

## Gender Responsive Value Chains

Roundtable conducted on Friday, 29<sup>th</sup> January 2021 at 11:15 am-01:15 pm IST

**Host:** FICCI FLO **Country:** India

**Number of attendees:** 78

**Number of Countries:** 8

### **Moderator:**

1. Karon Shaiva- Chief Impact Officer, MD, IDOBRO Impact Solutions

### **Experts:**

1. Joy Foster - Oxford, UK, TechPixies
2. Minal Jagtiani - Singapore & India, Principal Founder, LeadThink
3. Urvashi Devidayal - Mumbai, Sankalp Lead
4. Anupama Kapoor - Mumbai, Founder-Reboot
5. Dr Ramavenkatachalan - Associate prof Ph.D. St. Mira's college for girls.

### **Summary:**

The Roundtables at RISE World Summit are the core activity to encourage collaboration around the challenges the world faces. Subject matter experts enable breakthrough interactions to identify outcomes for post-event joint efforts and alliances, knowledge assets, and more for collective impact.

More information on RISE Summit can be found at <https://risesummit.in/>

“Women hold up half the sky” is an often-used proverb to denote the importance of all things female. So when you believe that women are a source of power that can drive an economy, you want to find some great mechanism to multiply its impact. The Gender Responsive Value Chain Roundtable focuses on Diversity & Inclusion policies and practices across various aspects of the workplace and society with relation to women in the role of:

- Suppliers
- Employees
- Consumers
- Decision Makers
- Community Members

The round table covered 3 aspects; firstly the challenges faced by women in the workforce were discussed, then the capabilities to ensure a gender-responsive value chain were listed, and finally, collaborations and solutions were highlighted by various stakeholders. The RISE World Summit 2021 has provided a virtual platform for discussions on various topics that hosted

diverse panels, but it was inspiring to see a majority of women on this round table along with men who supported the idea of Gender Equality.

### Introduction:

The Gender Responsive Value Chain roundtable was hosted by FICCI FLO, FLO being an all-India forum for women. Ms. Karon Shaiva, the Chief Impact Officer and MD at Idobro began the session by introducing the different experts on the panel joining from all around the world to focus on the inclusion policies and practices across various aspects of the workplace and society with relation to women and encourage equal participation and fair distribution of opportunities.

### Challenges:

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It is important to distinguish between the two scenarios faced by urban and rural women, which are vastly different.

Dr. Renuka Singh - Jawahar Lal University. - Professor  
Gender Responsive Value Chain  
at RISE World Summit 2021

The first challenge discussed was the observation that in most organizations there are only men at the top levels. The most common excuse for this was that it was not possible to find a suitable woman for the role. This was mostly applicable to finance and technology firms as mentioned by the experts on the panel. However, Mr. Pawan Singh highlighted the 3.6 million rural women from Gujarat, who were his employers. Mr. Pawan Singh elaborated on the sustainable solutions and efforts of Amul in Gujarat. These women were able to create an economic opportunity out of daily household activities and gained economic equilibrium in their society. While the efforts of Amul were appreciated, Ms. Minal Jagtiani the Founder of LeadThink raised the real question of being able to cascade such solutions to

other organizations too. The challenge is to be “Intentional”, not just being aware of the problem. **Dr. Renuka**, a sociologist at JNU emphasized that it is important to distinguish between the two scenarios faced by urban and rural women, which are vastly different. This is very evident in the social scenario of India. However in the UK, as explained by Joy Foster, the CEO/ Founder of TechPixies; there is no disparity in regions, but the disparity vastly lies in technology. A woman’s duty is not just restricted to the office, they are also expected to manage the household responsibilities. Another challenge in the UK post lockdown is the rise in domestic violence cases. While talking about women’s duty in the household **Ms. Sarmilla**, CEO, **Step-Up Parenting** shared how important “Equal Parenting” has become. It is important to show parity to children and avoid gender roles when they are young. This helps develop their mindset. There is a constant notion of “Men being the providers” along with the issue of women being paid lesser than their male colleagues. In such situations when faced with an emergency, women are more likely to take a break than the male family member whose salary is a little higher. This raises the challenge of economic independence. Organizations need to work towards such occupational gender stereotypes to create a difference in the above-mentioned scenarios.

**Mr. Rajat Soni** a Teen Life Coach said it's not about education, it's not about how affluent or non-affluent you are it's about the patriarchal mindset which has been existing in our country which has led to the inequalities. It starts from the very childhood, when a child observes their father speaking to the mother, in a certain way, when the child sees their mother working in the

kitchen or when the father hits the mother or there is any kind of domestic violence. **Ms. Anupama Kapoor** stated that it's important for us to also empower women and help them become financially independent to make their own decisions and move forward in life. **Ms. Dolly Dhamodiwala**, the founder of Business Beacon Management Consultants spoke about how women were discriminated against by banks and financial institutes. Women were not given business loans as most of them have no collateral. Banks turn down women even though they are more likely to pay back their debts. Further, it was observed that women shy away from financial matters.

### Capabilities and Solutions:



The point that Fathers should also play an equal role in parenting was supported by all the experts and participants. The general opinion was that it shouldn't be seen as an exception or a favor done by the father. It is the duty of both parents to work towards the upbringing of the child. Ms. Sonal Zaveri mentioned that in order for the Labor force participation to go up it is important to address the practical needs of women. Ms. Minal mentioned that the capabilities of individuals must be recognized. Instead of quotas, other benchmarks must be used to keep women included at higher levels. The benchmarks must be equal and unbiased. Organizations should use the term 'Gender Balance' instead of gender equality. While discussing

capabilities the Amul example must be given emphasis. As mentioned before, the traditional capabilities of women were technically enhanced in dairy farming. This skill enhancement was developed to become an economic resource. Women were given decision making responsibilities. Thus giving rural women respect due to their skill and capabilities. This can be observed in the social structure in the North-East of India and Bhutan too, where women hold a higher stature in society and it becomes important to take lessons from these cultures. Ms. Minal Jagtiani said for a mindset shift, conversations at home and school need to be gender-neutral. At the workplace, evaluation of performance, targets, promotion, and salaries should not be gender-biased.

### Collaborations and Way forward:

As the response to women being discriminated against by banks on financial matters through her organization's collaborative efforts, Ms. Dhamodiwala was able to spread awareness about various Government Schemes available for Women entrepreneurs. These efforts are in line to achieve SDG 5 which is about gender parity. "Mardon wali baat" and "Equal half" are platforms and safe spaces for men & women to work towards Gender Balance Advocacy. Productive dialogues raise consciousness about gender equity among participants and engage men as equal stakeholders for Gender Equality. The aim is to guide participants to understand what an ally is and how men can make a difference by becoming change agents. Paternity leaves were also part of the discussion on collaborative efforts. Men would be paid less when they avail paternity leaves; hence many would not opt for it. It was only after a few CEOs at higher levels availed paternity leaves, which motivated male employees to do the same. Moreover, men are obligated to work just as women are obligated to stay home. They have to provide for the home. It could be said that men feel trapped at work just like women feel trapped at home. The work-life

balance must be kept for both men and women. An equity & inclusion advisory for gender equality, this platform can work across the spectrum, it can work in a rural setting it can also work in an urban setting and in a corporate setting in an entrepreneurial environment as a safe space for men to engage in conversations and become allies.

Gender parity is always taken from the woman's perspective, and we don't realize how men feel trapped about these kinds of expectations that are there from them. It is not an adversarial issue, it has to be seen with sensitivity, the issue is one of understanding and sensitivity which needs to be worked upon together.

**Thank you and closing note:** Ms. Karon Shaiva concluded the session by saying that we have achieved an objective of collective interaction on issues pertaining to gender and now we can take it forward and act on these issues with sensitivity.

**Note:**

*For a more detailed understanding of the session outcomes, kindly access a complete recording at <https://youtube.com/channel/UC2UI5NfIyN0E5hifaSVOpEw>*

*A LinkedIn group has been created by RISE World Summit Team to foster collaboration between participants. <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/12494977>*

*More information on RISE Summit can be found at <https://risesummit.in>*