

Best Practices in Gender Mainstreaming

Bridging the Gender Diversity Gap in the Energy and Industrial Sector



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Industrialization can significantly contribute to reduction in poverty and promote shared prosperity. However, women often face hindered access to secure and well-paid jobs in manufacturing industries and related service sectors, and consequently, their participation in the development of new technologies remains limited. The Energy and Industrial sectors remain two such manufacturing-heavy sectors that are gender imbalanced, and gender equity presents both a challenge and an opportunity waiting to be harnessed.

A study conducted by International Energy Agency (IEA)¹, 'Women working in the rooftop solar sector' (2019), is a testament to this challenge. According to this study, women account for an estimated 11% of the workforce in the rooftop solar sector in India, significantly less than the 32% global average of women in the renewable sector. In other energy sectors in India, like coal, oil and gas, and electricity utilities, this figure falls even further, to 10%. When it comes to the broader manufacturing-heavy industrial sectors, such as chemicals, automotive, process industries, heavy machinery, and aerospace and defence, women are underrepresented, with participation ranging from 3-12%.

Women's empowerment has long been a part of USAID's focus. USAID firmly believes that universal access to reliable energy is key to improving the health and well-being of people around the world. It strengthens livelihoods and bolsters local economies. Energy is especially critical to improving health, safety, productivity, education, and income-generation opportunities for women and girls, who are disproportionately impacted by lack of access. USAID is working to increase access to energy for all people and strengthening opportunities for women to formally participate in the energy sector at all levels. Furthering this commitment, USAID has partnered with U.S. India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF) to establish the South Asia Women in Energy (SAWIE), a platform to promote gender equity and women leadership in the energy sector.

South Asia Women in Energy (SAWIE) in partnership with Spencer Stuart India, organized a "Chief Human Resource Officers (CHRO) Roundtable on Best Practices in Gender Mainstreaming on May 11, 2020. CHROs from leading Energy and Industrial companies participated to discuss this gender challenge and share best practices that, when replicated, can help create an enabling environment for a gender-balanced workplace.

SAWIE aims to provide a platform for women to form a collaborative and strategic approach towards reaching gender equality goals and building strong pillars across the energy sector. This platform will bring together women leaders across the energy sector to work together on designing interventions in outreach and recruitment; mentorship and leadership; and professional development that can help bridge gender gaps.

Below are some of the key themes and best practices that emerged from the panel discussion that will be useful for women desirous of entering the industry, and for companies striving to increase the gender diversity of their leadership teams.



1. Societal vs. Organizational focus

- *Understand and acknowledge the issue, and the need for change*
- *Focus on leveling the playing field, not only equipping individual players*

The focus of gender diversity initiatives must move beyond the question of what women need to do to succeed, to what organizations, leaders, and each one of us need to do to help them—in other words, what the society at large needs to do in order to more effectively leverage the potential of one half of the world's population.

Research shows that gender diversity benefits manufacturing organizations through an improved ability to innovate, generate higher return on equity, and increase profitability. Although diverse leadership teams are often still thought of as “a good to have” rather than good for business, numerous studies have confirmed the link between diverse teams and superior business results. Introspecting one's own company data on the number of women at each level in the organization, engagement and retention numbers by gender, average compensation at each level for men versus women, performance of diverse teams versus homogenous ones,

and the extent to which employee base diversity mirrors that of its customer base (or lack thereof) can be highly revealing even to organizations who believe that they have got it in hand.

The banking industry in India is a great example of this, with more women in leadership positions than most other industries. Bringing in senior female talent laterally at the top of the pyramid is always an option but not the most sustainable. Ultimately, organizations that invest in building a level playing field not only build a stronger internal pipeline but are more attractive for female leaders coming from the outside too. Leadership and culture play the biggest role in leveling the playing field. Addressing conscious and unconscious biases in the organization's culture drives real inclusion. Holding leaders accountable to “walking the talk”, including mentoring high-potential women across levels and changing policies that disadvantage a certain gender, has been proven to have far-reaching positive results.



2. Attracting & hiring women

- *Build gender diverse campus recruiting strategies*
- *Ensure use of inclusive language*
- *Structure salaries that showcase equal pay*
- *Make your company an attractive place to work*

“While hiring laterally can help fill positions faster, campus is really where organizations get built”² Companies that hire on-campus need to make roles and the workplace environment in the energy and industrial sectors more attractive for women. These companies should make sure that there is diversity in the interview panel itself, throughout the interview process, train their recruiting professionals to focus on driving more inclusive recruiting efforts, review role descriptions to ensure the use of inclusive language, showcase transparency by mentioning salary ranges.

According to studies carried out by PricewaterhouseCoopers, 45% of female candidates

feel that gender stereotypes or assumptions in the recruitment process is one of the most significant barriers to increasing the level of female hires.³

Kavita John of Air Products (an American international corporation whose principal business is selling gases and chemicals for industrial uses) shared some of the unique sourcing strategies that were practiced at her organization which included tapping into employee/business resource groups and tying up with agencies and firms that bring deep expertise of attracting and hiring women by reaching out to women-led groups/networks.

3. Creating role models by broadcasting success stories – internally & externally

Most organizations and industries today need more visible female role models and success stories. Several panelists recommended that companies talk about theirs and collaborate beyond organizational boundaries to showcase such talent. In countries that have made more progress than India on gender diversity, a commitment to publicly sharing data and actions have proven to be even more powerful than certain government actions.

One such story that was shared by Aniruddha Khekale of Emerson Automation Solutions, about a woman employee who broke the preconception of women not being able to operate gas turbines, by volunteering to run the field operations, a job that women had not taken up before.

Sharing this story not just locally but globally within the organization has inspired several women at Emerson, to take up technical field roles and showcase their ability to excel and be hands on by overcoming barriers and challenges faced earlier



4. Building capabilities by providing equal opportunities

- *Creation of techno commercial roles for women*
- *Fast tracking high potential female talent*
- *Leadership development programs*
- *Include women in succession planning*

India tops the world in producing female graduates (43%) in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) but ranks 19th in employing them (14%)⁴. In a leadership study conducted by KPMG, when asked what training and development skills were needed to move more women into leadership roles, 57% of study respondents cited leadership training, 56% cited confidence building, 48% cited decision-making, 47% cited networking, and 46% critical thinking.⁵

To make the prospect of working in the energy and industrial sectors more attractive for women, companies should create roles that combine elements of sales, technical/field operations, and client facing roles. This will help bridge the skill gaps, break preconceptions in the sector, and enable women to become strong managers in the future. It is equally critical to fast track high-potential women, accelerating their growth by building leadership capabilities and entrusting them with P&L accountability opportunities to lead businesses. Initiatives deployed by Emerson Automation, such as “STEP (Science, Technology, Engineering and Production) Ahead”, “Bubble & Stretch Assignments”,

and “Learning Projects”, all aimed to provide platforms for women to develop senior-level leadership skillsets, while identifying new growth opportunities and building diverse capabilities. At another company, ensuring that the ratio of women to men, leading projects and assignments at mid-level management, was in the 60%/40% range, or at least 50%/50%, went a long way.

Sabih Ahmad Kidwai from Schneider Electric shared his experience in implementing URJA (which translates to ‘Energy’ in English) a leadership development program, available for all women employees across India, Srilanka and Bangladesh designed to accelerate the development and strengthen the leadership skills of mid-career women employees. As of end 2019, more than 400 women have benefitted from the program

Commitment from the top becomes key in inclusion of women in succession planning. C-Suite executives need to demonstrate their support by sponsoring and mentoring high potential women, and employees from other under-represented groups, by setting aggressive goals on changing the demographics.



5. Sensitizing top leadership

- *Eradicating unconscious bias at the workplace*

One often notices that there is a subtle, subconscious bias that still prevails in the energy and broader industrial sectors, even within organizations that pride themselves on their efforts to provide equal opportunity for all. In these traditionally masculine domains, society expects men to fill the vast majority of engineering, operations, sales representative, and high-level management positions, while human resources, communications, legal, quality control, safety, accounting and other support-oriented careers are more typically open to women.

Relevant leaders must be sensitized through case scenarios to highlight how their decisions or conversations reflect subconscious bias. Performance reviews are another organizational process that should be gender neutral. It is essential to ensure that necessary checks and balances are in place in the process so that appraisal decisions are driven by performance and not the employees' identity, whether it is a matter of gender, culture, sexual orientation, or other minority status. Teaching managers to use specific facts and behaviors when giving constructive feedback to the employees can help reduce subconscious gender biases in the workplace.

6. Providing the right infrastructure & structuring robust leave policies

- *Creating women friendly workplaces and removing mobility barriers*
- *Structuring modern and effective gender-neutral parental leave policies*

Infrastructure is not gender-neutral. Gaps in access to good infrastructure disproportionately affect women. Women must have a voice in setting priorities for the design and operation of infrastructure if it is to have the desired impact. Examples of infrastructure conducive for women employees are having a fully functional and well-managed creche facility to help working mothers transition back to work from maternity leave, pick-up and drop-off services that ensures their safety, implementing the POSH (Prevention of Sexual Harassment) Act by managing redressal mechanisms and constituting internal complaints committees that protect women from sexual harassment at the workplace, and setting up counselling centers to help women prepare mentally for personal and professional challenges.

Schneider Electric has implemented various women friendly policies in the organization such as Flexi@Work (flexibility to choose the time of arrival and departure provided core business hours are met) and DayCare Policy (reimbursement of expenses for women employees at firm's DayCare centres provided at subsidized rates) that allow women to align with the firm's ever changing needs.

Structuring attractive leave policies for employees can help organizations make a big difference. Indian businesses have recognized the need for paid time off for new parents, regardless of gender, and have changed their benefits packages accordingly. While there is still a lot to be done when it comes to improving parental leave offerings in India, best practices can be adopted from examples such as Amazon's 'Leave Share' & 'Ramp Back' programs or Zomato's and Novartis' new global parental leave policy, which offers 26-WEEKS paid parental leave to both men and women.

7. Providing a Support Network

- *Women's Interest Network*
- *HeForShe*

Manufacturing companies must create advisory boards and women-run networks that promote career opportunities for women and drive local and national initiatives to support, advance, retain and reward women. Activities focused on mentoring, networking, relationship building, leadership and skills development have proven successful in advancing women in traditionally male dominated sectors.

Shalawn Jackson from ExxonMobil shed light on some of the inclusion & diversity initiatives, such as their internal Women's Interest Network (WIN), which has proven to be a source of mentoring and support for women within the business and ensured supportive policies. Another example given by a panelist from a leading global credit card company, the 'Active Women's Interest Network', helps enable relevant forums and benefits such as mothers' nursing rooms across their locations. Taking thought leadership on diversity and inclusion to the next level in India, the company designed and created a unique diversity initiative, 'Reach Out', that was rolled out in collaboration with four other like-minded organizations and involved cross-functional mentoring of high-potential women leaders across these companies by their leaders.

One of the panelist shared that "true inclusion in diversity is more than just inviting people to the table, it is about making sure every single person at the table feels empowered to contribute, it is also through garnering diverse perspectives that we could develop unique value added solutions for us to remain competitive in our industry".

HeForShe is a solidarity movement for the advancement of gender equality, initiated by the United Nations. Its goal is to achieve equality by encouraging men to partake as agents of change. Grounded in the idea that gender inequality is an issue that affects all people-socially, economically and politically-it seeks to actively involve men in a movement that was originally conceived as "a struggle for women by men". UN Women launched the HeForShe IMPACT 10x10x10 initiative to gain further momentum in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment at the 2015 World Economic Forum in Davos.

One of the panellists, Schneider Electric, is a signatory of Women's Empowerment Principles - a set of principles for business, mandated by UN women, offering guidance on women empowerment. Schneider Electric was selected as one of the Impact 10x10x10 (UN women has selected 10 countries, 10 universities and 10 multinational companies around the globe for the initiative and Schneider Electric is one of the 10 companies) corporate champions for HeForShe movement initiated by UN women, to promote gender equality. 15,000+ employees across Schneider Electric, including its top leaders, have made HeForShe commitments to provide a support network and advocate for greater gender equality. Greater adoption of this best practice can help in gender mainstreaming in the energy and broader industrial sector.





Conclusion

It is clear that women are underrepresented in the energy and broader industrial sectors. The corporate-level initiatives discussed in the CHRO roundtable will not solve the problem of gender inequality overnight. However, open dialogue and a commitment to change, combined with implementing initiatives that promote participation of women in these sectors - not only at the organizational level, but at societal and individual level - will help business leaders to craft a more deliberate diversity strategy that better aligns with the behavior of both men and women.

At an individual level, women can benefit by altering their own belief systems that influence their perception of being the “weaker” gender, which poses an obstacle to advancing in traditionally male-dominated sectors. Women should focus on enhancing their competencies, seeking out high value assignments, developing stronger networking skills, and showcasing ambitions and determination to excel. In parallel, corporations need to promote mentorship culture to guide women in their journey to the top leadership.

One looks forward to the day when corporate India will no longer need to use qualifiers like ‘woman leader’ and women will be the driving force in the rapidly expanding energy and broader industrial sectors, increasing companies’ fortunes multifold and contributing to a growing global economy.

Acknowledgements: We would like to express our sincere thanks and appreciation to all the speakers at the panelists and participants (see annexure) in the joint CHRO workshop, for sharing their perspectives with us. The event was organized under SAWIE.

About SAWIE: SAWIE, a joint initiative of U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the U.S.-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF), aims to promote women’s empowerment and gender sensitization in the energy sector in South Asia region.

The platform brings together leaders, particularly women leaders, across the energy sector to design interventions focused around outreach and recruitment; mentorship and leadership; increasing women’s participation in networking and brainstorming events, and professional development that can help bridge the gender gaps. USAID is supporting the SAWIE platform through its “Greening the Grid – Renewable Integration and Sustainable Energy (GTG-RISE)” initiative.

For more information on SAWIE, please visit <https://sawie.org/>

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Sources and Citations

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Source 2 – How to design an effective campus hiring strategy <https://www.peoplesmatter.in/article/assessments/HOW-TO-DESIGN-AN-EFFECTIVE-CAMPUS-HIRING-STRATEGY-23418>

(Quote by Vachaspati Saxena, Head TA, General Electric Technology Centre India)

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Source 4 – Business Insider Article <https://www.businessinsider.in/careers/news/india-tops-the-world-in-producing-female-graduates-in-stem-but-ranks-19th-in-employing-them/ARTICLESHOW/74117413.CMS>

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Source 6 – India’s best companies to work for 2015: 360-DEGREE development of staff is the mantra at American Express

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Annexure

CHRO Roundtable and Participants



Chief Human Resource Officer Roundtable on

BEST PRACTICES IN GENDER MAINSTREAMING

Date: May 13th 2020 | 7:30 - 8:30 pm IST

RSVP: gsingh@usinfoundation.org

SAWIE is organizing a roundtable of Chief Human Resource Officers (CHRO) from leading energy and industrial companies to share gender challenges and discuss best practices to help create an enabling environment for a gender balanced workplace.

The roundtable will be attended by 6-8 leading CHRO's and moderated by SWAIE's Co-Chair Shalini Sarin.

SAWIE's knowledge partner Spencer Stuart will join a deliberations and prepare a recommendation paper for sharing with corporate leadership in the energy/industrial sector.

BACKGROUND

The energy sector remains one of the most gender imbalanced and gender equity holds a greater challenge in the India's energy sector. The skewed women participation can partly be attributed to the social and perception barriers about dominance of field-based activities, geographical mobility and shift-based working, which have been traditionally considered as negative for women participation.

SAWIE aims to provide a platform for women to form a collaborative and strategic approach towards reaching gender equality goals and building strong pillars across the energy sector. This platform will bring together women leaders across the energy, and industrial sector to work together on designing interventions in outreach and recruitment; mentorship and leadership; and professional development that can help bridge gender gaps across leadership levels

Panelists:

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Shalini Sarin, Co-Chair, SAWIE and Session Moderator | Country responsibility, Honeywell |
| 2. Vijay Lal, Sr Executive Vice President (HR), BSES Yamuna Power Limited | 8. Shubhra Bhandari, Head HR – India, Texas Instruments |
| 3. Sabih Ahmad Kidwai, HR Director, Schneider Electric | 9. Mukund Vyas, Head - Executive Management and Talent Development, Tata Motors |
| 4. Aniruddha Khakale, Group Human Resources Director, Emerson Automation Solutions | 10. Dilip Pattanayak, President & CHRO Steel & Corporate, JSW |
| 5. Anupama Kaul, Director HR, Cummins India Ltd | 11. Shefali Bairaria Suri, Chief Human Resources Officer, Greaves Cotton Limited |
| 6. Kavita John, Director HR India Region, Air Products | 12. Shalawn Jackson, Wells Manager, Bengaluru Technical Center, ExxonMobil |
| 7. Mahesh Joshi, Head- Compensation and Benefits and | |