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VOICE OF THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR



**Study Report on Status of
Gender Centric Policies and Practices
in
Civil Society Organisations**

To promote gender equity and equality within the sector

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Study Report on Status of Gender Centric Policies and Practices in the Civil Society Organisations- To promote gender equity and equality within the sector

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Preface

It is a well-known fact that women comprise almost half the population in India, but this ratio does not reflect in their holding leadership positions or in decision making processes. They represent less than 15% of all national parliamentarians (May 2019) and out of the 28 states and 8 union territories, only one is headed by a woman Chief Minister (2.7% as in 2020). This clearly indicates that women's opinions and perspectives are sidelined or ignored across sectors whether public, corporate or civil society sector. Women's participation in the labour workforce is in many cases hindered due to a range of constraints, underpinned by social and cultural beliefs that suggest that women are not meant to have a role in public life.

The role of civil society organisations (CSOs) in advocating for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has been significant. Speaking of SDGs, these organisations have been working towards creating a gender equal voluntary sector since a very long time. Even in 1995, during the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, the topic of discussion was along the lines of contemporary SDG 5: To achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. The voluntary sector has been trying to address obstacles such as unequal access to education, under-representation of women in leadership positions and in boards, not enough limelight on gender issues, the prevalence of gender stereotypes in the society, etc., in the path towards achieving this goal.

To pursue this goal and to make it a reality, a bi-focal approach needs to be followed: initiation of gender specific programmes along with gender mainstreaming in all spheres. This includes facilitating changes concerning policy development, creating awareness amongst masses, in depth research, institutional capacity building, and mobilization.

VANI has been working on good governance practices among CSOs and focuses on enhancing women participation and gender equality in the voluntary sector. Two years back it set up a Women Leadership Forum, where women leaders from national and regional platforms came forward to discuss challenges, share ideas and solutions. As a step further in this direction, VANI conducted an indicative study to assess the status of Gender Centric Policies among CSOs and promote gender equity & equality within the sector. The aim of the study was also to identify exemplary practices from ground to upscale them.

The results obtained highlight key concern areas and probable solutions to develop a gender equal workplace in the voluntary sector. Organisation structures, HR policies and internal strategies are increasingly identified as crucial for achieving gender parity in the workplace. Despite the fact that the voluntary sector is known to have played a major role in enhancing women leadership and gender equality, the presence of women within the voluntary organisations does not suggest that the sector is gender friendly and equal. Even in this sector, women face discrimination on various levels.

In the end, I would like to acknowledge and extend my gratitude to IM Swedish Development Partner for supporting this project. In the end, I would also like to thank my research team, Dr. Pallavi Rekhi, Programme Officer and Ms. Nivedita Datta, Programme Manager for compiling and editing the document, and for concluding the study.

Best Regards,

Harsh Jaitli

Chief Executive Officer



Abbreviations



CSO	- Civil Society Organisation
VANI	- Voluntary Action Network India
SDG	- Sustainable Development Goal
HR	- Human Resource
IM	- Individual Människohjälp Swedish Development Partner
ILO	- International Labour Office
PRI	- Panchayati Raj Institution
POSH Act	- Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal Act
LFPR	- Labour Force Participation Rate
IIAS	- Institutional Investor Advisory Services
UN	- United Nation
ICC	- Internal Complaints Committee

Introduction

As enshrined in the Preamble to the Constitution of India, “equality of status and opportunity” must be secured for all its citizens; equality of every person under the law is guaranteed by Article 14 of the Constitution.

As a unique exercise to achieve the above, this study aims to understand the status of gender centric policies in both, structure and function of the CSOs. It is an exercise to review the measures adopted and the challenges faced by different voluntary organisations at various levels, in making the workplace safer, accommodating and gender- friendly. An online survey was conducted across a varied range of CSOs, working on diverse themes and not necessarily on gender equality and women leadership.

This study is part of VANI's initiative towards advancing women's leadership in the Voluntary Sector. As part of the same initiative, the Women Leadership Forum was ideated in 2017, and the first meeting was held in February 2018. Women Leadership Forum is where women leaders from national and regional platforms come forward to discuss and share ideas and solutions. It provides a perfect stage to women leaders where they discuss issues like – how to further advance society, increase equality between men and women and promote the number of women in leadership positions.



This initiative offers female senior managers working in CSOs a unique opportunity to develop their leadership potential and improve crucial networking skills. The platform offers an opportunity to senior women to develop themselves as leaders, to enhance their visibility and to enable them to network and influence the

wider external environment and to increase the number of women progressing to higher-level management positions in the voluntary sector.

Context

Gender equality is also one of 17 Global Goals that make up the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable



Development. It aims to ensure that there is no discrimination against women and girls across the globe. Unfortunately, there is still a significant amount of inequality in access to paid employment, and there is also a huge gap between the percentage of men and women participating in the labour market. Some of the other barriers in achieving gender equality remain sexual violence and discrimination in public decision making.

Ensuring equal access to healthcare, education and economic resources like land and property have pivotal roles in reaching the goal. Encouraging women leadership across all regions will help strengthen policies and legislation for greater gender equality.

The Beijing Declaration 1995 established its commitment towards gender equality and women empowerment. They were convinced that “full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision-making process and access to power, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace”⁽¹⁾.

Gender Equality at Workplace in the Civil Society:

There is truly little literature available with respect to the status of gender equality and women leadership in the civil society in India. The civil society sector is also often perceived to be the domain of women in India; this is possibly because several well-known large non-profits are headed by the wives and daughters of billionaires⁽²⁾. As per media reports, in a study conducted by Dasra (India's leading strategic philanthropy foundation based in Bombay) in 2015 across 328 civil society organizations, they found out that even though, a large number of women are working in this sector, only a miniscule number of them are involved in decision making processes. It was concluded that, out of the total number of organisations surveyed, maximum of them reported very few women representatives at leadership positions. This gap increased in larger organisations; those with an annual turnover of more than 5 crores, percentage of organisations with women leaders was only 20%, which is almost half of those led by men (38%).



References:

- (1) <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/declar.htm>
- (2) <https://www.livemint.com/Companies/busG56HnYK2a6TeU9xcuSO/Even-in-the-nonprofit-sector-women-are-getting-left-behind.html>

There are also not many studies that have talked about the good practices being used in promoting women empowerment and gender equality in the civil society. A number of studies performed in the private sector suggest that the best practices for promoting women empowerment include initiatives such as breast-feeding areas at the workplace, child development centers in the office, flexible work hours, corporate programmes for women upliftment, etc. But there are no studies that reflect that these measures will be as successful in the CSOs as in the corporates.

Therefore, there is a need to invest in research studies based on the status of gender equality in the CSOs. However, even after continuous efforts in this sphere, there is still a long way to go.

Objectives:

The main objectives of this study are as follows:

- *To assess the status of gender centric policies and practices amongst our member organisations.*
- *To promote women leadership and their presence amongst Indian Civil Society.*
- *To identify the common concerns of women working in the civil society and address them collectively.*
- *To identify exemplary practices followed to encourage women employees, and to upscale them.*
- *To promote gender equity and equality within the sector.*

Purpose of this Report:

This report examines the status of gender equality in CSOs in India. By engaging in ground research and in-depth analysis of the CSOs across India, it aims to identify key inhibitions, trends and good practices being adopted to promote gender equality and women empowerment in the sector. This report is meant for organizations of the civil society to encourage women participation and leadership. It is also meant to provide a clear understanding of what gender equity and equality at a workplace means. Additionally, it encourages these organisations to adopt and strengthen policies and enforce legislations for promotion of gender equality and women empowerment in their organizational structure and function.



Sampling:

Online questionnaires were shared to all the 560-member organisations of VANI. The responses received were analyzed and reviewed to assess the status of gender centric policies in the voluntary sector. The data was collected through organisations working pan India.

Methodology:

This study is only an indicative study that reflects the trends prevailing in the CSOs pertaining to gender equality and women empowerment. This report has been developed using a mixed methodology. Secondary research has been used to understand gender equality at workplace, in the civil society. Primary research was conducted in the form of online surveys with all the 560-member organisations of VANI, out of which 100 responses were obtained. We also conducted in- depth, telephonic interviews with experts, working in the field of women empowerment and

gender equality in the workplace. These interviews not only provided qualitative data regarding the status of gender centric policies in the civil society, but also highlighted the key challenges faced by organizations in promoting gender equality and how they are addressing these.

Desk Research:

- Secondary research was conducted to understand the current status of women leadership in CSOs.
- Data was gathered using previous studies, articles, and media reports, etc.

Limitations of the Study:

Due to the small sample size, the conclusions that have been drawn are only indicative, and do not present the realities of the entire civil society in India. The selected sample also portrays a selection bias, as we sent the questionnaire to only member organizations of VANI. The data collection mode being online, a constraint was to receive the desired number of responses. Constant reminder emails had to be sent out to the participants in order to obtain responses. The data received, was subject to the understanding of the responder.





Chapter I: Gender Equity & Equality



Gender: Gender refers to the socially constructed differences and relations between males and females. These vary widely among societies and cultures and change over time. The term “gender” is not interchangeable with the term “sex”, which refers exclusively to the biological differences between men and women, which are universal and do not change. Statistical data are disaggregated according to sex, whereas gender characterizes the differing roles, responsibilities, constraints, opportunities and needs of females and males in all areas and in any given social context.

Gender roles are learned behaviours in each society, community or other social group. They condition which activities, tasks and responsibilities are perceived as appropriate to males and females, respectively. Gender roles are affected by age, socio-economic class, race/ethnicity, religion, and the geographical, economic, political and cultural environment. Gender relations are also relations of power which affect who can access and control tangible and intangible resources.⁽³⁾

Gender Equity: The concept of gender equity refers to “fairness of treatment for women and men, according to their respective needs. This may include equal treatment or treatment that is different, but which is considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities” (International Labour Office [ILO], 2000). Equity is used for example within the education, health and humanitarian sectors referring to the equal distribution of resources based on the needs of different groups of people.⁽⁴⁾

Gender Equality: Gender equality refers to the enjoyment of equal rights, opportunities and treatment by men and women and by boys and girls in all spheres of life. It asserts that people's rights, responsibilities, social status and access to resources do not depend on whether they are born male or female. It does not mean, however, that men and women are the same or must become the same. Gender equality implies that all men and women are free to develop their personal abilities and make life choices without the limitations set by stereotypes or prejudices about gender roles or the characteristics of men and women.

In the context of decent work, gender equality embraces equality of opportunity and treatment, equality of remuneration and access to safe and healthy working environments, equality in association and collective bargaining, equality in obtaining meaningful career development, maternity protection, and a balance between work and home life that is fair to both men and women. The ILO understands gender equality as a matter of human rights, social justice and sustainable development.⁽⁵⁾

However, the picture is quite different on the ground. India has one of the lowest labour force participation by women, when compared to countries across the globe, just under 18 per cent in 2017 compared to 82 per cent for men (ILO, India Labour Market Update, July 2017 (August 8, 2017)).⁽⁶⁾

References:

- (3) https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/publication/wcms_087314.pdf
- (4) https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/publication/wcms_087314.pdf
- (5) https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/publication/wcms_087314.pdf
- (6) https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---sro-new_delhi/documents/publication/wcms_568701.pdf





Chapter II: Gender Centric Laws in India across Sectors & Supporting Provisions in the Legislature



Different sectors like public, private and voluntary sector in India have different legislations and policies that are women oriented or affect women at workplace in some way. This chapter deals with those laws, and they are enlisted below:

(1) Companies Act (2013): Every listed company shall appoint at least one woman director within one year from the commencement of the second proviso to Section 149(1) of the Act. Every other public company having paid up share capital of Rs. 100 crores or more or turnover of Rs. 300 crores or more as on the last date of latest audited financial statements, shall also appoint at least one woman director within 1 year from the commencement of second proviso to Section 149(1) of the Act. A period of six months from the date of company's incorporation has been provided to enable the companies incorporated under Companies Act, 2013 to comply with this requirement. It is better to say that existing companies (under the previous companies act) has to comply the above requirements within one year and new companies (under the new companies act) has to comply within 6 months from the date of its incorporation. Further if there is any intermittent vacancy of a woman director then it shall be filled up by the board of directors within 3 months from the date of such vacancy or not later than immediate next board meeting, whichever is later.⁽⁷⁾

(2) Sexual Harassment Act (2013): Since December 2013, the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal (POSH) Act, 2013 is aimed to “provided protection against sexual harassment and for the prevention and redressal of complaints of sexual harassment”. The act mentions that:

- (1) No woman shall be subjected to sexual harassment at any workplace.
- (2) The following circumstances, among other circumstances, if it occurs, or is present in relation to or connected with any act or behaviour of sexual harassment may amount to sexual harassment: —
 - (i) implied or explicit promise of preferential treatment in her employment; or
 - (ii) implied or explicit threat of detrimental treatment in her employment; or
 - (iii) implied or explicit threat about her present or future employment status; or
 - (iv) interference with her work or creating an intimidating or offensive or hostile work environment for her; or
 - (v) humiliating treatment likely to affect her health or safety.⁽⁸⁾

(3) Reservation for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions in India

The Panchayati Raj Bill in India proposes 50% reservation of women in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI). One of the first states to adopt this bill was Bihar, followed by others like Andhra Pradesh,

References:

(7) <https://www.icsi.edu/media/portals/0/APPOINTMENT%20AND%20QUALIFICATIONS.pdf>

(8) https://indiacode.nic.in/handle/123456789/2104?view_type=browse&sam_handle=123456789/1362

Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, West Bengal and Uttarakhand. Most candidates in these Panchayats are women.

(4) The Minimum Wage Act

There is a minimum amount of money decided by the government that the employer has to pay the employee. The Indian parliament passed the Minimum Wage Act of 1948. In every employment sector, it is the state government that decides the respective minimum wage. It does not matter if the person is a man or a woman an equal amount of money will be given according to the type of job it is fixed, hourly, etc. It applies to both skilled and unskilled workers. This minimum wage may vary from state to state depending on various factors as decided by the government of India.

(5) Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2013

Sexual harassment is the coercion or bullying, of a sexual nature, and the inappropriate or unwelcome promise of rewards in return for sexual favors. Sexual harassment covers a range of actions from mild transgressions to sexual abuse or assault.

There are many laws related to sexual harassment in India. In a workplace, when any employer repeats the mistake under this Act, they will receive severe punishment if given under any other law for the same offense. Also, a business license can get canceled in this kind of situation.

If any senior colleague or any employee of the company demand favors in exchange for any form of benefits- work or anything else such as money, promotion or salary increment, etc. It is an act of sexual harassment as stated in the Sexual Harassment Act, 2013. In 2013, the Government of India notified the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (POSH) Act. Consistent with the Vishaka judgment, the Act aspires to ensure women's right to workplace equality, free from sexual harassment. This Act included various issues which remained unaddressed in the past such as an extension of the definition of a workplace to include almost all types of establishments including private sector organization, dwelling places or houses, the inclusion of the term domestic worker and unorganized sector to address the issue of sexual harassment of women.

(6) The Maternity Benefit Amendment Act, 2017

This Act provides benefit to all the women employees working in India. Any women can apply for the maternity leave in a company and can get benefits from it. The company has to give a salary during maternity leave. The Act regulates and promotes the employment of women in certain establishments for a certain period before and after childbirth and provides for maternity and other benefits.

The maternity leave can be up from 12 weeks to 26 weeks. Depending on the nature of job type and her employer's consent, a new mother can now choose to work from home. This provision is also provided.

(7) Equal Remuneration Act, 1976

It is vital to get paid; equally, it is a man or a woman. Remuneration means money paid for work or a service. This Act aims to provide equal remuneration to male and female workers and prevent discrimination, particularly against women on the ground of gender. There are the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976 and Equal Remuneration Rules, 1976. A Central Advisory Committee has

been reconstituted vide Gazette Notification on 12th October 2010. It increases women empowerment and employment opportunities in India.⁽⁹⁾

Despite so many acts and legislations and supporting provisions in the Indian law, that promotes gender equality, there are still a huge number of gap areas and concerns to be addressed, if we want to achieve gender equality and women empowerment at the workplace. A lot of previous studies done across all sectors, i.e., public, private and voluntary sector, show a different story:

The UN Women and Inter- Parliamentary Union Study (March 2017), suggests that, India ranks 148th for the number of women parliamentarians out of 193 countries. While India being such a huge country, ranked 88th in number of women ministers with only 5 or 18.5% in the cabinet, on the other hand, Rwanda, being much smaller in comparison to India, has the highest (61.3%) women parliamentarians in the lower house.

According to the Economic Survey 2018, a declining female labour force participation rate (LFPR) despite increasing levels of education and declining fertility rates has emerged as a worrying trend. The current female LFPR is 23.7 per cent (26.7 per cent in rural areas and 16.2 per cent in urban areas). The declining trend is particularly strong in rural areas, where it has gone down from 49.7 per cent in 2004-05 to 26.7 per cent in 2015-16.⁽¹⁰⁾

A study done in the private sector, *Institutional Investor Advisory Services (IiAS) Study of NIFTY 500 Companies (March 2017)*, suggested that, there is a mere 13% women representation in the boards of these 500 companies. Just 622 out of a total 4, 690 directors were women, and only the boards of 26 corporates had three or more women directors, whereas, 15 participant companies did not have women representatives in the board at all.

If we talk about the voluntary sector, there are not many studies conducted that show how workplaces can be transformed into more gender friendly and more gender equal. Therefore, further research is required for a better and nuanced understanding of the present culture, to identify and adopt possible solutions for the problems hampering the progress within organisations.

References:

(9) <https://www.lawyerred.in/legal-disrupt/articles/employment-and-labour-laws-women/>

(10) https://niti.gov.in/writereaddata/files/Strategy_for_New_India.pdf



Chapter IV: COVID- 19 Effects on Gender Equality



Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world.

Over the years, there has been slow but significant progress in advancing gender equality and women empowerment. The literacy rate amongst girls has increased, fewer girls are forced into child marriage, and a greater number of women are seen at leadership positions in the parliament, and different policies and legislations are being passed to improve gender equality.

Even after the continuous efforts and some gains, many obstacles still prevail; social discrimination, age old social norms, are still dominant, and women are still underrepresented politically, and many of them still face sexual violence by their partners or at work.

Due to COVID-19 pandemic, the limited progress that we have achieved till date, might also be reversed. The corona virus outbreak exacerbates existing inequalities for women and girls across every sphere — from health and the economy, to security and social protection.⁽¹¹⁾

Women constitute almost 70% of the healthcare workforce, which makes them exposed to getting infected, while they are under-represented in leadership and decision-making processes in the health care sector. Moreover, because of the already prevailing gender inequalities across sectors, women face a higher risk of losing their jobs, shutting down small businesses, due to the anticipated economic crisis that India might go through. Also, there is a huge number of senior women living alone globally, on low incomes- exposing them to financial insecurities in the future. Apart from this, women also continue to do majority of unpaid care work in households, facing high risks of economic insecurity, and are subject to increased domestic violence, exploitation, mental & physical harassment during times of crisis and quarantine. Corona virus has had an unbearable impact on many vulnerable groups and women are one of the most heavily affected groups. A major chunk of the labour markets is also constituted by women, which also makes them greatly affected economically.⁽¹²⁾

According to UN Women's report, all the National Action Plans, task forces for COVID-19, recovery budgets, etc., must address the gender impacts of this pandemic. This means: (1) including women and women's organizations in COVID-19 response planning and decision-making; (2) transforming the inequities of unpaid care work into a new, inclusive care economy that works for everyone; and (3) designing socio-economic plans with an intentional focus on the lives and futures of women and girls.⁽¹³⁾

References:

(11) https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/policy_brief_on_covid_impact_on_women_9_april_2020.pdf

(12) <http://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/women-at-the-core-of-the-fight-against-covid-19-crisis-553a8269/>

(13) https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/policy_brief_on_covid_impact_on_women_9_april_2020.pdf

A few actions to support women, workers and families with caring responsibilities are:

- Offering public childcare options to working parents in essential services, such as health care, public utilities and emergency services.
- Providing alternative public care arrangements.
- Offering direct financial support to workers who need to take leave.
- Giving financial subsidies to employers who provide workers with paid leave.
- Promoting flexible working arrangements that account for workers' family responsibilities.⁽¹⁴⁾

VANI, as a part of its Covid-19 Response initiatives, started a social media campaign with one of its partners, Global Standard, for showcasing CSO accountability. VANI reaffirmed its pledge to commitment and accountability and in its fight against COVID19, through Global Standard and CSO Accountability, a series of social media posts around the 12 commitments pledged, were created to sensitize its audience. Commitment #2 on Women's Rights and Gender Equality was also pledged to promote women's and girl child rights and enhance gender equality in these tough times.

The COVID-19 pandemic provides an opportunity for radical, positive action to redress long-standing inequalities in multiple areas of women's lives and build a more just and resilient world.

The need of the hour is for the women in the CSOs to come together and fight against any kind of discrimination. As a famous song quotes:

“Zara mulk ke rehbaron ko bulao, Ye kooche ye galiyaan ye manzar dikhao

Jinhe naaz hai hind par unko lao, Jinhe naaz hai Hind par wo kahan hai”

("Call the people of the country, show them the streets, show these streets

Bring those who are proud of the nation, who are proud of the nation where are they”)



References:

- (14) <http://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/women-at-the-core-of-the-fight-against-covid-19-crisis-553a8269/>

Chapter V: Status of Gender Centric Policies in the Civil Society- Findings from VANI's Data

Our study on the status of gender equality in the workplace and women leadership in CSOs has highlighted the major challenges and the way forward to bring about behavioral changes and achieve a gender equal workplace. The organizational structure and the good practices being followed in the voluntary organisations are found to be of utmost importance to achieve gender parity at the workplace.

Following are some of the key findings of the study:

State- wise Breakup of Responses Received: A total of 100 responses were received from all across India. The maximum number of responses was received from Uttar Pradesh, followed by Odisha, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and Bihar.

No. of Responses State wise	
State	Nos.
Assam	1
Bihar	8
Chhattisgarh	4
Delhi	3
Gujarat	1
Haryana	3
Jammu and Kashmir	3
Jharkhand	6
Karnataka	2
Madhya Pradesh	1
Maharashtra	7
Manipur	1
Odisha	12
Rajasthan	11
Tamil Nadu	11
Telangana	2
Tripura	1
Uttarakhand	3
Uttar Pradesh	18
West Bengal	2
Total	100

Classification of CSOs on the Basis of Annual Turnover: The CSOs that responded to the questionnaire have been classified into three categories namely, (1) under INR 1 crore, (2) INR 1 crore to 5 crores, (3) Over INR 5 crores, on the basis of their annual turnover. There were 4 respondents that did not disclose their annual turnover and they were put under category 4.

Turnover of the Organisation	
Turnover of the Organisation	No. of Organisations
Under INR 1 Cr	60
INR 1 Cr - 5 Cr.	21
Over INR 5 Cr.	15
Did not disclose	4
Total	100

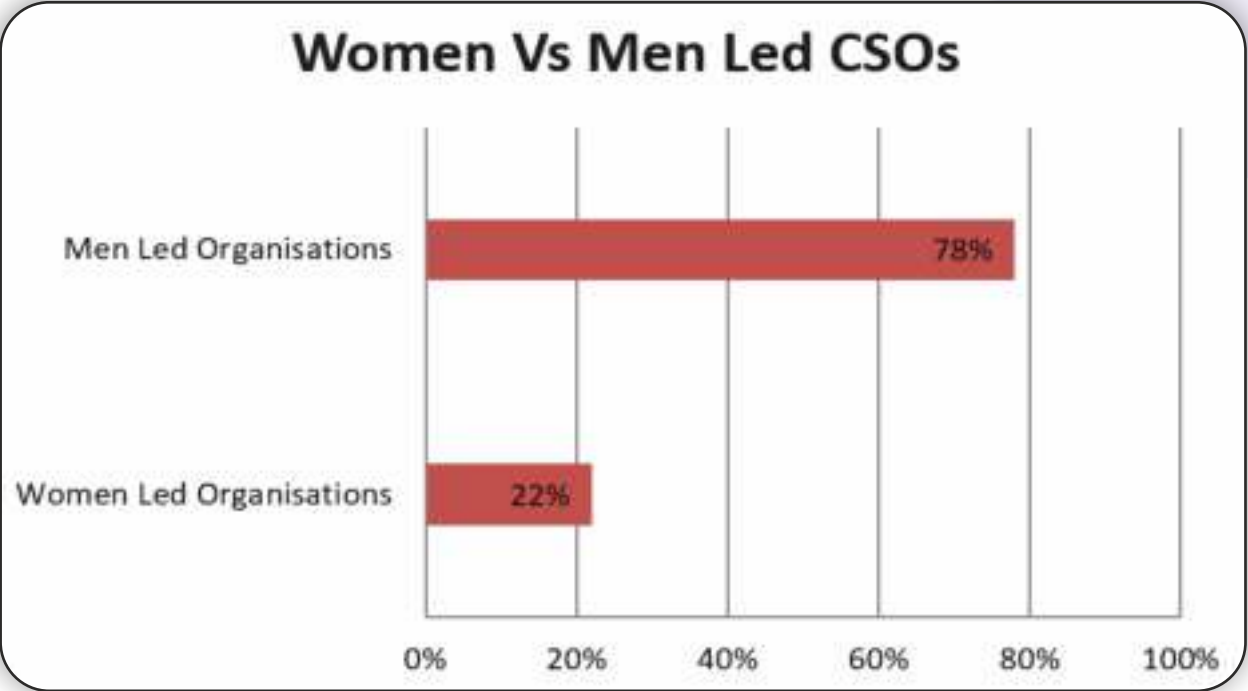
I. Current Status of Women Leadership across CSOs:

Women Representation within Organisation Boards: The following table represents the year wise percentage of women board members that were active in the participant organisations, over the last three years, i.e., 2016-2019.

Percentage of Women Present amongst Board						
Year	2018-19		2017-18		2016-17	
Percentage presence	No of Organisations	%age	No of Organisations	%age	No of Organisations	%age
Under 30%	25	26.59	26	28.88	28	31.11
30 - 50%	41	43.61	40	44.44	38	42.22
Over 50%	28	29.78	24	26.66	24	26.66
Total	94		90		90	

Over the three years, majority of organisations witnessed 30-50% women's presence in their boards. On an average, there was a marginal increase in women's presence on organisation boards from 43.42% in 2016-17 to 43.54% in 2017-18. However, an increase by 1.54% to 45.08% was observed in 2018-19. One of the contributing factors for this trend may have been the reports of women leadership forum meetings shared with VANI members and also messages urging members to focus on increasing women's presence overall especially on organisations board.

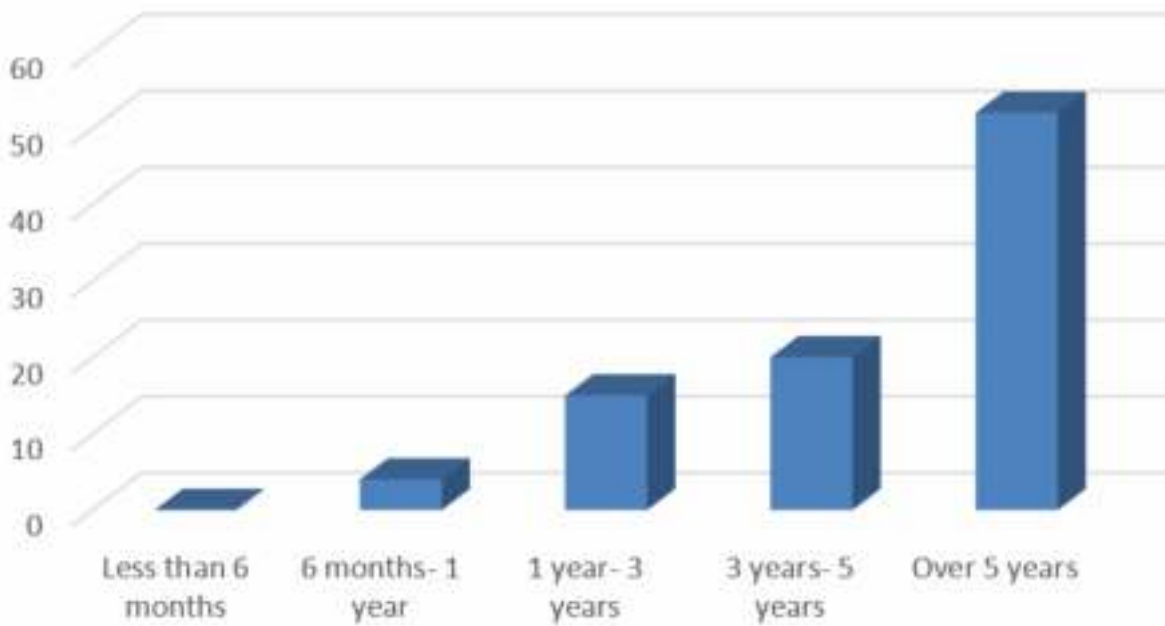
Women Leadership in Voluntary Organisations: According to the results, 78 respondent organisations were male headed while only 22 were women headed. This shows the under representation of women in leadership roles within the voluntary sector. 10 out of 15 large organisations are headed by men. These results suggest the need for strengthening women leadership and creating a pipeline. Appointing women employees at intermediate and senior levels is necessary for cultivating women leadership within the organisation.



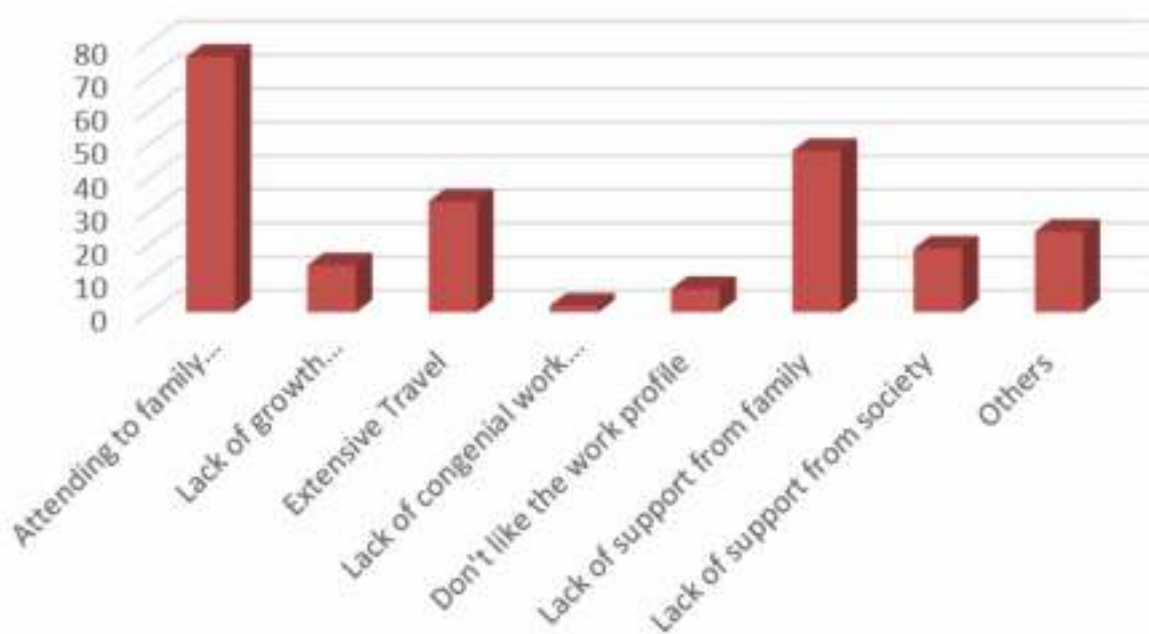
Key Factors Influencing the Average Tenure of Women Employees: More than half, i.e., 52% of the women employees in the civil society sector have an average tenure of over 5 years.

Based on the responses that were received from the member organisations, the key reasons for women dropping out of their jobs ranged from the inability to maintain a work-life balance due to family responsibilities to lack of support from the family. 76% of the participating organisations identified this as the topmost constraint from retaining women employees and thereby, achieving gender equality at workplace. Other reasons that were highlighted during the study were extensive travel (33%), lack of support from the society (19%), better professional opportunities (24%), etc. a key constraint for achieving gender equality. Women being unhappy with the work profile (7%) and lack of a congenial working atmosphere (2%) accounted for a much smaller proportion of women employees dropping out.

Average Tenure Length of Women Employees



Key Reasons for Women to Leave



II. Good HR Practices:

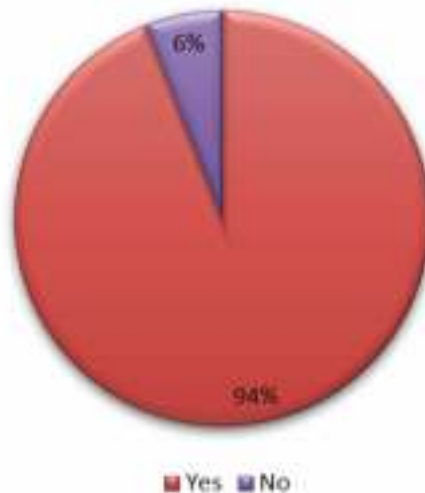


Initiatives for Providing a Safe Workplace: A severe problem for women at workplace continues to be sexual harassment, despite all the legal facilities provided by the Human Resources Departments of organisations. Under the Sexual Harassment Act, it is mandatory to have an ICC (Internal Complaints Committee), if there is employee strength of more than 10. According to the study, while 94% of the participant CSOs have adopted the POSH- policy, but there is a lack in initiation of gender sensitization workshops, which are also mandatory under the Act.

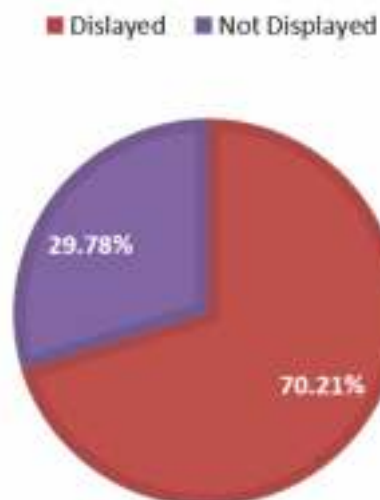
It means that though they have adopted the Act, but they are not aware of its provisions.

Out of the organisations that have adopted the policy, most of them (70.21%) have displayed it in their office premises.

Provision of the POSH-Policy



DISPLAY OF POSH-POLICY AT WORKPLACE



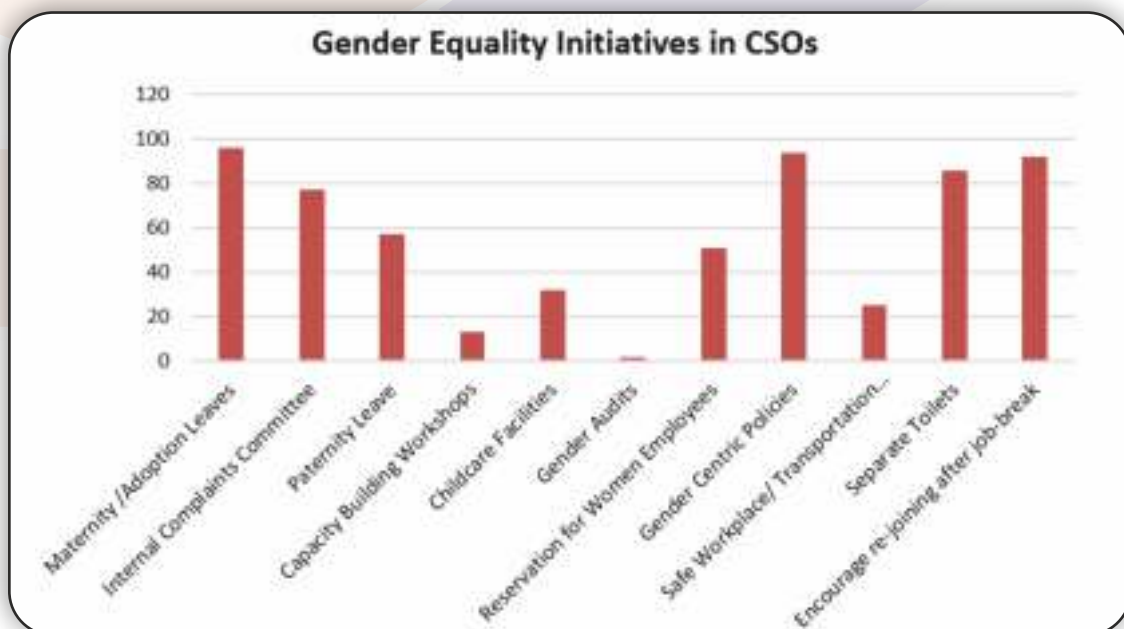
Promoting Gender Equality at Workplace: As the maternity benefits for female employees and policies against sexual harassment at workplace become globally adopted, more and more initiatives are being taken in order to achieve gender equality and promoting women empowerment in the CSOs. According to this study, CSOs currently seem to be focusing more on encouraging equal opportunities for both men and women, including women in decision making, and representation by women employees at senior levels as well. Some of the major practices being followed by these organisations in this regard are:

Supporting Facilities: According to the results, CSOs appear to have adopted many measures to ensure gender equality and women leadership at workplace. Many of these organisations provide transportation facilities if the women employees must stay beyond office hours. Majority of the organisations today provide maternity and paternity benefits to their employees. Flexible timings, work from home facilities, childcare facilities, separate toilets, encouraging re-joining after job-break, capacity building workshops, are some examples of the other initiatives being taken. However, certain support facilities have gained more popularity than the others. For instance, maternity/adoption leaves (96%), adoption of gender centric policies (94%), and giving weightage to women wanting to rejoin after a break (92%) are much more common, while childcare facilities (32%), transportation facilities (25%), capacity building workshops (13%), and gender audits (2%) are less common. A major example of practices that are extremely beneficial for women employees, but is not practiced much, is the availability of a breast-feeding room at their workplaces.



Work-Life Balance: When we talk about work-life balance, it is largely focusing on working mothers and married women. Flexible working hours, work from home facilities are some of the practices that can support women employees to maintain this balance. In some cases, even after the availability of such policies, women tend to resign from their positions, as they are unable to manage both, official and family commitments. It is therefore very important for CSOs to adopt such work-life balance supporting policies to make

their women employees more empowered and increase productivity.





Chapter V: Recommendations & Way Forward...



Our study has considered the CSOs in both rural and urban settings. The key findings of this study are mainly based on the primary research conducted with member organisations of VANI all over India, but due to the small sample size, they cannot be generalized throughout the whole sector.

Based on the findings of our study, there are a few recommendations that the CSOs could adopt to achieve gender equality and women empowerment at their workplace:

Foster Women's Leadership at Workplace: The civil society sector does not seem to be developing a path towards strengthening women leadership. But fostering women leadership should be made a top priority for growth of the CSOs. To achieve this goal, may take a very long time. Women employees generally look up to women leaders as role models. Therefore, organisations should encourage women leadership and promote gender equality in the workforce at senior levels.

Mentorship: Mentoring has always served as a useful tool for addressing specific challenges for anyone, be it men or women, specifically with respect to the career graph and the double burden of responsibilities on working women. It will prove to be a successful method to help women overcome their unique challenges in managing both home and work and encouraging men to participate in household work.

Employee friendly HR policy: For the growth of any organisation, it is of extreme importance to have an employee friendly Human Resources policy. An example of this could be conducting exit interviews when any employee resigns, to identify the key inhibitions for them to stay. This will help in further, strengthening their policies and practices, while achieving gender equality in their workplace. This will also help them tremendously, in creating a work-life balance for their employees. This might be because CSOs generally tend to focus on capacity building of other organisations, in turn ignoring their own capacities.

Inclusiveness in Decision Making: When the ideas of female employees are given equal weightage, when women employees are encouraged to speak freely and participate in decision making processed, this cultivates an environment that will bring about behavioral change. This will encourage women employees to stay and create gender equality in the organisation.

Internal Gender Audits: This will serve as a unique tool to assess the impact of the adopted gender friendly policies and facilitate gender equality and inclusion at the workplace. CSOs must conduct internal surveys at specific intervals of time, to measure the impact of their gender specific practices.

Proactive Disclosure of Gender Distribution within Organisations: A very important recommendation for the voluntary organisations to disclose the gender distribution within their organisations on their official websites. Majority of the voluntary organisations are proactively involved in promoting gender equality and women leadership at a larger scale, but what is required of them, is to make the male: female ratio within their organisations public and lead by example.

Future Surveys: A more detailed research study is required in the future, including small and larger sized voluntary organisations, to obtain more accurate results. A wider range of CSOs must be surveyed to achieve a larger sample size and finding a more appealing way to reach out to them than just a simple advance email about the study. This may help in getting maximum responses.

This report is an effort towards identifying a direction to bring about significant transformations in the gender equality and women leadership status at workplaces within the voluntary sector.

Although the preexisting gender biases and stereotypes continue to affect the workplace culture, the circumstances seem to be changing over time, though at a very slow pace. Although adherence still remains as a challenge, it is vital that workplace cultures are assessed. Due to the wide range of workplaces that exist within the voluntary sector, and the vast variety of themes they work on, it is necessary that the CSOs reevaluate the status of gender diversity over specific intervals of time. They need to recognize the underlying barriers that serve as obstacles in their growth. The management within CSOs must conduct employee surveys to gauge their perception on gender diversity in the organisation and use their feedback to develop an action plan towards improvement.

Though there is increased awareness of the importance of advancing gender equality within the voluntary sector organisations, but we are still a long way to go. We still need to find out why women find it difficult to continue working and how we should address the barriers in advancing gender equal workplaces. Because of this reason, in depth research on this subject within the voluntary sector in India, is required. A few areas recommended for further research are conducting employee perception surveys to analyse their opinions on gender parity at workplace in India. It will also be nice to explore how different factors like economic status, ethnicity, etc., affect the advancement of gender equality and women leadership within CSOs in India. This will significantly help in obtaining a clear picture of workplace cultures across the sector.

Although, a lot of work is being done in this direction, the progress is extremely slow. It is a long road ahead and we must continue to make efforts. We sincerely hope that CSOs will adopt and benefit from the recommendations provided in this report. This will also facilitate managers and policy makers to create effective strategies in order to achieve growth in the long run.

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About Voluntary Action Network India (VANI)

VANI is a national network of Indian Voluntary Development Organizations (VDOs). Currently VANI has 540 members with an outreach to around 10,000 VDOs across India. The membership of VANI ranges from grass roots to the national organizations. The members work on a range of priority development issues of the government including education, health, nutrition, integrated child development, livelihood, skill development, environment, natural resource management, climate change, water and sanitation, emergency response and preparedness, agriculture, poverty and so on, in some of the most remote areas of the country. In the year 2017-18, our network collectively reached out to over 32 million people belonging to vulnerable and marginalized groups including children, disabled people, women, elderly, farmers, dalit, tribals, disaster survivors, unemployed, youth, LGBT, sex workers etc. VANI through its efforts and strategies aims to build a strong civil society sector not only at national but regional and local level as well.

VANI was set up with the mission to promote voluntarism, create space for the sector by fostering value based voluntary action. VANI's interventions are focused to strengthen the external and internal enabling environment. To ensure the external enabling environment, VANI conducts evidence-based advocacy which includes regulatory frameworks and resource generation. In order to achieve this VANI works with the government, private sector, bilateral, multilaterals and other stakeholders. For strengthening the internal enabling environment, VANI works towards building resilience and promoting accountability, transparency and compliance through the interactive educational events and information dissemination. VANI strives to become a resource centre by conducting evidence-based research; publishing studies, articles and reports not only at state level but national and global level as well.



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