INR 2,500 the workers and helpers were getting prior to September 2018."18 Similarly, data operators employed in government offices across India unified as an union to fight contractualization of their jobs and instate regularization. Both male and female pointed toward broader conditions of work within which women are disposed to covert forms of gender discrimination (refer to Case Study 2). A male data operator in the IT sector shares, "I thought of quitting this job but one of my colleagues suggested that we file a court case against this issue [contractualization resulting in erratic salaries] and then we filed a case in labor court. There we got support from the labor commissioner and he assured us as we are fighting for a

good cause, but it might take longer. He promised to refer it in labor court, to move to regularize our jobs."

In India, the overall workers' union movement has been curtailed. The uneasiness with retrenchment of labor unionization activities was expressed by a labor rights activist as, "... the attack on freedom of association is phenomenal, there is no collective bargaining. It does not even get to collective bargaining because freedom of association is tough enough. Workers are scared to say they belong to a union or being caught with union membership cards in their pockets; they could lose their jobs. There is also illegal termination. As a union, this is a very difficult time because there is no support from the government." The success of data operators to organize into a union in the public sector setup can be juxtaposed with the inability of salespersons to unionize in the private sector, owing to the labor standards that are legally enforced. In case of the latter, the response of the state in the times of increased privatization, to say the very least, is "muted"(Singh, 2009).

These associations formed by workers may not always be issue or agenda based, but are multifaceted. They are important because they stimulate broader workers' rights – accountability of employers and state actors on a range of issues such as getting childcare facilities, enhancing mobility in relation to employment, steady pay and social securities. While some of these issues are related to work and employment, they are often linked to creating pathways for enhancing women's agency.¹⁹

The networks formed by workers and women in different jobs and roles can be formal such as unions, or informal such as peer circles. These networks aid and help women to overcome their day-to-day hurdles as well as collectivize to demand accountability as workers for structural change.

¹⁸ Govt doubles salary of Anganwadi workers - The Hindu. (2017). Retrieved January 29, 2020, from https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Delhi/govtdoubles-salary-of-anganwadi-workers/article19333885.ece

¹⁹ In their paper Measuring Women's Agency, authors arrive at three key constructs of agency upon review of multiple measurement frameworks: a) Individuals need to define goals that are in line with their values b) Individuals need to perceive a sense of control and ability c) Individuals need to act on goals. (Donald et al., 2017)

PARTICIPANT NARRATIVE 2

Arun has been working as a data collector at the Central Government Health Scheme (CGHS) center for 11-12 years. His career began with a walk-in interview advertisement for computer operators at the center when CGHS was upgrading its record keeping systems from physical to electronic. At the time of joining, he was a graduate in physical sciences, with certification through a year-long computer software course. He was married a year after he started his job. He now lives with his parents, wife and a son.

When he began working in 2006, new recruits in his role were trained on the computerization system and trained everyone with the set module, after which they were appointed directly for work, but the salary was paid by a third-party outsourced by the State. Until 2012, the outsourcing of payment rendered the workers contractual and exempted them basic benefits such as bonus, maternity leaves, sick leaves, etc. After 2012, the troubles increased because the salary was extremely irregular. The nature of employment remained contractual despite discussions on regularization and the company outsourced to pay their salaries was frequently changed, each one with their new set of terms and conditions but all with no regard for workers' rights. When employees started filing formal complaints, they faced a backlash in the form of termination letters, and verbal harassment from seniors and other permanent employees who felt threatened due to regularization of data collectors. His female colleagues, part of the union, and hence, petitioners on the case, were also harassed in an unspoken manner by senior employees – locking women's washrooms, removing fans from their rooms, giving bad character references, increased surveillance of their entry and exit timings, etc.

Data collectors working at CGHS centers across the country formed a union, registered and approached the labor court in 2013. The first cause for fighting was to nullify the vengeful termination orders against data collectors working on contract basis all over India. He added, "When our termination orders were issued, 100-150 workers protested in a rally in front of labor commissioner's office. There, we pursued them to refer our case to higher court. There were me, women, old/aged people in our rally, which forced them to listen to us and file a case in this matter."

The backlash increased when this case was filed in the court of law, but the union decided to fight it despite the increased gap in salary payments. The data collectors were asked to work at different centers in Delhi on a rotational basis instead of hiring more employees at centers, increasing the workload for employees. Transfers and posting at far off locations became a new ploy to harass employees. Arun currently works at three different centers throughout the week, spread across the length and breadth of the city. While discussing the hostile work environment, he mentioned he continues to work here because if the union wins the case, he will receive all salary arrears and will become a regular employee with the government.

In the meantime, he admitted that resources within the household were strained. The family then considered that his wife should also work. As per Arun, she was interested in working as a beautician. Following a family discussion, she enrolled in a one-year course, after which she started working in a salon about a kilometer from home. Given her work-timings and household chores, she started waking up at 4:30 am instead of 5:30 am to finish off all chores before she left for work. Arun's mother takes care of his son once he returns from school and other related chores. They

considered crèche facilities, but they were expensive, and the staff unreliable. Arun considers the joint family to be a boon. The outcomes of the hostile working conditions and salary were vastly different for his female colleagues, some of them had to quit work, *"before the case began, women who got married, didn't get salary on time for many months and had to reach office by 7.30 am in the morning after managing household work; they simply quit the job."* He added that if his female colleagues work as contractual workers with erratic timings and salaries equivalent to minimum wages, they preferred working elsewhere. A few of them quit a few months after their marriages in the absence of policies such as maternity leave, compensatory leaves, sick leaves, etc. In some cases, the harassment was sexual, and owing to their status as contractual workers, the internal complaints committee refused to address cases and suggested filing police complaints. However, the reputation of the women and their future job prospects are at stake, which act as deterrents to them filing the reports. Arun believes that the court case will be in their favor.

3. Gender segregation is reinforced in jobs and roles

Job roles for women are derived from cultural assumptions and expectations in relation to their gender roles and other factors such as caste and class.²⁰ For instance, research on global value chains in apparel manufacturing shows that the women are concentrated in labor intensive roles, which are mostly low-skilled, low-paid for a variety of reasons including skills and cultural factors whereby "jobs involving machinery may be viewed as being more suitable for men than women." (Farole, 2016, p. 5). Our study further validates that women are often kept out of certain jobs by differentiating between "fringe functions" that are fulfilled by women as opposed to "core business functions" undertaken by men. As a participant explained, "For every organization, there are certain roles that form the core competency. So, you have marketing sales, which is what brings in the money. You have HR that manages the workforce that is bringing in the money and you have finance that is managing the money that comes through. That is what businesses are based on. Then come the support functions, the biggest ones being the

manufacturing and logistics. Now, both manufacturing and logistics are support functions of a business that are heavily women dominated." - Interview with a male corporate manager (co-worker)

Our data further indicates that many of these biases are not only instilled during the hiring processes, but also in the way these roles are structured and managed. For instance, sales related roles at entry and midlevels involve working in smaller cities with extensive travel. Given the glaring issues of public safety and the regressive norms faced by women with respect to living and traveling (Lamb, 2018), these roles are most often taken up by men. Hence, progress from bottom to top rungs is male dominated.

In another example of gender segregation, in urban metropolis contexts like Delhi, labor market activities are shifting and mediated by digital platforms, leading a number of women into "freelancing" arrangements in the gig economy²¹ with platforms such as Uber, Zomato, UrbanClap. "On-demand-jobs",²² specifically like UrbanClap, are attracting women workers for

²⁰ Government doubles salary of Anganwadi workers - The Hindu. (2017). Retrieved January 29, 2020, from https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/ Delhi/govt-doubles-salary-of-anganwadi-workers/article19333885.ece

²¹ The gig economy – also known as the platform, sharing or collaborative economy – is expanding quickly, as digital platforms that bring together workers and the purchasers of their services continue to emerge and grow globally (Hunt & Samman, 2019)

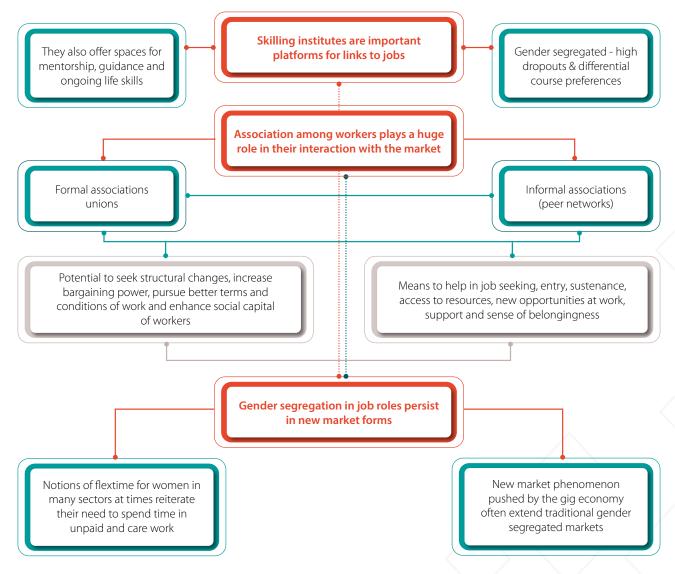
²² On-demand work refers to tasks that are carried out locally, with the purchaser and the provider in physical proximity. These tasks are generally organized via mobile platforms, by companies that set the terms of service (including fees and minimum service quality standards) (Hunt & Samman, 2019)

different services. These gender-specific career paths owing to the discriminatory conditions are prevalent in the market and in industries. The conditions of flexible work and high income, on the other hand, is meeting the demand of women workers as informed by the key informants. "Most women prefer joining salon and spa services. Stereotypes affect the kind of jobs that people select and/or are already trained for. It is expected from customers too. It is assumed that part-time jobs like paid domestic help will be fulfilled by women, whereas deep cleaning and car cleaning by men, mainly because the latter involves machinery."- KII with an employer.

Flextime (Chung & van der Lippe, 2018) at work has allowed women to continue their jobs and to balance

their domestic chores and responsibilities. Flexibility has acquired new dimensions that can be related to time, terms of employment, work available and so on, which has benefitted women. Women voiced this as having increased control of their labor and time. However, the flexibility demanded by employees must be read critically in view of employer-driven flexibility and greater demand for contractual labor, which may imply surrendering or lowering of benefits (Das, Deb Kusum, Choudhury & Singh, 2015). It must also be interrogated for its perpetuation of gendered work options for women, which confine them to their homes.

The market is opening in diverse ways. Digital platform is one of the new interfaces in urban



SNAPSHOT OF FINDINGS FROM MARKET DOMAIN

Delhi, which is attracting workers from different social classes. However, there is little evidence that the existing gendered perception of market is not replicated on this platform, concretizing the roles further.

The utilization of flextime benefits for women is a double-edged sword. It permits women to control their time and labor in different duties they are bound by, mainly because of lack of market and state provisions for various kinds of caregiving.

With an increase in privatization of market and jobs, it is important to look at the global value chain that has been found to perpetuate labor-intensive roles for women.

3.3 ENABLERS AND BARRIERS: STATE AND POLICY RELATED

The policy response by the government in addressing the decline in women's labor force participation has lately been geared toward the promotion of skill development and entrepreneurship initiatives. Given the demographic dividend in India, along with the skill mismatch, feminist economists argue that instead of focusing on skill development there is a need for macroeconomic development strategies focused on good quality employment generation for the youth. Skill development may be a part of the process; however, not the only path to address the issue of joblessness and acute decline in women's work force participation (Ghosh, 2015). In the skill training discourse technical skills and life skills are both essential parts of the curriculum. Life skills training in NTL programs by NGOs have played their role in enabling women to critique gender norms, negotiate better sharing of work within households and better conditions at work.

The capacity of skilling by schemes and policies in the ambit of Skill India initiative launched in 2015 (British Council, 2016) is massive²³ (Gothoskar, 2016). The gap in implementation, although, is also wide as schemes

and policies often do not have components of enabling environment in terms of budgets and infrastructural provisioning, along with gender concerns built within them. Some policy measures address the need for crèches, working women's hostels, maternity benefit, provisions to address sexual harassment at workplace in principle, however, in their design or operationalization, these do not have universal coverage.

Following are a few emerging trends with respect to policy discourse, highlighting key gaps and demands in policy design:

1. Skill policy is not adequately gender-responsive

The Skill India initiative included specific proposals for increasing both women's participation in economic activities as well as increasing employability of women. Skilling has encouraged entrepreneurship among women, but mostly in stereotypical occupations rather than challenging occupation gender norms (Thakur & Mitra, 2019). The National Policy for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship 2015 (Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, 2015) mentions women in two specific areas: as part of the youth cohort, and as entrepreneurs, which are not truly responsive to the continuum of needs women may have at different stages of their educational, skilling/ training and professional lives. The policy mentions mainstreaming gender roles by skilling women in non-traditional roles and increasing gender sensitivity at the workplace. It does not clarify the concept of non-traditional or roles encompassing it. The policy mandates encouragement of women entrepreneurs through appropriate incentives for women-owned businesses under the public procurement process.

The profile of trainees who sought training at ITIs endorsed some of the findings from the household level. The profile of trainees, when analyzed by their employment status, revealed that the high proportion of unemployed trainees who joined the ITIs aspired primarily for any salaried job and much less for wage or self-employment opportunities. This was followed

²³ "According to the 2013–2014 annual report of the Directorate General of Employment and Training, by 2014 there were 2,275 government-run ITIs that could accommodate 490,802 students and 8,475 private ITIs with a capacity to train 1,032,894 students.20 However, there were regional variations." (Gothoskar, 2016, p. 16)

by a higher proportion of unemployed trainees, who cited their desire for public sector jobs as a reason for joining ITIs (CENPAP, 2012, p. 15). The undesirability of self-employment was further exemplified by only 6.7 percent of graduates reporting their engagement in self-employment without any significant increase in the last few years (Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship, 2018). Most of the trainees joined the ITIs with an intent to get salaried jobs and most of the graduates who are employed after their training are in the category of salaried jobs, both private and public.

There is a stark difference between males and females who enroll in the ITIs – 71 percent male and 20.3 percent female. The percentage of female students who enrolled and graduated was 72.6 percent (as compared to 71.8 percent for males). Analysis of gender differences in employment indicates a difference - 58 percent males and 50.7 percent females as employed (Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship, 2018). Therefore, the inequalities are higher at the entry level for females than their male counterparts for skilling and training. Once linked with opportunities, the proportionate number of males and females who graduate and enter the market is not so different. There is a need to assess externalities such as the gender of mobilizers or trainers at the ITIs, classroom composition of male and female trainees, and counselling of parents and trainees to go over pre-existing biases regarding courses offered. These measures have been successful in some of the training institutes and with members of the NTL network.

There is a clear demand for salaried and public sector job opportunities by both men and women, and low uptake of self-employment opportunities.

Mobilization of women to enter skilling and training roles may improve their chances of participating in the market. Efforts for this must be improved.

2. Lack of thrust on education as a primary skilling process

Since education is the most structural skilling process there is, so to speak, with increasing privatization, who can access what kind of education requires attention. As a key informant, working in the arena of skilling of adolescents and youth, pointed out, "if you are looking at young people for jobs in the retail sector, those who are coming out of government schools are often compared to and are competing with people who are coming out of private schools. They are going to be competitive in terms of language, exposure, communication skills, and computer knowledge. That is sort of 15-19-year olds we must be mindful of when providing skills. This is linked to expanding aspiration, expanding opportunities and moving from exposure to an ability that's really moving down the path of realistic work skill acquisition."

This can be better situated through a study of class, caste and religious differences (Azad Foundation, 2016). Structural changes in the education system are needed to fully harness the potential of skilling initiatives. Several surveys such as the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) comment on children's foundational skills, which have long ranging repercussions for acquiring skills and training later in life. To quote from ASER 2018, "however, even in 2018, only a quarter of all children in Std III are at 'grade level'. This means that the majority of children need *immediate help in acquiring foundational skills in literacy* and numeracy." Moreover, this varies regionally along with other socio-demographic indicators, but trends stabilize with age at the national level, "basic math levels remain low. In Std VIII, more than half of all children are still struggling with division." The report further states, "many children completing Std VIII are unprepared for higher studies or for the labor market. Preparation for school, work, and life is needed by this stage." Given a weak educational foundation, compounded by gender differentials in enrolment, attendance as well as learning performance, skilling options shrink manifold by the time women complete secondary education (Pratham, 2017).

3. Lack of convergence across sectors and departments

The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) is the nodal Ministry for Skill Development. However, in addition to MSDE, there are 17 other Ministries/Departments conducting vocational training toward skill development. Nine other ministries conduct short-term training courses. The Report on the Committee for Rationalization & Optimization of Skills Sector Councils (Prasad, 2016) highlights the lack of convergence in the skill ecosystem and recommends greater realignment of the same. Moreover, beyond the mainstream skills discourse, several other departments are involved in creating an enabling environment for women's participation in paid work and in public life at large. These efforts do not have cohesive or coherent implementation, monitoring and accountability mechanisms.

4. Implementation barriers and low budgetary allocations

Conditionalities within legal frameworks (e.g. twochild norm in Maternity Benefit Act) and in schemes (for example. income-level eligibility for Working Women's Hostel Scheme, which further limits women's stay to three years only) create hindrances for women accessing benefits from these policies and schemes. Bureaucratic procedures, the burden of documentation of proof to access schemes, and implicit gender biases (for example, the clause on "false complaints" in the law against sexual harassment) create further barriers for women. Where enabling provisions exist, they end up benefiting men. For instance, the Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY) has a provision of travel allowance to mobilize trainees in rural locations. This benefits men more as it is assumed they can relocate to places away from home, which is not the same for women.

Budgetary allocations for several enabling schemes have remained consistently low in 2018-19; such as of the National Crèche Scheme and Working Women's Hostel (Thakur & Mitra, 2019). The cost of mobilization reported by NGOs is often quite high, at INR 5700 per capita, while the per capita cost parked under the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) is less than one-tenth of this amount, at INR 500 (Gothoskar, 2016). The PMKVY also has provisions of conveyance allowance for non-residential training for women candidates and persons with disabilities, but there is no data available regarding its implementation. The state and markets need to turn their attention to more basic amenities that often are overlooked, but can bring a considerable degree of difference to women's agency at the workplace.

"Some of the 'disablers' for women workers in urban centers are the lack of social security benefits and other facilities. They are usually not on the rolls of the main company, but work through a subcontracted agency. They often face issues of late salary, absence of provident fund, etc., for which the main company bears no responsibility. We sometimes do advocacy work with these agencies and companies to push for social security, on-time salary, sanitation facilities, etc."- KII with a person working with an organization aiding migrant workers

The provision of hostels and enabling schemes like transport facility, sanitation facilities, conveyance allowance can safeguard or at the very least ease women's fear of everyday violence that restricts their mobility and choices. The narratives of women pointed toward some latent fear of violence and harassment when they leave their homes for paid work outside. Women traverse these spaces by using subversive techniques like covering themselves or wear visible signs of marriage (e.g. "sindoor") to ward off offenders in public spaces and in their transit to work. However, they are also clear in their articulation of wanting to be out in the public sphere and in employment, illustrated through phrases like: "we have to overcome it" and "become strong". The fear of impending violence also draws certain kinds of responses from co-workers and employers, especially in relation to work timings, "appropriateness" of tasks for women, gender composition of workplaces, and infrastructural facilities like washrooms and safe transportation.²⁴

"...firstly, men can meet clients any time even at night and it is not always a comfortable environment so that one can send a saleswoman at night, that's why it is difficult for them. Secondly, we do not have a comfortable transport system, often we must travel in sharing arrangements (in buses and auto-rikshaws), which male staff can manage easily. Women can't travel in such conditions, for example,

²⁴ In the NTL Policy Report, we came across some good practices on safe transportation, such as those led by the NGO Akshara and by Asia Development Bank (ADB) in Mumbai.

if a woman enters a crowded bus, the surrounding people behave in a manner that she will never think of traveling in a crowded bus ever again. I think women can do this job if they get fixed working hours like morning 10 am to 7 pm. So, there are the things one needs to face while on field and these are the reasons why there are less women in sales jobs." - Male co-worker employed as a senior salesperson

This narrative is driven by a protectionist standpoint. The perceptions of women's safety impose constraints on women and their lives in public spaces and in paid work. This marginalizes unpacking of structural or normative underpinnings of the nature of violence experienced by women, whether at home, or in public, or at the workplace.

Through our policy report, we find that while there exists a national law specifically for preventing and addressing violence and harassment at work, measures like the Internal Complaint Committee (ICC) at the workplace are often not trained to be gendersensitive. In some cases, they discriminate against women workers if they are employed contractually or as part-time employees. The current state of weak implementation of these policies must be strengthened for women workers to avoid living in fear of workplace harassment, and structural inabilities of the redressal system should be addressed.

Convergence of several departments working toward skill development can increase the efficiency of resources invested in skilling the youth of India.

- Conditions of work for working women, especially considering migrant workers in urban centers, should include fundamental provisions like hostels, transportation, etc., from the point of view of safety and freedom to work outside of the domestic sphere. These require a nexus of efforts by the state and markets to shift the burden away from the household, where this currently resides.
- Women are not passive recipients of violence or harassment; they navigate it with tactics and strategies that shape their experiences and

perceptions of public spaces and working, which are starkly different than those of men.

5. Political will to formalize progressive policies

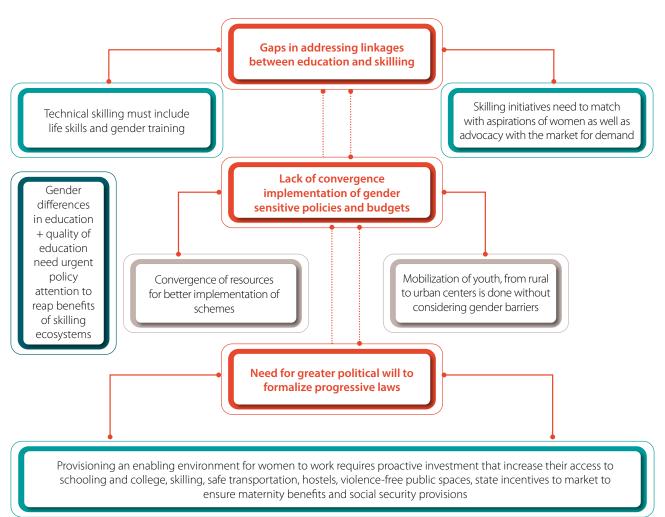
The National Policy for Women (2016 draft prepared by the Ministry of Women and Child, Government of India) recommends policy directives to be in place by providing critical analysis of the situation of women workers in the economy with specific reference to women's unpaid care work, gender wage gap, effective implementation of specific policies, need for childcare, crèches, and addressing violence at the workplace. The framework contextualizes the inter-relationship of women with family, community workplace/market and governance. For creating an enabling environment, the policy aims at provisioning working women's hostels, drinking water, and infrastructure in terms of lighting and safety linked to travel to and from work. The policy mentions specificities related to conditions of work and terms of employment for women. Lastly, the policy points to the need for redistribution of gender roles across different sectors in India. However, progressive policies such as these are often at a draft stage and are not formalized.

To conclude, the above findings present continuity between domains spanning across a range of conditions that the women workers operate in. From the starting point of this study, we committed ourselves to understand non-traditionality of women's work as transformative work.

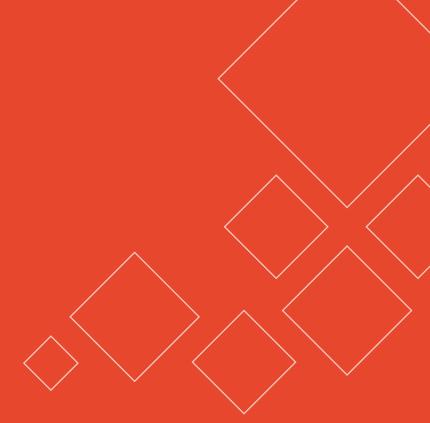
The next section provides takeaways from different sectors and roles that can help formulate some principles to be used by policymakers, practitioners, researchers and working women to overcome the barriers that compartmentalize women's work as low paid, low productivity and harsh conditions.

As discussed, women's work has gradations that emerge from their economic roles and a combination of conditions that underscore the three broad domains of our framework. Considering this, each woman worker occupies a unique position. There are examples of different shifts in all the domains to transform the experience of work for women and enable them to make choices that help them in whatever role or sector

they chooses to work in. The next section summarizes and presents the nucleus of transformative work in a way it has emerged in this study.



SNAPSHOT OF FINDINGS STATE AND POLICY DOMAINS



SECTION 4: Way Forward

The earlier sections discussed in detail the multiple threads of enablers and barriers that women deal with in order to enter the labor force and continue working. We see that gendered expectations of marriage, childbearing and childcare, unpaid household work and care work all remain important mediators for the kind of roles and sectors women can enter for work and sustain themselves, in the long term. We also see how individual motivators play an important role in navigating structural issues of market segregation based on gender roles, policy lacunae in encouraging equitable participation of women in economic activities as well as normative barriers at the household level. There is also an inevitable relationship between the state and the market that continues to maintain this status quo.

Reflecting on the questions we started with, we were able to unpack multiple layers and dimensions of the idea embodied by NTLs as an approach, process as well as an outcome for women to move into non-normative ways of participating in the economy and, in turn, contributing to their own and their families' social lives. In identifying specific enablers and barriers, we find a range of issues that women face and find ways around, from participants' own narratives and lived experiences; many of which are also corroborated by existing literature.

Three important reflections that emerge from the study are as follows:

 The world of work for women is complex, fluid and not understood or organized in the binary of TL and NTL sectors or occupations. It is highly determined by existing gender norms that are reflected across the three pillars of social organization – the household, the market and the state. From any perspective that we adopt to view non-traditionality, it will not be an exaggeration to observe that all the barriers are enhanced when women try to move into these domains of work. Similarly, enablers in the form of social sanctions are far and few when we consider non-traditional domains of work. Again, it is important to stress here that non-traditionality is a highly dynamic concept that differs from one individual to another, highly sensitive to their unique positionality in socio-economic hierarchies and household level vulnerabilities.

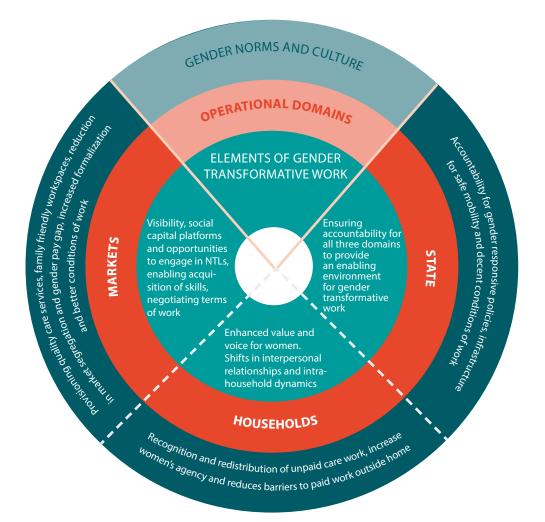
- Enablers and barriers for women irrespective of the sectors remain similar (as narrated above) and are determined by structural forces, which emanate from norms and transcend to gendered state-controlled policies, schemes and budgetary allocations. Creation of an enabling environment, as such, is limited as per the capacities of these structures. This includes obvious considerations such as policies for encouraging women's skilling and training in certain trades, guotas for recruitment and promotions across sectors, promoting women's leadership and so on; but also includes addressing underlying considerations of safety in public spaces and availability of publicly funded, guality education at school and college levels, safe accommodation facilities for girls to continue education/training/work where needed, meaningful incentivization of continuing education coupled with delaying the age of marriage, early sensitization of men for reducing the burden of unpaid and care work on women and so on.
- A crucial component of this ecosystem is influenced by the market. As markets provide the platform for convergence of women's agency, household level determinants of women's choice and decision-making, policy implementation, presentation of economic trends, and formation of linkages between economic and broader

development outcomes, it is not surprising that gender segregation is highly visible in existing market structures. Markets comprise both state and non-state actors and hence, are in a strong position to provide synergistic responses to enable implementation and uptake of progressive policy measures, enabling women to absorb demand generation in newer sectors and negotiate with normative barriers at the household level. A sizeable market share in India is informal²⁵ in nature, largely comprising women, without much accountability for service and social protections. In this respect, markets, especially sectors (both public and private) that thrive on informal supply chains must make provisions to extend fair wages, decent working conditions and job security beyond the purview of formal enterprises, especially for women as they are more vulnerable to social and economic risks. This also applies to access to credit, technology, marketing and other support services.

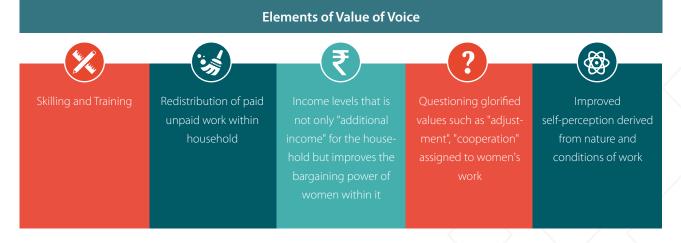
Based on this, we propose the following framework to lay out the problem statement of gender segregation in the economy with a wider context of gender norms and culture across the household, the market and the state. In addition, we recognize key elements discussed above in order to further nuance the understanding of the world of work for women, especially considering the approach of NTLs, which was the key question this study sought to address. We propose this framework to enable further understanding of work to achieve a gender transformative potential in women's lives, of which NTLs are a key element.

²⁵ The term "informal economy" refers to all economic activities by workers and economic units that are – in law or in practice – not covered or insufficiently covered by formal arrangements. Their activities are not included in the law, which means that they are operating outside the formal reach of the law; or they are not covered in practice, which means that – although they are operating within the formal reach of the law, the law is not applied or not enforced; or the law discourages compliance because it is inappropriate, burdensome, or imposes excessive costs- International Labor Organization, 2002. In this study we have not engaged with informal economy, but it is crucial to consider with respect to the Indian scenario.





This framework encapsulates newer perspectives on the lives of women who aspire to work and are already working which emerge from our study. Most significant elements which we highlight in order to achieve a world of gender transformative work for women are as follows: • WHAT are women's own articulations of what they attach **value** to and draw value from? And how they use it to enhance their agency within and outside the household is critical to unpack in order to distil concepts around what constitutes non-traditionality and how to embed these elements



into existing program and policy efforts. Given that women operate within a patriarchal normative structure, changes within this space on account of their working status and enhanced agency is extremely important to document in their own voices. HOW is visibility in different forms and shades, owing to certain kinds of work or conditions of work, allowing women the space for various changes? This space may allow them to negotiate, assert and demand decision-making on important matters concerning their lives. This also enables

Elements of Visibility and Social Capital



them to form social capital by way of building support groups and networks.

 WHO is accountable for reducing structural barriers for women to be able to work also emerges in multiple dimensions? A lot of work currently fixes the ownership of change on women, but, perhaps the discourse needs to shift to focus on the "powers that be" within the household, the state and the market, who need to be seen as duty-bearers. This may manifest itself as support in household negotiations, ensuring better conditions of work as an employer, or promotion of gendertransformative policy design, implementation, measurement of outcomes and meaningful convergence by the state.

Elements of Accountability of Duty Bearers

Overhaul of structural issues in the wider education system to harness the potential of skills initiatives



and convergence between departments and schemes offering skill development for effective results



reating basic amenities and infrastructures like hostels, transport to ensure safety of women workers, which is a looming impediment to access to public sphere and hence, work Based on the above discussion, we make some key recommendations:

Figure 7: Key Recommendations

Future of Research

- Linkages between migration, marriage and kind of work women are engaging in, especially in semi-urban and urban contexts
- Inquiring into the promise of the gig economy and gender segregation within it
- Lack of quality education and its gendered repercussions on skilling
- Exploring women's narratives of deriving value from certain kinds of work and possible policy implications
- Everyday forms of violence faced by women workers while negotiating public spaces and within the realm of household

Future of Practice

- Interventions by government and non-governmental bodies alike may benefit from a greater focus on convergence of efforts
- Skilling alone without adequate demand generation and sensitization of market players is futile, especially for NTL trades
- Rather than pushing women into male-dominated job roles, improving conditions of work may allow more women to join the workforce and expand into more diverse roles

Future of Policy

- Convergent efforts between policy measures, and public and private markets are of primary importance to create enabling conditions for women to participate in the economy
- While most policies are geared toward women (18+) they leave out adolescent girls from their ambit. This linkage is crucial to build in order to obtain value out of skilling initiatives at post school levels.
- Curricula with strong gender-transformative frameworks are needed, even within the skilling ecosystem
- Ensuring employee benefits and rights, formalization of large sections of women workers and entrepreneurial ventures need immediate attention for policy advocacy by civil society actors

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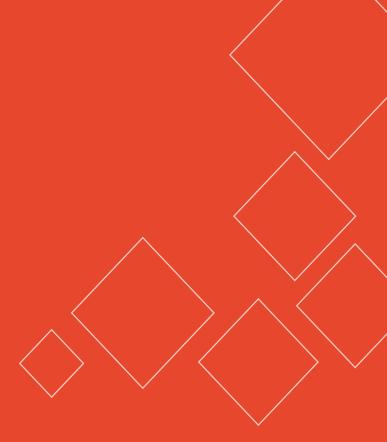
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ANNEXURES

ANNEXURE 1: DETAILED METHODOLOGY

1. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

- Undertook synthesis of academic and programmatic literature and mapping of debates in popular discourse on women's work in India. The focus was on understanding current trends with respect to livelihoods of women, and the factors that impact related decisions. For the purpose of this review, a tripartite lens comprising the household, the market and the state was used as it often shapes women's workforce participation.
- Analyzed peer reviewed journal articles, book chapters, research reports produced by practitioners in civil society; newspaper features and featured articles, published after 2013; besides a few programmatic reports that suggested themselves strongly to the topic during the course of the study. There was a twofold reason for reviewing literature 2013 onward. First, 2011-12 was the last round of NSSO data available when the study began; second, the definition of "work" was revised from including merely marketoriented economic output to focus on work that contributed to the wellbeing of the population (children, chronically ill, elders), whether paid or unpaid. (ILO, 2013).

2. REVIEW OF POLICY AND INITIATIVES

- Mapped policies, schemes and initiatives, specifically focused within the skills ecosystem, discourse to understand women's entry and sustenance in the workplace. The policies, schemes and reports analyzed as part of this process are attached in *Annexure 2.*
- The analysis of policies, schemes and initiatives is focused on: gendered assumptions in design of policies; provisions for recruitment and sustenance of women workers.

3. TRENDS ANALYSIS

- As part of this study and in consultation with the TAG, ICRW commissioned a scoping paper "Unpacking Trends in Female Employment in India Scoping Paper for ICRW's Study on Unpacking Nontraditional Livelihoods of Women" undertaken by Dipa Sinha, Professor, Ambedkar University.
- It includes the longitudinal trends of women's participation in the economy across three labor Employment and Unemployment (EUS) surveys by the National Sample Survey (NSSO). The paper also presents a discussion on how sectors can be defined as "traditional" or "non-traditional"

as far as women's livelihoods are concerned for the purpose of ICRW's study. Further, there were recommendations for sample selection for the qualitative primary research phase, which involved primary data collection. Some of the findings from the paper are included in **Annexure 3**.

- The paper proposed the following sampling strategy, which was used in the study undertaken:
 - Women's participation in certain sectors in the three labor survey rounds
 - Roles within sectors that are traditional (Anganwadi workers) and non-traditional (corporate managers)
 - Roles in which participation of women is rising (all the four occupations listed below), irrespective of being traditional and non-traditional at present

Table 2: List of Sector and Examples ofOccupations of Participants in the Study

SECTORS	OCCUPATIONS
Health	Frontline Health Workers (For example, Anganwadi workers at urban Anganwadi centers)
Manufacturing	Corporate Managers (For example, outsourcing or product manager at any apparel manufacturing enterprise)
Retail trade	Models, Salespersons and demonstrators (For example, salesperson on shop floor of a retail store like clothes, gadgets, electronics and so on)
Information and communication	Physical, Mathematical and Engineering Science Professionals (For example, software developer or tester in any Information Technology company or in any IT department of private or public company)

PRIMARY QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

4.1 Selection of participants

- The selection of participants in the study was done using a purposive sampling approach following the recommendations from the trends analysis.
- The site for primary research was the National Capital Region (NCR),²⁶ both urban and semi-

urban areas. The study limited its scope to the NCR given its nature, which focused on understanding the attitude of workers, employers and state-run bodies. It was prudent to understand this in a limited demographic and geographical location in light of the duration of the study.

4.2 Training and data collection

- The study protocol was reviewed and approved by ICRW's Institutional Review Board and Sigma Research and Consulting's ethical review board.
- The qualitative data collection was led by a small team of experienced qualitative researchers from ICRW, who are proficient in Hindi language.
- IDIs and KIIs were undertaken by one researcher with one notetaker.
- All tools were developed in line with the key areas of interest and pretested before starting of the data collection.
- The details shared in *Annexure 4* about different primary research participants is with due consideration to the consent processes.

5. ANALYSIS, SYNTHESIS AND CONSULTATIONS

In the last phase of the study, we analyzed all the primary data collected, as well as review of literature and policy, schemes and initiatives, using a grounded theory approach. All the qualitative activities were transcribed and translated into English prior to analysis

- Coding was conducted for all transcripts
- As a first step, the coding process included two independent coders going through 10 percent of all transcripts to arrive at a preliminary set of codes, which was then discussed and agreed upon by all members of the research team to be used as a framework for coding the rest - of the documents.
- We generated about 119 raw codes to build into code "nodes" that allowed organization of the data and finally arranged these into themes or "families" to draw out the most important learnings.
- The code families generated in the process have been attached as *Annexure 5*.

²⁶ National Capital Region is a unique example of interstate regional planning for development of a region with National Capital Territory Delhi as its core. It also falls in the territorial jurisdiction of participating States of Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and NCT-Delhi. URL: http://ncrpb.nic.in/ pdf_files/Annual%20Report%202014-15.pdf

ANNEXURE 2: LIST OF POLICIES, SCHEMES, INITIATIVES INCLUDED IN THE POLICY REPORT

Table 3: List of Policies on Skilling and EnablingWomen to Work in India

POLICIES

National Policy for Women 2016 Articulating a Vision for Empowerment of Women- Draft

National Policy on Skill Development and Entrepreneurship 2015

National Strategy for New India @75 by NITI Aayog

Labor Code on Social Security and Women's Economic Empowerment

Maternity Benefit Act (Amendment), 2017

The Sexual Harassment at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013

Early Child Development Policy

Table 4: List of Government Schemes for Skillingand Enabling Women to Work in India

SCHEMES

Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)

National Urban Livelihood Mission and Skills Training

Working Women's Hostel Scheme

Rajiv Gandhi National Crèche Scheme for the Children of Working Mothers

Support to Training and Employment Program for Women

Table 5: List of Reports on Skilling and Enabling Women to Work in India

REPORTS Report of the Committee for Rationalization & Optimization of the Functioning of the Sector Skill Councils INDIA STUDY - Financing Options for Skills for Work of Marginalised Women: A Research Project of ASPBAE and Azad Foundation, India – 2017 Overcoming India's skill challenge: Transforming India into a High-Performance Nation- Accenture and NSDC report, 2013 Overcoming India's skill challenge: Associated and Tiss August 2017

Overview of skill development in India – ASSOCHAM India, Skill India and TISS, August 2017

An Exploratory Review of Skills-building Initiatives in India and Their Relation to Women's and Girls' Empowerment- Sujata Gothoskar Fair Wear Foundation India Country Study - Manufacturing in three states and violence, 2019)

Table 6: List of Initiatives for Enabling Women to Work by Private Sector, NGOs and Civil Society Organizations

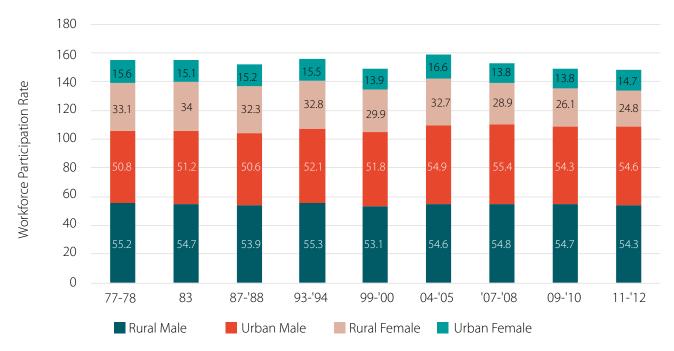
Initiatives (NGOs and civil society organizations)	Initiatives (Private sector)
Archana Women's Centre	Asian Development Bank and Mumbai Metro
Mobile Crèches	Coca Cola
Dalit Shakti Kendra	Brickwork Foundation
Barefoot College	Tech Mahindra
Pratham Institute	CENTRUM Trust
Azad Foundation Network Partners	Edu Bridge
Mahila Housing Trust Self Employed Women's Association	Gram Tarang
Feminist Approach to Technology	Accenture
Akshara Centre	DISHA
Sadbhavana Trust	My Quest
	Ernst and Young STEM Tribe
	Cyber Shikshaa

ANNEXURE 3: KEY FINDINGS FROM TRENDS ANALYSIS

All findings are from the trends analysis exercise undertaken for the scoping paper (Sinha, 2019).

A. Workforce participation rates

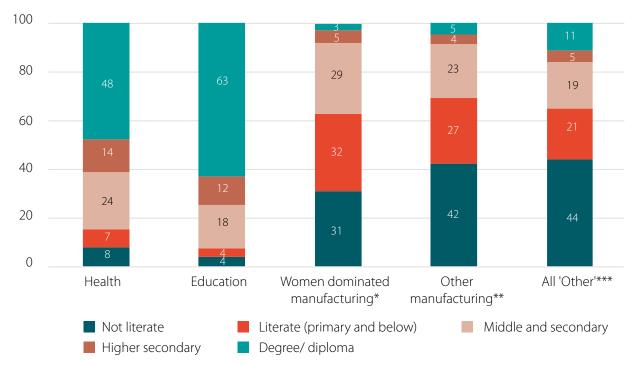
Figure 8: Workforce Participation Rates, 1977 to 2012 (Authors' Estimates from the NSS Unit-Level Data, 68th Round (EUS))



B. Average female workforce participation of women in the 5 women-concentrated sectors.

Table 7: Sectors with more than Average Female Employment (Women-Concentrated)

Sectors with more than average female employment (TL)	% Female within sector
Domestic work	66.6
Education	43.3
Human health and social work activities	42.6
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	35.5
Manufacturing	29.4



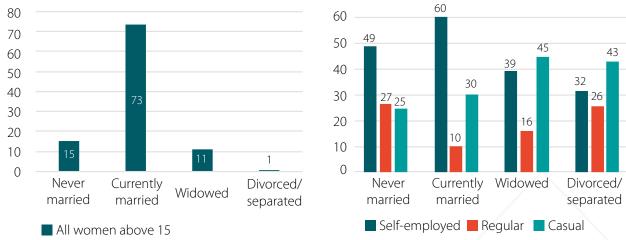
C. Education levels among women workers in women-concentrated sectors

Figure 9: Education Levels Amongst Female Workers in Various Sectors (Source: Authors' Estimates from the NSS Unit-Level Data, 68th Round (EUS)

In education and health sectors, a large proportion of women are literate and even educated at the graduate and higher levels. In manufacturing however, both in the women-concentrated sectors as well as the other sectors a large proportion of women are illiterate.

D. Workforce participation rate of women, their marital status and nature of work²⁷





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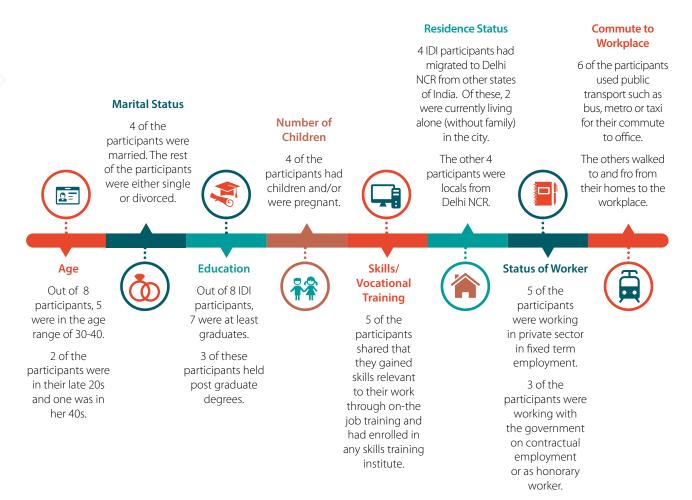
Figure 11: Nature of Employment as per Marital Status of Women (Authors' Estimates from the NSS Unit-Level Data, 68th Round (EUS))

²⁷ a. Self Employed: Persons who operate their own farm or non- farm enterprises or are engaged independently in a profession or trade on ownaccount or with one or a few partners are considered as self-employed.

b. Regular: Persons working in others farm or non-farm enterprises (both household and non-household) and getting in return salary or wages on a regular basis (and not on the basis of daily or periodic renewal of work contract) are the regular salaried/wage employees.

c. Casual: A person casually engaged in others farm or non-farm enterprises (both household and non-household) and getting in return wage according to the terms of the daily or periodic work contract is a casual wage labor.

ANNEXURE 4: PROFILE OF IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS IN THE STUDY



ANNEXURE 5: CODE FAMILIES

A total of 119 codes emerged during analysis, which we categorized into 15 families. The code families were agreed upon by the researchers engaged in analysis and finalized upon agreement of at least 2 team members.

Code Families	Number of Codes
Perceptions around women and work	7
Research Participants: Life and Employment details	13
Way forward- Areas for Further Research	2
Barriers: At the Workplace	23
Barriers: At the household level	14
Barriers: Fear of Violence	14
Influencers for work (financial support; history of working in the family)	2
Enablers: At workplace	8
Enablers: At household level	9
Structural Enablers	12
Challenges (Infrastructure and Policy level)	5
Suggestions from participants on creating an enabling environment for women	2
Non-Traditional Livelihoods and Traditional Livelihoods	1
Responses to Harassment Cases: Workplace, community and individual level	6
Values	1



Photo

Ganga Ben Vanita leads a team of male labourers in the renovation of an apartment. Previously a construction laborer with unsteady, daily work, she attended a skills training program offered by SEWA. Credit: Paula Bronstein/Getty Images/Images of Empowerment





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