

SDG 5
Gender Equality

Supported by:

JSL
JINDAL STAINLESS



THE BRIDGE INDIA

Facilitating Social Partners

E-Magazine (Quarterly) - Volume 5 - Issue 1 - Jan - Mar 2023



Women's Special

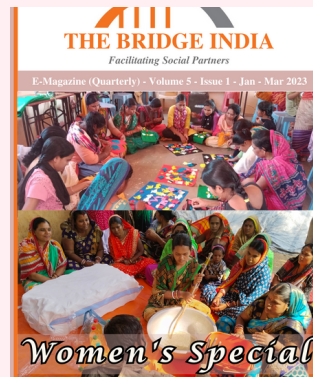
INDEX



Dr. Lopamudra Priyadarshini

General Manager, CSR, ESG, Sustainability, Community Relations, Corporate Affairs, External Stakeholder Management, R&R Land, and Communication, Hindalco Industries Limited, Rayagada, Odisha.

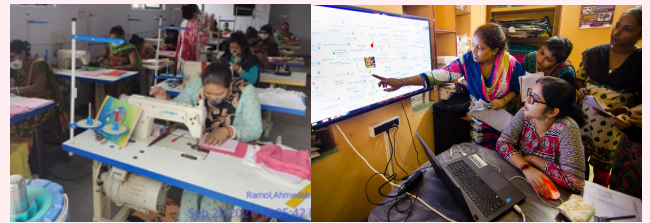
3 From the desk of Guest Editor



Supported by:



Cover Page Pic Courtesy
Jindal Stainless Foundation



4-6 Corporate Story

*Indian Inc. Use Digital Tools to Break Barriers
in Women's Empowerment*

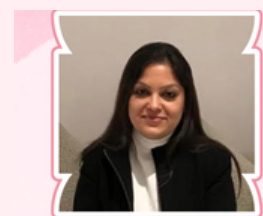
7-8 NGO Story

*Empowering women: The role of NGOs in the
age of innovation*



9-10 Government Initiatives

Women Empowerment Schemes



11 Social Sector Movements

12 Development Happenings

13 Past E-Magazine Issues

Editorial Advisors*Rakesh Jinsi**Rajiv Khurana**Dr. Ashok Kumar***Editor-in-Chief***Seema Jairath***Guest Editor***Dr. Lopamudra**Priyadarshini***Sr. Editorial Associates***Karan Bhardwaj**Prachi Raturi Misra***Editorial Associates***Sunidhi Pareek***Sr. Web Developer /****Web Designer***Ritu Sharma***Photography***Rahul Kumar*

Partnering for Gender Equality: Strengthening collaborations and building progress Through Innovation and Technology



Dr. Lopamudra Priyadarshini
GM CSR & CC

Hindalco Industries, Odisha

Dear Readers,

Gender inequality is the most urgent challenges of today and it's time we take collective, proactive, and collaborative action towards solutions in the most sustainable manner. The theme for this year's International Women's Day 2023: "DigitALL: Innovation and technology for gender equality". A gender-responsive approach to innovation, technology and digital education can increase the awareness of women and girls and create opportunities to pursue careers in science; technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) related fields. Quoting the thoughts and interventions of United Nation, "Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world. There has been progress over the last decades, but the world is not on track to achieve gender equality by 2030."

As COVID-19 continues to affect lives and livelihoods around the world, we can already see that the pandemic and its economic fallout are having a regressive effect on gender equality. The impact has been across employment, entrepreneurship, education and every other area where women have been involved. Achieving the ambitious Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – and notably the goal 5 on gender equality

and women's empowerment – requires proactive measures, transformative shifts, integrated approaches and new solutions. As responsible corporates we must transform our workplaces, our value chain and society at large by prioritizing gender equality in everything we do in pursuit of our belief that no woman should be left behind.

- We need to make a high-level corporate commitment to adopt a gender-responsive approach to innovation through technology and scale innovations that provide sustainable solutions to meet the needs of women and girls
- We must adopt a gender-responsive approach to innovation across businesses and corporates and ensure that women play a key role at every phase of the process.

Caring for the community with a sustainable intervention especially the vulnerable sections is an integral component of the corporates operations and reflects a commitment that goes much beyond business excellence. Essentially, we can create & recreate more equitable society by inculcating a culture of bringing creative solutions with the potential of innovation and sustainability. It is also the need of the hour to bridge the digital gender gap on widening economic and social inequalities, and further highlight the importance of protecting the rights of women and girls in digital spaces.

Happy Reading!

Indian Inc. Use Digital Tools to Break Barriers in Women's Empowerment

Latest CRS trends suggest corporates are using technology and innovation as key enablers to create new opportunities and promote gender equality,

By Karan Bhardwaj, Senior Editorial Associate, The Bridge India E-Magazine



India has made remarkable progress in women empowerment over the past few decades, with women increasingly occupying prominent positions in the workforce and playing a crucial role in the country's economic growth. However, there are still significant disparities in terms of gender equality and access to opportunities, particularly among weaker and marginalised sections of the society.

In recent years, Indian corporates have stepped up their efforts to address these disparities by incorporating women empowerment into their corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities. Many companies are leveraging technology and innovation to create programmes that support women's education, healthcare, and economic empowerment. From providing skill training to women

in rural areas to supporting women entrepreneurship, Indian corporates are working towards creating a more inclusive and equitable society. They are also raising awareness about gender equality and encouraging social change at the grassroots level.

Gaining financial independence

A lot of efforts are being made to make women financially independent and become the earning member in the family. Self-help groups (SHGs) are playing pivotal role in this move. Jindal Stainless Foundation (JSF) has promoted 250 women self-help groups in Danagadi and Sukinda blocks covering 30 villages and more than 2,500 women. The women groups are encouraged to take up thrift and credit activities initially and linked to local banks to become credit-worthy. The CSR team has facilitated bank credit

for the women SHGs to take up a lot of income-generating activities related to agriculture and non-agricultural activities such as dairy farming, goatery, sheep rearing, poultry, duckery, mushroom cultivation, pickle making, bakery, lentil nuggets (badi), papadum (papad), incense sticks (agarbatti), phenyl, sewing, pulverising, and lot of other small businesses in their villages.

“For better economic empowerment of the women SHGs, they were grouped together to form “Sampanna Jeevika Producer Company Limited (SJPCL)” so that they can take up larger business activities for their economic empowerment. The Board members of SJPCL were provided the required exposure and training to take up spices business, particularly turmeric business. They are provided with e-rickshaws to facilitate their livelihood development activities,” says Pritika Chand from JSF.



Corporate Story



Another exemplary example is of Lupin Foundation's all-women's Farmer's Producers Organisation (FPO), which is playing a critical role in increasing economic growth opportunities for women and increasing agricultural return. Working closely with women farmers and first-generation entrepreneurs, the Foundation has organised an all-women's FPO in Dhule. Dhule is an agriculturally backward district with limited income generation opportunities and scope for economic growth as it is an arid, dry geography for most summer crop (Kharif) season. Understanding these challenges, the programme organised 315 women farmers into a FPO to ensure the timely availability of agriculture inputs and facilitate better price realisation for their produce. "The FPO has an agricultural input sales unit, cattle feed manufacturing unit, and micro-irrigation dealership. In addition, women FPO members regularly provide advisory support to fellow farmers to adopt improved agricultural practices, year-round green fodder production, and effective water management practices. Interventions promoted by the FPO have significantly supported farmers in increasing their incomes and optimizing economic growth opportunities," says Shweta Munjal, Head, Corporate Communications, Lupin.



Over the years, India's award-winning PSU GAIL Ltd has also formed several SHGs in multiple regions. Besides providing basic help, support has also been provided for empowering adolescent girls and women through employability and education. Their initiatives in Pant Nagar, South Delhi and Gurdaspur, Punjab, to provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for women have been appreciated. Support has also been extended for providing vocational training to women with visual impairment in Delhi.

As noted, various interventions of the CSR teams under women empowerment have resulted in the socio-economic, political, cultural, organisational, physical, and educational empowerment of underprivileged women. A lot of women have taken up income-generating activities, participating in the political field and have proven themselves by becoming PRI members and working for community development with their counterparts.



Focus on Technology

Indian companies are also focusing on digital interventions in making their CSR initiatives more effective. They are using technology to help women become digitally equipped and gain access to new opportunities.



From providing digital marketing training to women entrepreneurs to setting up online marketplaces for women-led businesses, these corporates are leveraging technology to help women overcome the traditional barriers to entry in the market and become financially independent.

"Technology-enabled interventions are instrumented to increase productivity and reduce farm-led drudgery. While the interventions equally benefit men and women, with an increasing feminisation of agriculture, women benefit the most. Secondly, it has been noted that women's engagement is higher in labour-intensive tasks, thus, technology-enabled applications facilitate interventions to reduce of farm-led drudgery," says Munjal.

Another area where Indian corporates are using technology is in promoting women's health and wellness. Women are provided access to digital health services, such as telemedicine and online counseling, enabling them to take better care of their physical and mental well-being.

Corporate Story



Digital challenges

With these positive stories, corporates also share some challenging issues they face in achieving their goals. One of the biggest challenges is the lack of digital infrastructure in many rural and backward areas. Limited internet connectivity and access to digital devices can make it difficult for women in these areas to take advantage of the digital literacy and economic opportunities provided by companies through their CSR initiatives.



Another challenge is the lack of awareness and education among women about the benefits of technology and how to use it. Many women in rural and backward areas may not understand the potential of digital tools and how they can help them improve their lives and livelihoods.

Cultural and societal barriers can also pose a challenge to women empowerment through technology and innovation. Deep-seated gender biases and patriarchal attitudes may make it difficult for women to access digital resources and participate in online marketplaces, leading to limited economic opportunities. Also, the cost of technology and digital services can also be a significant barrier for women in rural areas. Many women may not be able to afford the digital devices and services needed to take advantage of the opportunities.



Despite these challenges, Indian corporates and their CSR teams are continuing to make significant efforts to promote gender equality through technology. By working to provide digital access and education to women in far-flung areas, they are creating new opportunities and driving social change.



Empowering women: The role of NGOs in the age of innovation

Several NGOs in India are not only supporting rural women in gaining financial independence but also using technology to prepare them for non-traditional jobs.

By Karan Bhardwaj , Senior Editorial Associate, The Bridge India E-Magazine



In today's day and age, empowering women and promoting gender equality have become a critical need to reduce poverty and achieve sustainable development. Thanks to the efforts of NGOs such as Oxfam India, Azad Foundation, and Ashray Social Welfare Foundation, women from marginalised and rural sections of the society are getting opportunities to accelerate their growth and climb up the societal ladder.

Empowering rural women

According to Oxfam India, empowering women in rural areas is critical for nation building. The NGO has been working towards this goal through its several livelihood programmes. "Oxfam India's livelihood programme works directly with 10,000 women across 11 states in India. The livelihood programmes are customised according to the needs of communities we work in. This includes training women in sustainable agricultural practices, linking women farmers to markets, government scheme and service

providers and creation of Self Help Groups (SHGs) to provide non-agricultural opportunities to marginalised women. Our Women Support Centres have helped 904 of women seeking protection and legal action from domestic violence in Odisha in last one year alone," says Pankaj Anand - Director: Programme & Advocacy , Oxfam India. In addition to this, Oxfam actively works with ASHA workers and build capacities of these frontline health workers to strengthen public health system. "We have reached out of around 70,000 ASHA workers and provided them with training and equipment," informs Anand.

Similarly, Ashray Social Welfare Foundation's "Holiya" intervention is one of their social and gender justice projects. "We recognised that a majority of women spend half their lives carrying water across miles every day. Holiya would recharge groundwater thus eliminating the need for women to travel all the way to another village.

In fact, because the labour is locally sourced, construction of Holiya provides employment to a number of local men and women," Nalin Johari, Executive Director, Ashray Social Welfare Foundation.

Women in non-traditional roles

For most marginalised women, mere skill acquisition will not lead to sustained changes in the quality of their lives. Gendered social norms continue to impact their participation. Women need to learn to equip themselves with skills, knowledge and confidence to address the same so that they could make use of the skills gained to alter their living conditions and their position in society.

Azad Foundation, through its strategic partner Sakha, has been supporting women in non-traditional roles such as driving. Their programme provides women with the necessary skills and training to become professional drivers,

thereby breaking gender stereotypes. They employ women drivers to run cabs and access employment as chauffeurs with individuals, organisations, state entities, embassies, etc. “The pandemic made us expand our capabilities by training women as 2-wheeler riders to render them eligible for employment opportunities in the e-commerce industry,” Dolon Ganguly, Chief Functionary, Azad Foundation.

The Foundation has seeded a national network to provide greater impetus to its advocacy work. “This is a critical part of our intervention so that women can sustain their work participation and access decent and dignified livelihoods. After a long engagement (since 2016) with policy-makers, Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) has provided opportunities for women to work as bus drivers and presently, over 30 women are under process of working as drivers as a result of Azad’s policy-level engagement. Our Gender-just Skill Education approach ensures that women not just become breadwinners, but decision-makers controlling money, assets and their well-being,” says Ganguly.

Harnessing innovation and technology

The pandemic has highlighted the importance of innovation and technology in empowering women. Oxfam India, for instance, has been using digital tools to reach out to women and provide them with information on healthcare, government schemes, and financial literacy. Similarly, Azad Foundation has been using technology to train women drivers through virtual classrooms and simulation software, thereby increasing accessibility to their programme. However, there are challenges galore. NGOs urge government to take immediate step to bridge digital divide driven by gender, caste, class and religion. The most basic step toward bridging the digital divide is availability

In rural and hard-to-reach areas, Internet availability is either intermittent, poor or non-existent. Service providers need to ensure its availability through community networks and public WiFi/ internet access points. Oxfam India’s latest research titled ‘India Inequality Report 2022: Digital Divide’ showed women are lagging due to gendered digital divide. Percentage of men owning phones is as high as 61 per cent while only 31 per cent women owned phones, according to the report.



“The truth is that digital technologies are only available to urban centres. We do not like to admit it but there is a digital divide between rural and urban areas and it was brought to light during the pandemic. There is certainly a need to invest in more robust digital infrastructure and make smartphones more accessible,” says Ashray’s Nalin Johari.

Challenges and the way forward

Besides technology, there are other battles too that need to be addressed. Ashray Social Welfare Foundation, for instance, has noted that “social norms and gender stereotypes continue to be a challenge in empowering women.” Menstruation and the lack of structural support is a key factor in young girls dropping out of school, missing many school days and other opportunities in public life. “To redress that, we ran community cleanliness drives to make sure that men and women had access to sanitation facilities.

Our SHGs also play an important role in training and providing livelihood skills and offering micro-financing for small women run businesses,” says Johari.

Policy-makers, industries need to create non-traditional skill training and job opportunities to expand opportunities for women. Investments need to be made to create gender-inclusive infrastructure, such as clean and hygienic washrooms, safe roads etc. “Special efforts need to be arranged in terms of gender-inclusive atmosphere in the training centres, job markets,” says Dolon Ganguly from Azad Foundation.

While there are still challenges to be addressed, these NGOs remain committed to creating a world where women have equal opportunities and can live with dignity and respect. Through their various programmes, they have provided women with the necessary skills and tools to become financially independent and take on leadership roles in their communities. Additionally, with the use of innovation and technology, they have been able to reach out to more women than ever before.



Women Empowerment Schemes in India

The Indian government has launched a number of schemes for women over the past few years to ensure their economic security and expose them to more opportunities in education, work, and more.

Mahila Police Volunteers Scheme

The Mahila Police Volunteers scheme was introduced in 2016 by the Ministries of Women and Child Development and Home Affairs in all states and UTs. In order to ensure police outreach on crime cases, this central government-sponsored program strives to establish a connection between police authority and local communities.

As part of this strategy, an MPV (Mahila Police Volunteers Scheme) will act as a public-police liaison to combat crimes against women such as dowry harassment, child marriage, domestic abuse, and domestic violence. This plan also encourages women to join the police force by fostering a secure atmosphere.

UJJAWAL Scheme

This program was introduced in December 2007. It is an extensive scheme established by the Indian government to suppress trafficking and retrieve, treat, and reintegrate sexually exploited survivors of human trafficking. The scheme is being implemented mostly through non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in order to give direct relief and benefit to victims of human trafficking.

Working Women Hostel Scheme

This scheme was initially launched by the government of India in 1972-73 with

the primary purpose of providing secure housing and environments for working women as well as giving daycare amenities for their children, if any. The government offers grant-in-aid through this women's empowerment project to construct new hostel buildings and enlarge an existing structure in rented space.

Women Helpline Scheme

Launched in April 2015, the Women Helpline scheme aims to provide women who have experienced abuse in either public or private settings with 24*7 emergency assistance.

The government introduced a toll-free number (181) for providing quick and emergency assistance. Women can use this helpline number in every state and union territory across the country. This initiative also raises awareness about women's empowerment and safety.

Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme

This initiative was launched in Haryana on 22nd January 2015 by the Prime Minister of India to guarantee the survival, safety, and education of girls. The initiative intends to tackle the issue of the unequal sex ratio in recent years, raise social awareness, and improve the effectiveness of welfare benefits for girls.

STEP (Support to Training and Employment Program for Women)

From 1986–1987, the Ministry of Women and Child Development operated the STEP scheme as a "Central Sector Scheme." In December 2014, it underwent revision. It was designed to give women work security and training in skill development. This government-sponsored initiative provides institutions and organisations with funding so they may run training programs for women.





Rajiv Gandhi National Creche Scheme

The Indian government has established the National Creche scheme for children of working mothers to provide several amenities. It was introduced in 2006. This initiative offers working mothers with childcare services and promises to enhance their health and nutrition status. Furthermore, this women empowerment yojana supports children's physical, social, and holistic development as well as increases awareness about child's health by educating parents on how to improve childcare procedures or practices.

Mahila Shakti Kendras (MSK)

Mahila Shakti Kendra, an initiative for women's empowerment started in India in 2017, is one of the well-known schemes for women. It intends to offer women convergent support services at one location so they can grow their talents, find work, and improve their digital literacy. This program is active on a number of levels, including the federal, state, and local levels.

By constructing 920 Mahila Shakti Kendras, the government hopes to reach the 115 districts with the highest poverty levels. This program aims to give women access to resources, including

quality healthcare, education, work opportunities, and counselling.

One Stop Center Scheme

The One-Stop Center scheme is one of the schemes for women that provides essential medical assistance. Introduced in 2015, it is a government-sponsored scheme for women that receives funding from the Nirbhaya fund. Under this initiative, state governments get complete federal funding to protect women who are victims of gender-based violence in both public and private settings, such as acid assaults, rape, and sexual harassment. This program provides medical assistance, legal help, and counselling services under one roof to address all types of violence against women.

Mahila E-Haat

This scheme launch in 2016 to facilitate entrepreneurship opportunities online for women.

To educate women on various aspects of online selling and helping them establish their venture.

SWADHAR Greh

It is one of the Indian government schemes for women's empowerment introduced in 2018. This project's primary goals are to ensure social, economic, and health security as well as to offer housing, food, and clothes. This program gives women legal support and empowers them to take the initiative to reintegrate into society.

Nari Shakti Puraskar

Every Year, Ministry of Women & Child Development celebrates International Women Day on 8th March. The significance of the International Women's Day lies in our re-affirmation of improve the condition of women, especially those at the margins of our society and empower them to take rightful place in society.

Ministry of Women and Child Development, has revised the guidelines for Women Awards for conferring on eminent women, organisations and institutions. These awards will be called "Nari Shakti Puruskars". Now, from the year 2016, 20 Nari Shakti Puruskars shall be conferred every year.

NIRBHAYA

This scheme launch in 2012 to facilitate safety and security for women at different levels. To ensure strict privacy and confidentiality of women's identity and information. Provision for real-time intervention as far as possible.



Social Sector Movements

IRA SINGHAL

***Special Secretary
Department of Education,
Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh***

***Previous Position
Dy. Commissioner,
Office of the Divisional Commissioner,
New Delhi***



TANISH DANG MAHESHWARI

***Head - Communications,
DLF Foundation***

Moved from Tech Mahindra Foundation



AIF's Annual Event unpacks the Role of CSR in Building Women's Livelihood

The American India Foundation, catalyzing social and economic change in India for the past 22 years, organized the annual Livelihoods knowledge event 'Future of Livelihoods' at Silver Oak, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi. Starting with the Keynote address by the Chief Guest Smt Smriti Zubin Irani, Hon'ble Union Cabinet Minister for Women and Child Development and Minority Affairs, Government of India, the event addressed emerging gaps in women's labor force participation, the inclusion of women with disability in the workforce, and the far-reaching impact of climate change on their livelihoods in the next decade.

The event brought together ecosystem partner National Skill Development Corporation (N.S.D.C.) as co-hosts, Madhya Pradesh Rural Livelihood Mission as Special Partner, and iForest (International Forum for Environment, Sustainability, and Technology), Skill Council for Green Jobs and Wadhvani Foundation as Knowledge Partners. In the inaugural session Smt Smriti Zubin Irani, in conversation with Mathew Joseph, Country Director, AIF, brought a keen focus on enabling women as key social change drivers by supporting

their livelihood aspirations. Addressing the audience at the event, her powerful and thought-provoking session stated 'It is not incumbent upon one department to look at women's issues but it needs to be a part of every department, and that has been one of the biggest changes to have come in the governance.'

The eminent panels consisted of foremost thought leaders and ecosystem stakeholders such as Ashish Chaturvedi, Head - Environment, Energy and Resilience, UNDP; Poonam Chandok, Head - HR, L&T Energy; Praveen Saxena, CEO, Skill Council for Green Jobs; Kamesh Sanghi, Director, Livelihoods, American India Foundation (AIF) among others distinguished speakers.

With an overarching theme of 'Unpacking the Evolving Role of CSR in Building Women's Livelihoods in the Post-COVID Era', Future of Livelihoods' first session 'Building the Women Entrepreneurship Ecosystem - Enabling the Next Leap' kick-started with the discussion on how India's growth story has left behind a key demographic: women!

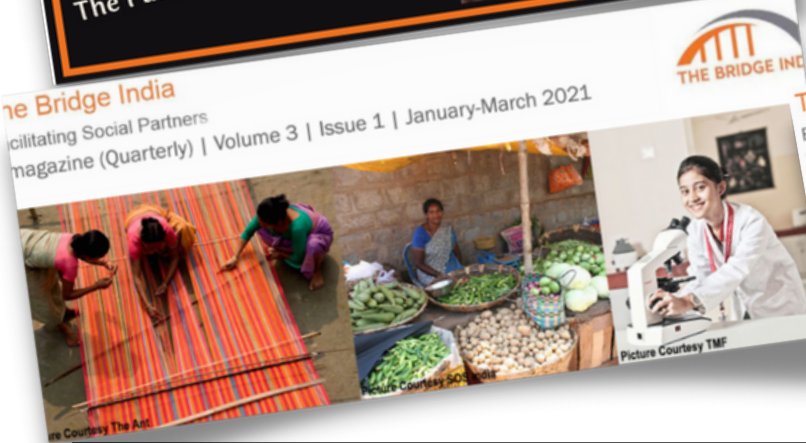
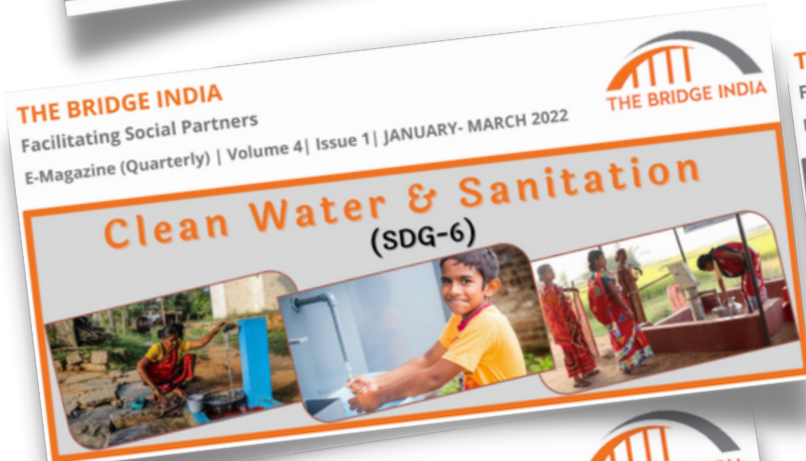
The second panel 'Leveraging technology - Mainstreaming disability at workplaces' emphasized the need for a multidimensional approach to catalyze accessibility while keeping women with disabilities at the center of this meditation.

The session set the stage to discuss how the ecosystem must enable and empower them by promoting inclusion and diversity in the workplace. Panelists also reflected on the need for innovation in this space and how government, both at the national and state level, along with NGOs, and CSR partners can come together to institute systemic change.

Closure of Rashtriya Mahila Kosh for optimal utilization of resources

At the time of setting up of Rashtriya Mahila Kosh, it was a prominent Government body working in the area of extending concessional micro-finance loans to poor women through Intermediary Organisation. However, over a period of time, substantial alternative credit facility mechanisms have become available to women entrepreneurs through various Government initiatives like Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojna and Stand-up India and therefore the RMK has lost its relevance. In line with the recommendations of the Expert Management Commission set up by the Ministry of Finance and the report on Rationalisation of Government Bodies authored by the Principal Economic Adviser, Department of Economic Affairs, Government has decided to close down RMK to improve efficiency and utilize the available resources optimally.

Past E-Magazine Issues



Supported by:



THE BRIDGE INDIA

Facilitating Social Partners

www.bridgeindia.co

Connect with us on



<https://www.facebook.com/thebridgeindia2017>



<https://www.linkedin.com/company/the-bridge-india/>



<https://www.youtube.com/c/TheBridgeIndia2017>



<https://twitter.com/TheBridgeIndia3>



https://www.instagram.com/the_bridge_india/

communication@bridgeindia.co