

# The NTL-Network and Women’s Labour Force Participation – a Position Paper

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## I. Introduction

The growing concern over the persistent marginalization of women in India with regards to availability and access to resources and dearth of opportunities to improve their life circumstances influenced Azad foundation, New Delhi, to initiate a network of concerned organizations and individuals to strengthen efforts against discriminating socio-economic practices that continuously result in the disempowerment of women in India. This process of initiating a network by Azad foundation comprised of exhaustive research exercises such as mapping of organizations working in the field of livelihoods; series of deliberations among interested organizations on the question of women's dignity of labour, access to education and training, and problem of strict gendered division of labour among many other issues. Additionally, experiential learning journeys were conducted with visits to different organisations to learn from their expertise and experience of enabling women to secure varied livelihood options. These efforts which began in the year 2014 culminated into the formation of the nationwide Non-Traditional Livelihoods Network (NTLN) in a meeting held between 16 NTL organizations in September 2017.

The overarching purpose of NTLN has been to pool together energies, resources and experiences aimed at strengthening the understanding of women and work and to collectively advocate an enabling environment for women's economic empowerment. However, given the socio-economic and cultural context of the country that has historically excluded women from certain kinds of livelihoods and roles; a key focus for the network has been the promotion of women in 'non-traditional livelihoods'. Non-traditional livelihood (NTL) has been defined by the network as given below:

'Livelihood practices that help women break stereotypes emerging from the intersections of gender, caste, class, religion, sexual orientation, disabilities and other marginalities and oppressive structures, within a dynamic context of space and time. Non-traditional livelihoods 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.'<sup>1</sup>

The definition adopted by the NTL network does not restrict NTL to certain pre-identified professions or roles, it is rather a dynamic definition that challenges the norms emanating from an intersection of social differences and such as gender, caste, class, religion, sexual orientation, disabilities and so forth that have reproduced and reinforced marginalities. Largely, women have been at the receiving end and the most marginalized living in a social system that is fueled by patriarchy. Thus, the network primarily defines NTL as those activities and roles in the economy that challenge these exclusionary gendered norms and practices in an attempt to establish equality and social justice for women.

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<sup>1</sup> NTL-Network Charter

The purpose of this paper is to further develop NTLN's position on certain key socio-economic issues that have consistently worked to disempower women especially in the labour market domain. Even though the network is fairly recent, the organizational and individual members of the network bring with them many years of rich experience of working with women on their socio-economic and cultural rights in India. This paper will first begin with a detailed discussion of the context focusing on the discriminating factors against women workers emanating from the labour market domain in India. The paper will subsequently elaborate the network's position and demands to remedy the deep- rooted gendered constraints faced by a large majority of women in the country. The paper is based on an in-depth analysis of NTL – Network's documents<sup>2</sup> (See annexure I for list of documents referred), two key informant interviews from the networks steering group and desk research involving review of academic literature on the subject.

## 2. The Context

The social and economic practices in India cutting across all regions, cultures, and religions is dominated by patriarchy, a social system whereby men hold power and acquire authority in all facets of life. To explain simplistically, gendered arrangement and norms under a patriarchal system is such that decision making powers, wealth, resources, and opportunities come to be inherited by the male lineage to the disadvantage of women in general. The patriarchal system is also typically characterized by gendered codes of behavior and roles for men and women, easily observed in the case of a family – the basic unit of a patriarchal society – where women are expected to maintain the household and attend to the care needs of the entire family, male members of the family are considered to be the providers and protectors of the family. These gendered beliefs and practices are taken as 'moral' and essential to maintain a 'natural' order in a patriarchal society, and thus, these beliefs and practices are also sustained by all the other institutions of the society such as the education system, governance, politics, market institutions and so forth. However, these gendered arrangements have resulted in inequitable, dependent and vulnerable social conditions for a large majority of women, that has historically manifested in India in the form of skewed sex ratio in favor of men, son preference, poor asset ownership, widespread violence against women in the private and the public sphere, comparatively higher rates of female illiteracy, poor political representation and participation, and poor female labour force participation.

The Indian state acknowledges the problem faced by women in the country, and gender equality has been openly espoused as a goal of the state especially since the release of the 'Towards Equality' report in the year 1974, that drew the state's attention to appalling condition of women in health, nutrition, education, and discrimination in paid work. These findings were also, subsequently cited in the National Perspective Plan for Women, 1988-2000, and further

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<sup>2</sup> These documents included proceeding of NTL-Network's meetings and conferences, process documents of 'Learning journeys', the Needs Assessment study of the NTL network.

elaborated in the Shramshakti Report, 1988. Since then, there has been a switch in the state narrative from welfare to development and has led to commitments and series of affirmative actions to improve women's situation in different spheres of life. Importantly, India has also committed to address gender inequalities by ratifying various international conventions and human rights instruments committing such as the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1993, the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action in 1995, and more recently the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015.

India has seen some improvements in gender equality indicators over the last couple of decades especially in female educational attainments. There has been an increased enrollment of girls particularly at the primary school level and fewer girl school dropouts. In terms of numbers, girls out of school, as percentage of primary-school-going age female population has dropped from 34.63 percent in 1990 to 1.53 in 2013 (World Bank data as cited in Mohan 2017<sup>3</sup>). There has also been a decreasing trend in adolescent fertility rate (births per 1,000 women ages 15-19) which now stands at 23.29 in comparison to 98.81 recorded in 1990 (Mohan 2017) showing fewer instances of female child marriage. However, indicators such as the sex ratio at birth (900 females per 1000 males in 2015)<sup>4</sup> which has continued to remain low, increasing reports of crimes against women, and declining female labour force participation rate (FLFPR) suggests that not enough has been done in the right direction to assuage the deep rooted problem of gender inequality in India.

## **2.2. The Female Labour Force Participation Rate in India**

Of the many important indicators of gender equality in the country, the female labour force participation rate (FLFPR) is also seen as an indicator of women's economic empowerment. It is interesting to note that despite the high economic progress seen in the last few decades, with greater educational attainments for women and declining fertility rates, India has still worryingly shown a consistent decline in the FLFPR, in fact in terms of global ranking, India stands 8th from the bottom based on the World Bank data for 182 countries for the year 2019.<sup>5</sup> 'India has been witnessing a consistent decline in the FLFPR since the 1980s when it stood at approximately 40 percent and touched 29.4 percent in 2004-05. The decline in FLFPR was rather steep between 2004-05 to 2011-12 as it reached 22.5 percent for women of all ages' (Chaudhary and Vervick 2014, Neetha and Mazumdar 2011). India's new Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) showed a decline from the last NSS for 2011-12 to 2017-18, for both men and women; however the decline was steepest for rural women (PLFS 2017-18).

The 'FLFPR has shown a clear declining trend in rural areas, between 2009-10 and 2011-12 as there was a drop from 26.5 percent to 25.3, while urban areas saw some increase from 14.6 percent to 15.5 percent for the same period' (Chaudhary and Verick 2014:12). With increasing economic growth, agricultural sector is making a decreasing contribution to India's GDP. This coupled with rising incomes and better education, female employment is continuously falling in

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<sup>3</sup> <https://thewire.in/economy/ten-charts-gender-inequality>

<sup>4</sup> <https://niti.gov.in/content/sex-ratio-females-1000-males>

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/rankings/Female\\_labor\\_force\\_participation/](https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/rankings/Female_labor_force_participation/)

this sector. At the same time the secondary and tertiary sectors have failed to absorb a greater number of female workers resulting in the continuous decline in the overall FLFPR (Afridi et al 2016).

The resistance of the non-agricultural sectors in India to absorb women workers, despite better educational attainments, points to the socio-economic development process in a patriarchal society where women are merely accepted as cheap and unskilled labour, and higher educational attainments do not naturally result in the acceptance of women in job sectors that are 'non-traditional' to them (Chaudhary and Verick 2014). A higher achievement in enrolling and retaining females in school is not converted into non-agricultural employment opportunities for women in patriarchal societies (Littrell and Bertsch 2013). Furthermore, an explanation that finds a mention in most of the literature explaining the declining FLFPR is the effect of hegemonic social norms and the strict gendered division of labour in India. Social concepts such as honor and respect associated with keeping women in the private domain of her household, coupled with disproportionate burden of unpaid labour for the household has played a key role in constraining women's participation in non-agricultural sectors (Pande and Kabeer 2019, Lahoti and Swaminathan 2016, Neetha and Mazumdar 2011, Hirway and Jose 2011).

The worrying decline in FLFPR has thus revived the long standing discourse on the rigid discrimination of women across different regions and cultures of India. The low position of women in the society was also economically evident from her deprived presence in lucrative paid-work, but over representation in low skilled, precarious, unrecognized and insecure work options. The discussions on declining FLFPR and its causes is not confined to economic literature alone, but also pricked civil society organization and women's groups particularly working in the field of women's economic empowerment in India. Troubled with this continued pattern of existence for Indian women, the NTLN comprising of civil society organizations working with underprivileged women to transform gendered relations in education, training, and livelihoods has come together in different national and international forums to discuss and strategize. The member organizations of NTLN hold a variety of expertise and bring a diverse range of experiences to the network. These include organizations working directly with communities, and proficient in providing training and facilitating skill development, developing entrepreneurship among underprivileged section of society is another area of expertise, while there are still others who focus on research, policy advocacy and community campaigning.

Given that the organizations in NTLN come from different parts of the country, it enriches the network's perspectives and skills from a cross-section of realities, cultures, environment and socio-economic conditions making it truly representative of India. Based on its vast experience of creating an enabling environment for women workers through various strategies, NTLN has identified main concerns or agendas in its resolve to change the predominant gender discriminations against women reflected in the declining FLFPR. The following section discusses mainly three positions of NTLN by combining insights from NTLN process documents,

interviews held with key members of the network for the purpose of this paper, and arguments from literature.

### **3. NTLN's Position to enable Women's Economic Empowerment in India**

Members of the NTLN come from different states of India and hold varied set of expertise, but the focus of all the member organizations remains the upliftment of women by way of removing systemic gendered discriminations. Through a series of deliberations between the members of NTLN and particularly during the general body meetings of the network, three crucial areas of work have been identified as pathways to women's empowerment and have been stated as advocacy position for NTLN<sup>6</sup>. These include a) Gender Sensitive Education and Training, b) Recognition and Redistribution of Women's Unpaid Work, and c) Creating Gender Sensitive Markets. These three positions are intricately linked with each other, and in the following sub-sections the paper attempts to elucidate each of these positions by drawing support from NTLN experiences and relevant academic literature.

#### **3.1. Gender Sensitive Education and Training**

Literature notes a 'U' shaped relationship between women's educational attainment and labor force participation, which shows that the participation level of women who are illiterate or have attained education up to primary level is quite high in unskilled poorly paid sectors such as agriculture, in comparison to women with higher education up to graduation level who pull out from agricultural employment but do not find entry into tertiary or non agricultural employment, but gradually pick up employment with education higher than graduation (Sorsa et al 2015). This can also be seen in the rural-urban divide, whereby rural areas with lower educational levels of women have a high FLFP, while in urban areas even with better education the FLFP is almost half of that in rural areas (Fletcher 2018.) In other words, women have continued to face the brunt of the 'jobless growth' in India by experiencing a non-stop decline in their employment rate. Thus gendered pattern of employment persists in the job market, despite increasing education levels of women.

However, the importance of education in producing empowering outcomes for women as highlighted by human capital theories is undeniable. The importance of education to transform women's status in the society was also noticeably accepted by the Indian state in 1986 'National Education Policy' by stating, 'Education will be used as an agent of basic change in the status of woman. In order to neutralize the accumulated distortions of the past, there will be a well-conceived edge in favor of women. The National Education System will play a positive, interventionist role in the empowerment of women' (As cited in Sahni 2018: 5). Education as a pathway to women's empowerment and gender equality has been recognized by India in its various policy documents, and in the enactment of Right to Education Act in 2009. Additionally

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<sup>6</sup> These three are not the only positions that NTLN has stated, but have been identified as key positions from the NTLN documents (listed in annexure 1) that capture the deliberations and discussion held between the NTLN members.

at the international level the government has committed to promoting gender equality by being a signatory to various international instruments such as the CEDAW, the Beijing Declaration, United Nations Girls Education Initiative 2010, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and the SDGs among various others. The government's focus on education has led to encouraging outcomes, according to the ASER report, 2018, for the first time the percentage of children in the age group of 6-14 who are not enrolled in school has dropped below 3 percent in 2018. The girls out of school in the age group of 11-14 stood above 10.3 percent at all India level in 2006, the same has fallen to 4.1 percent in 2018 (ASER 2018). The focus of the government on achieving enrollment and retention targets for children, particularly girls to close the gender gaps in access, although important and desirable, are not enough to meet the transformative targets of achieving gender equality in other life outcomes or empowering them as enshrined in various policy documents of India and international instruments that India has been signatory to. In other words, an increased level of access to education has not led to transformation in discriminatory gendered relationships at home or the workplace.

What is needed therefore is to move beyond access to also focus on quality education as recognized by the SDGs. The education system needs to be such that recognizes and redresses the disparities in our society, the gendered stereotypes and stigmas that discriminate against various social groups, and the pervasiveness of violence against women and the weak in our private and public lives (Fredman et al 2016). Instead, often gendered norms are perpetuated in the classroom through use of textbook material that reinforces ideas of sexual division of labour, or differences in feminist and masculine qualities. The teachers who play a crucial role in shaping the minds of children often also unquestioningly entrench the patriarchal versions of gender roles (Fredman et al 2016). Alternatively, a focus on quality education would mean attention to 'process, content, and curricula that critically address inequitable social norms and structures' (Sahni 2018: 7). Nirantar, an organization set up in 1993, and also a part of NTLN has been working in the field of education to enable critical thinking and empowerment among children, youth and women. The educational methodology developed by Nirantar builds in a critical analysis on gender and sexuality and is derived from grass-root engagement with girls and women in several states of India. The educational material is also based on the lived experiences of women and youth belonging to different under privileged sections of the society. Thus, the educational material so developed enables a better understanding of the gendered realities in their immediate socio-political and economic environment. The pedagogy at the same time builds in dignity, confidence and agency in the learner as well as the teacher. The educational material developed by Nirantar is being used by several other NGOs and groups in the country. The government can learn from such important initiatives in the country towards transformative education and scale up its use in formal education system across the country.

### **3.1.1. Skill Training**

Besides formal education in school, skill development has been seen as a key factor in increasing women's employability and it encourages women to participate in labour market by increasing opportunity costs for not being employed. Both hereditary and on-the-job training increases the probability of self employment among women by 38 and 35 percent respectively in rural

areas, similarly there is a 35 and 31 percent respectively in urban areas (Chaudhary and Verick 2014). Fletcher et al 2018 observe that vocational training increases the likelihood of employment across all educational levels. Further, based on the NSS findings, the out-of-labour women who showed willingness to work stated that they do not have the requisite training to take up desirable employment (Fletcher 2018). The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) is the nodal ministry of the government that has taken several initiatives to facilitate skill development among women. The government recognizes the importance of skilling to improve productivity and employment and for this reason launched the 'Skill India Mission' in July 2015. These initiatives include trainings of one or two year duration under the Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) for all youth. The National Skill Training Institutes exclusively for women (NSTI (W)) were established in the 1990s are presently regionally spread across 16 cities in India. The courses offered at ITIs and NSTI (W) offer a range of courses designed as per industrial pattern and high employability<sup>7</sup>. The ITIs have a much larger network of over 15000 institutes across the country and encourage women to enroll by offering them tuition fee waivers. There has been an increasing enrollment of women in ITIs, admissions in 2018 reached 1,73,105 from 87,799 in 2014, an increase of 97 percent (UNI 2019)<sup>8</sup>.

Short term training options are extended under the flagship program of the Ministry called the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), wherein almost 50 percent participants are women (UNI 2019). The ITIs, NSTI (W), and PMKVY offer a range of courses that also include courses on electronics, computer hardware and software, interior designing, fashion designing, office assistance, architectural training, cosmetology and so on. Courses in artificial intelligence and data analytics are also being offered keeping the industry 4.0 in view. However women trainees still generally cluster in traditional courses for women such as fashion designing, cosmetology and office assistance, which points to the working of gender norms in their choice of training. The government also runs the National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS) under the Apprentices Act, 1961 to promote apprenticeship training and incentivize employers who engage apprentices. Trainees on completing their courses under ITI, NSTI or PMKVY can apply for apprenticeship under NAPS approved institutes. Other programs offered by the government for skill training, includes, Skills Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness for Livelihood Promotion (SANKALP) and Skill Strengthening for Industrial Value Enhancement (STRIVE), among others.

The government thus has been making efforts in promoting employable skills among women, but greater research is needed to understand why a desired impact of increasing women's labour market outcome is still not being achieved. National level datasets still lack analysis on contextual training needs and industry requirements thus research on the conditions and aspirations of marginalized women's group will support clear policy designs that truly match the requirements on both supply and demand side (Menon et al n.d). For instance, the PMKVY

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<sup>7</sup> <http://rvtijaipur.nic.in/>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.uniindia.com/women-get-special-focus-under-skill-india-mission/india/news/1523806.html>



scheme identifies particularly vulnerable sections such as women, persons with disabilities (PWD) and club them into a 'special group' of beneficiaries to provide them monetary post placement support of 1450Rs per month. But, by grouping them together the scheme does not account for the specific needs of these sub-groups and the quantum of support actually needed (Menon et al n.d: 30).

Mishra et al 2018, noted in their study on youth and work that although a greater number of female youth showed a desire to enroll in training programs, only 19 percent of females in comparison to 26 percent males actually enrolled in the training. This could be explained through gender difference in access to information and social norms on acquiring trainings and engaging in paid work. The same study also observed that about 70 percent youth lacked information about government run programs for skill development (Mishra et al 2018). NTLN members demonstrate how critical it is to mobilize and build awareness on the educational or skill training programs being offered such that information especially reaches the marginalized groups. Outreach is done by holding information camps in communities and interactions are held with prospective participants to address their concerns and queries. Community mobilizers or facilitators are engaged to continuously communicate with the communities. Archana Women's Centre (AWC), Kerala, networks with the local community leadership and elected local bodies such as the panchayats to build community ownership and encourage women to participate in non-traditional trainings for women such as masonry. Involvement of erstwhile trainees of NTL as trainers for the same community has also proved beneficial in instilling confidence among women to seek training especially in NTL. Azad Foundation, nurtures grass-root level women leadership in their program of 'feminist leaders' to engage with the community, creating role models for other women to aspire and take on similar trainings and roles.

Although government skill training programs have yet not had a major impact on national level labour market outcomes for women, but there were noticeable effects on non-cognitive skills such as self efficacy, aspirations and agency for women who undertook skill training (Menon et al n.d.). These behavioural changes have the potential to improve women's bargaining power and social standing. Ranganathan 2018 observed that socialization processes at skill trainings can play a key role in retaining women in their first jobs after training. Among the NTNL members, Eatasha for instance uses socialization processes in its trainings with youth using role models or trainers or socializing agents that inculcate skills such as self-presentation, interpersonal communication, work-life separation, and self-reliance that are needed to endure at paid- work. Azad foundation uses experiential learning model called '*Badlav ka safarnama*' where the women commercial drivers trained by the foundation elucidate their personal journeys of empowerment inculcating self esteem, confidence, and agency. The importance of support in behavioral change and soft-skills is emphasized by members of NTNL especially when encouraging women in non-traditional skill trainings, such as the 'Azad Kishori' another program of Azad foundation that educates young women on gender and sexually related stereotypes, to think of them critically and pursue NTLs. Similarly, structural support during the training in the form of crèche services, transport, provision of stipends, placement of candidates

in suitable jobs, market oriented job counseling is equally important. While most of these services and support is already provided in government training programmes, often the provision of crèche services lags behind, similarly while placements are usually done, counseling in terms of job search and market information is generally missing (Menon et al n.d).

#### **Box I - Key Recommendations - Gender Sensitive Education and Training:**

1. Development of educational material and pedagogy that is gender transformative and inculcates critical analysis of gender norms and stereotypes in all domains of life, and encourages dignity and confidence among girls. This will include development of gender transformative school curricula, gender sensitive training of teachers, having a gender sensitive school organization and environment.
2. Use of awareness building and mobilization techniques in educational and training programs that will address the concerns of women and generate awareness to encourage women participation. Social messaging needs to be creative enough to break gender stereotypes in skill training but at the same time should be context specific so as to not alienate women and communities.
3. Focus on process oriented indicators in addition to outcome oriented measurements is crucial to assess the quality of education or training. Such process indicators may include use of gender sensitive curricular, trainings of teachers/ instructors in gender sensitive pedagogy, provision of support services such as counseling and use of role models and positive peer pressure, provision of crèche services for both male and female trainees with young children, stipends and scholarships, safe transport, hygienic washrooms and toilets, support in market research on available opportunities, availability of counseling even after the training is completed to deal with post training challenges, identification of specific needs such as in the case of PWD and so on.
4. Post-training support and follow-up to deal with post training pressures of finding and settling in a new job is equally important as in-training support structures. Follow-ups are also useful in identifying specific challenges that the graduates face in the open market and the industry requirements, this will further help in making adequate pedagogic changes to the training. Learnings from the follow up need to be incorporated in the pedagogy in order to ensure better integration of the graduate into the learnt occupation.
5. Matching Aspirations of women to the Job Market - the normal practice for the training programs has been to offer courses as per the demand or skill gaps in relevant industries or sectors, or conversely the courses are offered out of habit (repeatedly offered irrespective of demand from the market) especially in the case of courses traditionally meant for women such as tailoring, cooking, beauty services. However, 'what is also needed is mapping the aspirations of the prospective candidates to the job market as it no longer sustainable to ignore aspirations of women. Women have a high drop-out rate from the job market, and one of the reasons for dropping out is the mismatch between her long term goals and the training or job role.' (Menon et al n.d: 56). Mapping women's aspirations to trainings will call for large scale but context specific research to this end.

### **3.2. Recognition and Redistribution of Women's Unpaid Work**

One of the main reasons for a low FLFPR as feminist researchers have pointed is the problem of excluding women's productive work from India's statistical accounts. System of National Accounts (SNA) and the measures used to count the labour force in the country are based on

production activities that create market value. However, a lot of the activities carried out in Indian economy and that happen to employ most of the women workers are of subsistence nature or done for home production or own consumption, hence not marketed and excluded from the statistical accounts. But what is especially excluded are all the activities done in caring for the household such as cooking, washing, cleaning largely which largely engaged women (Pande and Kabeer 2019, Hirway and Jose 2011, Mazumdar and Neetha 2011). Feminists have been challenging these patriarchal exclusions that have undervalued women's contribution to the economy and rendered them as non-workers.

The NSSO employment surveys do capture that the main reason behind the low female labour force participation rate is their preoccupation with 'domestic duties'. As per the survey in 2011-12, 35.3 percent and 46.1 percent of all rural and urban females were engaged in domestic duties respectively (Chaudhary and Verick 2014). Despite this high percentage of women reporting their primary activity as attending to domestic duties, the NSS data does not elucidate or give any further data on what this activity entails. Hirway and Jose, explain using the data from the Time Use Survey of 1998-99 that these activities involve household cooking, washing, cleaning, and shopping and the care of household members, such as children, the elderly, and the sick and a disproportionately high burden in terms of time i.e. 34 hours per week (2011: 85). In the Indian context, a great amount of time is also devoted by women in subsistence activities such as caring for land and animals, fetching water, collection of fire wood, and community services (Zaidi et al 2017). Further, Neetha and Mazumdar 2011, point out that the labour surveys can also be misleading if not understood carefully. A high percentage of women workers as per the NSS are found concentrated in the 'self employed' category, but if examined closely, women within this category are largely found to be in the sub category of the unpaid 'helper' in household enterprises. Therefore, even when women are counted as labour their participation is often in the form of unpaid labour (Neetha and Mazumdar 2011: 5-6). Thus, the nature of activities women are largely responsible for are unpaid, and invisibilized or goes unrecognized by policy makers courtesy the official statistical surveys, this further reinforces the patriarchal values that women's work and her status is subordinate to that of man's.

Feminist economists have urged time and again to expand the System of National Accounts (SNA) boundaries to make the collection of data more gender sensitive. Further break up of 'domestic services' that women are engaged in and the corresponding time spent in each will support recognition of a range of women's work such as social reproduction, expenditure saving activities and subsistence production. Presently the official datasets ignore the range of work women engage in giving the impression that all women out of labour force are only engaged in 'domestic services' which is simply understood as care work and household chores. The time and energy spent in these activities and their economic utility can be captured by tweaking the design of employment surveys like NSS and the method of collection of data (for e.g. collecting data from women directly rather than the household head, gives different results) (Pande and Kabeer 2019). Systematic collection of Time Use Data (TUS) is imperative to understand India's workforce more accurately and for estimates that are closer to women's

work realities (Hirway and Jose 2011). TUS components can be carried out separately or added to the existing surveys on employment.

In India, academics have noted that the effect of marriage is especially noticeable in withdrawing women from paid economic activities, which is not only due to the child care responsibilities that come after marriage but in the Indian case it is primarily because of the tightening of cultural patriarchal norms after marriage that keep women trapped in domestic chores and consequently decreases her likelihood of contributing in paid work outside home or even engaging in skill training and higher education (Pande and Kabeer 2019, Fletcher et al 2018, Chaudhary and Vervick 2014, Sorsa et al 2015). Despite all, a considerable number of women who mainly engaged in unpaid domestic duties or services were willing and interested to engage in paid work provided it offers flexible timings and is closer to home to be able to balance home production and paid work. Fletcher et al 2018 note that over 30 percent women currently counted as outside the labour force have indicated they would like to work, in other words, if all these women did work as indicated there will be a 21 percentage point increase in female labour force to 78 percent (Fletcher et al 2018: 8). This is to say, paid work opportunities made available to women are not suitable to their circumstances and time availability. On another note, women's willingness to work also throws doubts on whether women are actually voluntary involved in the unpaid domestic services as per the patriarchal norms.

### ***3.2.1. Redistribution of Women's Unpaid Work***

Studies using variants of TUS (Hirway and Jose 2011, Pande and Kabeer 2019, Zaidi et al 2017) have expressed the problem of the high time poverty women face in carrying out a series of unpaid work activities for subsistence and social reproduction. Studies also highlight the arduous nature of the work involved such as fetching water and fuel from long distances that has negative impact on her health and well being. While social norms place primary responsibility of social reproduction on women, the time consuming and arduous nature of the work leaves little scope for her to engage in personal care or other productive paid activities. Availability of public infrastructure, public services, and time-saving technology has known to have influenced women's time and energy. Recognition of women's unpaid labour alone is not enough, redistribution of unpaid work by adequate provision of basic public infrastructure such as water, fuel, electricity, crèche and day cares, health services, safe public transport can take huge burdens off women and support her in reallocating her time in other productive activities. India has indeed made huge public investments in constructing roads and bringing electricity to households and businesses, however the gap between provision and needs is still significantly high (OECD 2014) especially in rural areas, and poor income settlements in urban areas.

Establishing and mandating universal accessible and affordable child care facilities including day cares is the need of the hour. The Integrated child development scheme (ICDS) of India is a successful scheme bringing nutrition, basic health, and pre-school for children up to the age of 6 and has been implemented at a large scale and finds presence in every nook and corner of India. ICDS needs to be upgraded to also provide quality day care services for families of working

parents. The upgradation will serve the dual purpose of providing increasing employment opportunities, as well as, support women in taking up paid work. Employment and training programs need to pay greater attention to unpaid work by providing crèche and day care facilities, proximity to work, transport facilities, availability of basic utilities –water, food, toilets on work and training sites. MNGREGA for instance does stipulate setting up crèches at worksite, but the low priority assigned by the society leads to lack of implementation, leading to increase in women’s work burdens (Zaidi et al 2017). Hence, only recognizing such provisions on paper is not enough, equal attention is needed on its implementation.

Labour saving devices or gadgets such as refrigerator, mixer, cooking gas, washing machine, pressure cooker and the like have known to have reduced women’s time and effort in housework (Pande and Kabeer 2019). Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) launched in 2016, is a government scheme with the aim to provide labour saving device in the form of LPG connections to below poverty line (BPL) households. Under the scheme while the access to LPG cylinders and stove increased, the use of gas and stoves has still remained as the beneficiaries were not able to afford the refilling of cylinder with cooking gas. Thus improving technology to reduce women’s time poverty and drudgery through more such policy interventions needs to be undertaken however keeping in view the cultural and poverty contexts of the families.

### ***3.2.2. Promoting Socio-cultural transformations for Gender Equality***

Recognition and redistribution efforts from the state will not be useful unless the patriarchal social norms that are so in-grained and normalized in the Indian society are transformed. Decision to work, where and in what capacity is determined by social conditions created by gender norms, patriarchy further confirms the devaluation of all work that women do – paid or unpaid. However, the problem of gender inequality manifests in multiple ways, women’s poor FLFPR and working conditions is but only one dimension, women continuously face discriminations in the form of sexual, physical and mental violence, infanticide and feticide, denial of property or asset ownership and so forth. These facets of discrimination negatively influence one other further reinforcing women’s weak and vulnerable position in the society across all dimensions. Thus multi pronged interventions and strategies are needed to address all dimensions of gender inequalities in the society, as a poor performance on one indicator is sure enough to negatively influence the other.

The experience of women in construction work trained by AWC a NTLN member, shows that women have not only learnt to build their own houses, carry out repair and maintenance of their houses - a traditional occupation meant for men—but these women have also used their earnings to spend on their children’s higher education and health, to buy more assets, partake in family’s decision making exercises, and over-all improve their social standing and status in the economy. Likewise, Kelkar (2015) establishes the correlation between asset ownership and reduction in violence against women VAW. According to her, VAW reduces with asset ownership as a result of the following three processes, ‘1) economic empowerment of women through the ownership of land and related productive assets; 2) increase in women’s knowledge

and self-esteem alongside freedom of mobility and market access; and 3) enhanced social position of women with recognition of their agency and claims-making to rights and freedoms' (Kelkar 2015: 3). The Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act, 2005 was a landmark judgment that gave Hindu daughters equal right to ancestral property as same as their male siblings. Such legal Acts that can ensure asset ownership if actually implemented will reduce women's dependence on male members of the family as instituted by the age-old patriarchal system and is an important step forward in reducing her vulnerabilities in daily life.

Legal provisions are extremely useful steps by the government to recognize and redress discriminatory practices, but if not implemented by the society the discriminations will continue unabated. This can be seen in the persistent problem of sex selective abortions or feticide in India against females, that has maintained the poor sex ratio against the females in the country. Socio-demographic statistics estimate that close to 50 million girls are 'missing' from the Indian population (Sever 2008), and all this due to the patriarchal norms and practices that devalue the lives of women by considering them a burden on the families and communities. Despite passing legislations against misuse of medical technologies for selective abortions such as the Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques [Regulation] Act, 1994, feticide has continued at alarming rates forcing the government to launch the 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao' campaign to prevent gender biased sex selective elimination, survival and protection of the girl child, and to promote education of the girl child (Sever 2008 and See WCD <https://wcd.nic.in/bbbp-schemes>). Similarly, Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) in India is also gendered whereby fewer female babies survive as against males as a result of poor nutrition and health situation before and after pregnancy of the mother, and after birth in case of the girl child (Sever 2008).

All in all, the point here is that the underlying problem is the social political and economic structures—that determine the status of men and women in the society—are heavily discriminatory against women, and what is dangerous is that these inherent discriminations have been normalized historically. Thus a multi pronged strategy that would not only include legal interventions to include women, but equally important are efforts towards behavior and attitudinal change towards women, and major alterations in the pronounced gender roles or removing of division of labour at the level of household, community, state and the market. The a multi pronged strategy would therefore include engaging with men as well and promoting their role in care and household work at home, encouraging men and women to take up paid work that are considered non-traditional for them in the job market. Furthermore, the importance of gender-sensitive pedagogy and educational material in schools, already discussed in the previous section, can be a key method to ensure behavioural transformation to reduce gender stereotyping and increasing critical analysis of social norms. 'The present pedagogy at schools and vocational training institutes needs to be overhauled into empowering strategies that will help students to identify - norms, hegemonic power structures, and normalized social discriminations (Sahni 2018).

## **Box 2 - Key Recommendations – Recognition and Redistribution of Women’s Unpaid Work**

6. Women’s work goes unrecognized and is invisibilized by use of statistical techniques that formally exclude women’s work. It is imperative to use data collection techniques that are gender sensitive, and consciously include the range of work women engage in even if not ‘marketed’ in the classic economic sense. Use of Time Use data is important to understand India’s workforce more accurately and for estimates that are closer to women’s work realities (Hirway and Jose 2011). TUS components can be carried out separately or added to the existing surveys on employment.
7. The unpaid labour that women do is often arduous, tedious and time-consuming leaving little scope for her to engage in other productive activities. Proper provision of public facilities and services such as water, fuel, crèche and day care services, health, safe transport etc will substantially reduce women’s work burden.
8. Promotion of socio-cultural transformations towards gender equality by using a multi-pronged approach that will lead to lasting behavior and attitudinal change in the society. Breaking the entrenched norms on division of labour at homes, market, community and the state by encouraging men and women to take on non-traditional roles.

### **3.3. Gender Sensitive Markets**

As mentioned earlier, the changing socio-economic patterns in country are resulting in withdrawal of women from the low paid agricultural employment, however the other sectors in the economy have not created enough opportunities to absorb the workers that are no longer engaged in agriculture (Sorsa et al 2015). For instance, the manufacturing sector that could have taken in women workers with primary and secondary levels of education, has failed to do so and instead experienced a jobless growth (Afridi et al 2016). In terms of numbers calculated from NSS 1999 and 2009, ‘female employment in agriculture fell by 9 percentage points, and fell in manufacturing from 3.7 percent to 3.3 percent. Female employment in the construction sector rose by only 3 percentage points while there was no change in the services sector’ (Afridi et al 2016: 23). Pande and Kabeer 2019 in their study conducted in West Bengal found that women who were considered ‘out of labour force’ under NSS surveys, actually showed willingness and interest to participate in paid work, however due to pressures of domestic duties, the demand was more in favor of occasional full time (67.8%), regular part time (7.8%), occasional part time (5.78), and regular full time in case of 18.7%. This further confirms the mismatch between women’s time availability and concomitant availability of jobs. Moreover, women spent more time in looking for a job in comparison to a man, further reflecting that the market is predisposed to hiring male workers to the disadvantage of female workers (Fletcher 2018).

The official and independent studies have time and again shown concentration of women in precarious, low paid, low skilled and insecure jobs. The supply side factors such as gender norms and women's burden of unaccounted labour for home production or unpaid care work are blamed for this tendency of occupational segregation, but as discussed in the previous section the mismatch from the demand side in its inability to create decent jobs for women in different sectors is also responsible for strengthening these unfavorable gender norms in the market. The labour market follows gendered occupational segregation creating occupations that are disproportionately either male or female, however, invariably assigning work to women workers that is lowest in hierarchy, pay and conditions. The industries and sectors women are concentrated in, such as agriculture, manufacturing, self employment, elementary services, have not seen growth in employment and resultantly dropped their entry into the market (Chaudhary and Verick 2014). It is pertinent therefore to break this cycle occupational segregation that is determined by interplay of social, cultural, historical and economic factors, if we are to ensure that women benefit equally from country's economic progress.

Further, difficulties in accessing employment is not limited to suitable job availability and issues of occupational segregation alone, women also face widespread discriminations such as employment insecurity and wage gaps. Wage gaps are present across different sectors, but white-collar jobs showed the most striking wage differentials (Sorsa et al 2015). High wage differentials make paid work less attractive in comparison to home production. Gender gaps can easily be deduced as resulting from such differences as education, marital status, age etc, but after accounting for such easily observable group differences there still remain unexplained wage gaps which tends to be largest for sectors where women are most represented, while the sectors that have lower wage gaps are those where women are least represented (Fletcher et al 2018, Sorsa et al 2015). The NTNL member AWC by acknowledging that women may get delayed for their paid work on construction sites or may leave early due to pressures of unpaid work, has devised a method of wage payment that is calculated per square foot of work done for equality in wage payments. Furthermore, women also face widespread violations in form of sexual harassment at and on their way to the worksite, lack of crèche facilities at worksite making mothers vulnerable to job loss, loss of job or pay due to pregnancy. The informal sector in India is largely unregulated making women more prone to such discriminations and violence.

Thus market mechanisms in India are presently not amenable to gender equality, and needs state and civil society interventions to alter the existing patterns. Fletcher et al (2018) explain how gender sensitive policies of the government in the past have succeeded in altering the work participation of women and also in bringing about wage parity. The study gives the example of MGNREGA in the rural economy which increased the participation of women in un-skilled waged labour through a system of reservations and stipulating equal wages between men and women. MGNREGA also had other important gender sensitive policies such as ensuring proximity between worksite and home and crèches for children of the workers. The study also observes that a possible reason for women's better inclusion in the education employment sector could be the government's Operation Blackboard in the 1990s that used



quotas to ensure 50% teachers recruited were female. Thus, gender sensitive policies can potentially have long term impact on labour market practices and outcomes in promoting gender equality. There are instances from the NTLN member organisations that have gone beyond training and ensured placement or employment opportunities for trainees keeping their respective limitations in mind. For instance, Azad foundations 'Women on Wheels' for learning commercial driving also offer gender sensitive market linkages by partnering with Sakha Consulting Wings Pvt. Ltd or Sakha Cabs. Realizing that women have a limited capacity to pay for the purchase of car even in installments, Sakha cabs owns the cars and employs women as drivers on monthly salaries. Likewise, Priyadarshini an organization providing similar commercial training for driving devised the 'saheli system' for new drivers who would be accompanied by a female colleague for the initial period. This system was much appreciated by new female drivers as it gave them confidence and assurance when entering a non-traditional profession. There are also other examples of rural partners such as the Earth Care Design, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu Women's collective that have created livelihood opportunities for women in agriculture and allied activities, along with support for their children in education, counseling and legal action in cases of domestic violence.

Similarly, gender sensitive policies of the government to create an enabling environment for women have also had an impact on better education and labour participation outcomes for girls and women. Promotion of female leaders often through reservation at the gram panchayat level resulted in a higher percentage of women starting their own businesses (Ghani et al., 2014), additionally the gender gap between aspirations and career choices for adolescents had drastically reduced, as well as the gender gap between adolescent educational attainments was closed with female elected leaders in the village (Beaman et al. 2009). Also, participation of women in MGNREGA improved remarkably with election of female leaders and vice-versa (Bose and Das 2015). Gender sensitive policies such as financial inclusion of women through banking services and availability of credit through micro-finance has also shown to have a positive impact in increasing women's work participation rates, as well increases women's agency captured through better participation in household level decision making (Field et al 2016, Sorsa et al 2015).

Another instance of a government program that has supported women through gender sensitive training and placement is that of SHE taxi run as a public-private-partnership under the under the Gender Park initiative of the Department of Social Justice, Kerala. With the goal to create gender parity in access to jobs, the initiative places women as drivers after providing training in driving and mechanical skills, soft skills and self defense. To ensure security of women from sexual harassment, only women or men accompanied with women can avail the SHE taxies. Thus establishing gender sensitive markets would require combination of policies and supportive mechanisms to break down the deeply segregated nature of the job market that disadvantages women. Further, strong steps are needed to create gender sensitive and decent work conditions in terms of job and income security, equality in wages, security from sexual

harassment at workplace and commute, and social security measures that includes maternity benefits, health insurances and child care among others.

### **Box 3 - Key Recommendations – Gender Sensitive Markets**

1. In view of the mismatch between women's willingness to work and availability of suitable jobs, it is pertinent for the government to create job opportunities for women that match with their aspirations and availability of time. Access to information plays a key role in spreading awareness about existing and new opportunities. The government needs to undertake special awareness and outreach drives for women such as holding job fairs for women.
2. Taking note of the positive long term impact of special quotas or reservations on increasing women's labour participation in a specific sector, especially its potential to change the existing gender based occupational segregation. Such quotas or reservations for women are especially needed in sectors or professions under-represented by women. The emphasis on quotas is not only to increase women's participation, it is in the hope that such a policy will be gender transformative and help in changing the oppressive gender norms on women's roles in the society.
3. The underlying social norms and practices while hiring workers need to be further addressed by incentivising employers for recruiting women; the government needs to extend tax benefits, or loan waivers as rewards for removing gender gaps in recruitment, payment of wages.
4. Recruitment of women is of no use if the working conditions of workers are poor – which is the case in many of the informal sector jobs as they escape regularization. Gender friendly measures of particular importance would be provision of crèche facilities at or near the worksites, safe transport services, maternity as well as paternity provisions to drive in the fact that child care is a responsibility of both genders and not of women alone.
5. Ensure setting up a complaint redressal system especially implementation of Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 ("POSH Act") that mandates setting up of 'Internal Complaints Committees' for proper redressal of complaints on sexual harassment. The government needs to ensure proper implementation through a mix of penalties and incentives, but clear guidelines, instructions, and structures need to be set up for the informal sector where a large majority of women are employed.
6. Furthermore, the existing data sets and survey methods in India mainly focus on work participation rate and wage rates across different social categories, however increasingly important is to include indicators on working conditions of women in terms of safety and security, fears and aspirations, and so on.
7. Noting that presence of female leaders and role models have a spill over positive effect on labour and educational outcomes for women, government led programs that develop and encourage leadership among women and at the same time creating formal and informal channels and connections to increase their capacity to guide and positively influence other aspiring women into sectors that have not been women's domain traditionally.

## 4. Conclusion

The paper has played a dual purpose of highlighting the positions of the NTL –Network and in doing so also reflected on some of the key underlying factors for the declining FLFPR in India. The declining FLFPR has very importantly indicated the rigidity of discriminations against women presided by social norms on gendered division of labour. Such that, despite of better human development indicators in the form of educational attainments, declining fertility rate and better per capita income, women could not make gains in the economic sphere. Perturbed by such declining economic indicators for women in India, the NTL-Network used a unique approach of promoting and supporting women in non-traditional livelihoods to challenge and eventually transform social relations to bring about gender equality. The Network with its extensive field experience of working directly with women, identified three main focus areas – a) Gender Sensitive Education and Training b) Recognition and Redistribution of Women's Unpaid Work, and c) Creating Gender Sensitive Markets. These three agendas or positions of the network have been discussed separately at length in this paper, however, one strand that runs across all three positions is the significance of patriarchal cultural norms in deciding gender roles for women and men. Thus, policy interventions need to switch the focus from quantitative outcomes in terms of enrollment in education and training, or wages and participation in labour force and the like to process oriented indicators such as gender sensitive pedagogies, redistribution of women's unpaid labour by provision of gender specific public infrastructure and services, capturing data on women's work more realistically by using TUS, focus on the working conditions of women to make it more decent and dignified, large scale social messaging against gender stereotyping, these and many more such measures are extremely crucial if India wants to see equitable economic growth benefitting all genders in the near future.

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## 6. Annexures

### Annexure I – List of NTL Documents referred for the Position Paper

Non-Traditional Livelihoods Network (NTLN) Genesis, 2014- January 2019, Azad Foundation

NonTraditional Livelihoods Network, Annual General Body Meeting, Minutes, 17th-18th

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NTLN Learning Visit - A report of experience sharing and reflections by member organisations 5<sup>th</sup> th-9th August 2019, New Delhi

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NTLN Brochure 2020

Non Traditional Livelihoods-A Futurescope: Expanding Horizons - A Roundtable Consultation, 20 Feb 2020, India International Centre, New Delhi

## **Annexure 2 – List of Key Informant Interviews**

Meenu Vadera, Founder and Executive Director, Azad Foundation

Nandita Shah, Co-Director, Akshara, Mumbai

## **Annexure 3 – NTL Network Members**

*NTL Individual Members*

1. Adil Ali, New Delhi
2. Gurjeet Kaur, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh
3. Josefina Oraa, New Delhi
4. Nasreen Rustomfram, Mumbai, Maharashtra
5. Nilanjana Sengupta, New Delhi
6. Nisha Dhawan, New Delhi
7. Sujata Gothoskar, Mumbai, Maharashtra



Image Source: NTLN Brochure

## Annexure 4 – NTL Network Guiding Principles

The NTL network takes inspiration from international instruments like the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) adopted in 1979 by the United Nations General Assembly. CEDAW has also been signed and ratified by India on 30 July 1980 and 9 July 1993 respectively. The Convention comprises of 30 articles categorized into six parts. The definition of ‘discrimination against women’ as enshrined in Article 1 of the Convention is:

‘Any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of

men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field' (CEDAW)

While the NTL network is concerned with propagating all rights of women described under CEDAW, the Part III of the Convention that includes Articles from 10 to 14 in particular promotes economic and social rights of women by focusing on education, employment and health. The Convention is an important tool for the NTL network to advocate 'substantive equality', a term used by CEDAW against mere 'formal equality' that views equality as treatment of all humans as same under the eyes of state laws and policies. Substantive equality on the other hand, emphasizes that there is a greater need to remove systemic discriminations that give rise to inequalities in the first place. Hence, the concept of 'substantive equality' values special measures to ensure equal distribution of material and non-material resources resulting in equal opportunities for all. CEDAW has thus appealed to the NTL network and has helped the network to pursue its agenda of state accountability in ensuring equal opportunities for women especially in the socio-economic sphere.

Similarly, in September 1995 at Beijing, China, the United Nations had convened a conference called the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace wherein 189 countries from around the globe including India agreed to abide by a comprehensive plan, known as the Beijing Platform for Action, to achieve gender equality<sup>9</sup>. Commitments were made against twelve critical areas of concerns for women's equality, including, the environment, power and decision making, the girl child, the economy, poverty, violence against women, human rights, education and training, health, media, institutional mechanisms and women in armed conflict. Each of these 12 concerns further specified strategic objectives and 'actions to be taken' by the state and non state actors. The Beijing Platform for Action thus provides a comprehensive framework or a blueprint which if followed in letter and spirit would accomplish the goal of gender equality and empowerment of women. However, despite such exhaustive plans and commitments by governments little has changed for women since the conference was held in 1995. The organizational and individual members of the NTL network have participated at local and international events to deliberate on the progress made in the 12 areas of concern, of particular interest for the network is the concern over 'Women and the Economy'.

Under 'Women and the Economy', the declaration lists six strategic objectives with specific actions to be taken. All six objectives are of crucial importance for India given the country's huge unorganized informal sector and poor track record of protecting rights of women workers. Since India is a signatory to the declaration, it gives civil society initiatives such as the NTL network to pressurize the government to work towards their attainment. The six strategic objectives under 'Women and the Economy' are listed below<sup>10</sup>:

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<sup>9</sup> <https://beijing20.unwomen.org/en/about>

<sup>10</sup>

[https://beijing20.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/pfa\\_e\\_final\\_web.pdf#page=107](https://beijing20.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/pfa_e_final_web.pdf#page=107)



1. Promote women's economic rights and independence, including access to employment, appropriate working conditions and control over economic resources
2. Facilitate women's equal access to resources, employment, markets and trade
3. Provide business services, training and access to markets, information and technology, particularly to low-income women
4. Strengthen women's economic capacity and commercial networks
5. Eliminate occupational segregation and all forms of employment discrimination
6. Promote harmonization of work and family responsibilities for women and men

Besides the CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action, NTL network is also influenced by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). While the CEDAW and the Beijing Declaration are very specific to gender equality and women's empowerment, the SDGs on the other hand are a set of 17 interconnected goals to achieve a sustainable future for all. Each of the 17 SDGs also provide a list of targets with indicators to be achieved by the year 2030. Women and gender equality was taken as a cross cutting issue in all the 17 goals, yet a specific goal viz. Goal 5 on 'Gender Equality' was included to accord the importance the issue deserves. All 17 goals are of meaning to the NTL network due to their interconnectedness, but of special relevance are Goal 1: No Poverty, Goals 4 to 11 that promote, 'Quality education', 'Gender equality', 'Clean water and sanitation', 'Affordable and clean energy', 'Decent work and economic growth', 'Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure', 'Reducing inequalities' and 'Sustainable cities and communities' respectively.

The SDG 5 on Gender equality especially mentions the unequal distribution of unpaid labour, and recognizes that women take the largest burden of providing care to the household. The Goal 5.4 values unpaid care work of women and urges the governments to take steps towards redistribution of unpaid labour by provision of services, infrastructure, and social protection. In India it has been noted in research and experiences that high burden of unpaid labour and care work on women has limited women's choices and constrained her ability to secure better opportunities in education, skilling, and paid work. Furthermore, The SDG Goal 8 on 'Decent work and economic growth' is closely linked with the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) 'Decent Work Agenda'. The four pillars of decent work as stated by ILO—job creation, rights at work, social protection and social dialogue—formed the basis of SDG 8 and directed the articulation of its targets and indicators. In addition, key concerns of decent work as recognized by the ILO also cut across all the other 16 goals of the SDG<sup>11</sup>. At the same time gender equality claims to be integral to all SDG goals as well as the Decent Work Agenda of ILO.

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.ilo.org/asia/decentwork/lang--en/index.htm>

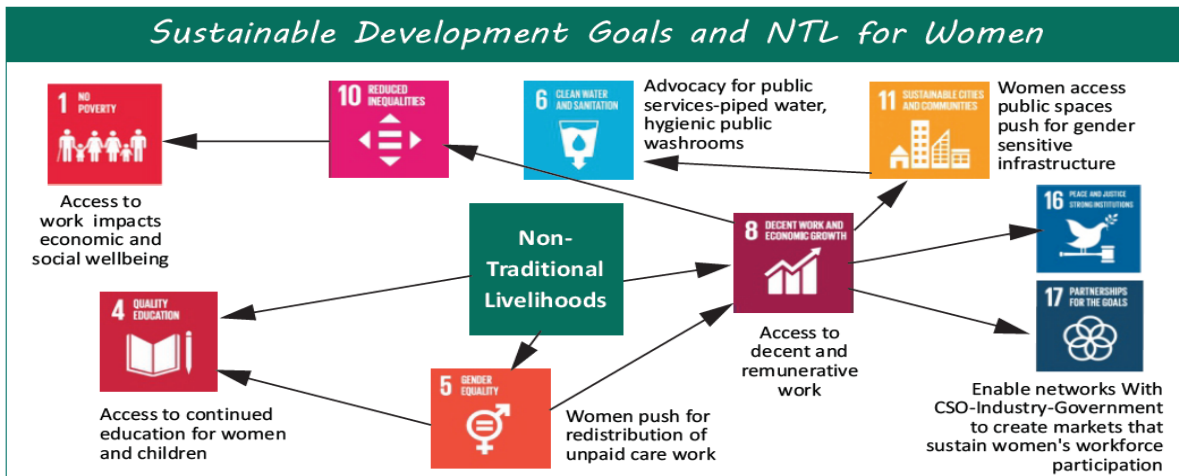


Image Source: NTL- Network Brochure

The CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for Action, the SDGs and the ILO decent work agenda are frameworks that complement each other and informs the advocacy of NTL network