



INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL STUDIES TRUST



INSTITUTE FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

WOMEN'S WORK IN DELHI: DIMENSIONS, CHALLENGES AND EMERGING ISSUES

SEMINAR REPORT

Women's participation in paid work, or their economic empowerment, has been the focus of much debate in India. It is a matter of concern that, according to official statistics, female workforce participation rate in India has been low and declining. Do the official statistics capture the full picture of women work participation? Where do the women workers work, what are their wages, working conditions, etc.? Research evidence around these important issues were presented and discussed in the context of Delhi in a two-day virtual seminar organized jointly by Institute for Human Development in partnership with the Institute for Social Studies Trust over 18th and 19th of August 2021. Titled 'Women's work in Delhi: Dimensions, Challenges, and Emerging Issues', the seminar highlighted emerging studies on women's work in Delhi, and indicated ways to overcome barriers to women's work participation and the areas of opportunities for improving women's economic engagement. The virtual seminar was widely attended by researchers, scholars, policy-makers, activists, academicians and students. It received an overwhelming response, with close to 700 people registering for the event. The event was simultaneously hosted live on YouTube.

Main Takeaways

The main takeaways from the conference are outlined below in brief.

- Delhi has the second highest per capita income in the country, and good infrastructural facilities. Yet official estimates indicate that Delhi has a very low female workforce participation rate (FWPR) at 16% as of 2019.
- But this represents an improvement over the FWPR at 14% during 2012.
- The FWPR captured by official estimates, is low, in general, across India.
- Some positive developments were observed in the Delhi economy recently in addition to the rise in FWPR. Gender gap is narrowing slowly, and there has been some rise in the share of regular employed among female workers.
- There is a lot of pent-up demand for jobs among young educated women as their unemployment rates are very high at 47% compared to that for men at 33%. This implies that they are in the labour force but are not working perhaps due to lack of jobs suitable to their aspirations.
- Why is the workforce participation of women so low in Delhi? Research-based evidence indicates several explanations:
 - **Measurement issues:** It is not that women do not work, rather their round-the-clock work does not get captured by the official statistics. This is because women often bear disproportionate burden of unpaid work. Unpaid work includes two kinds of work. First, women's contribution to family-based economic activity that gets attributed to the male head of household and for which they are usually not paid. And second, their burden of unpaid care work such as fetching water, fuel, cooking, childcare, elderly care, etc. Even their engagement in paid work may be sporadic in nature and does not fit the definition of work in official surveys. Micro studies of home based workers, domestic and construction workers, waste pickers provided ample evidence regarding this continuum of paid and unpaid work for women.
 - **Social/cultural norms:** The idea that women's ideal role in the household is as a housewife, especially following marriage and motherhood, is a barrier to their work participation. The 'separate spheres' ideology tends to get reinforced by inflexibility of regular work expectations.
 - **Health reasons:** Research indicates that many middle-aged women leave work due to health reasons in Delhi. This may be tied up with the exhausting round-the-clock work many women, especially those from lower income strata, have to put in.
 - **Education:** For the younger women, participation in education explains part of the low work participation.
 - **Income effect:** Some women withdraw from the labour market once their household income improves.
 - **Lack of appropriate jobs for women with higher levels of education:** Education is an important predictor for women's work participation. Just as less educated women from poorer income classes work for economic reasons, high work participation is also seen for higher educated women from better-off families. Their participation may be constrained by availability of suitable jobs.
 - **Overall economy:** The nature of growth which does not create jobs or even leads to loss of jobs, impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown, which affected women's livelihoods disproportionately, are also important factors behind low female work participation.

- What are the opportunities for women work participation in the future?
 - **Present informal sector jobs in a formal setting:** Poorly educated women from low-income households working in home based work, as domestic workers, construction workers, etc. would greatly benefit from recognition of their economic activities as ‘work’ so that they have access to associated benefits, access to social security and better work conditions such as more space.
 - **Entrepreneurship opportunities:** There is evidence that young educated women are keen to pursue the start-up path.
 - **Gig economy jobs:** Digitised platforms have opened up different types of job opportunities with more flexibility, although it is still at a nascent stage for women. As of now, such workers are not covered by laws relating to sexual harassment, trainings are reportedly not yet standardized, and they are not encouraged to collectivize which undermines their bargaining power.
- What are the expectations from policymakers?
 - Explanations for women workers leaving their job include household work burden, low wage rate, employer’s harassment and distant location of workplace. These need policy attention. For the informal sector workers, access to safe childcare services, recognition of informal workers’ work, better provision of public services such as water, sanitation, health and transport, higher and fair wages, better work conditions would go a long way to address these constraints.
 - For such informal sector workers, social security is extremely important. For many, the working life would last while their health lasts; so access to health insurance, pension can bring in great benefits.
- Skilling programmes for such women workers, so that they can transition to more value-added work, is needed.
- For the unemployed educated young women, access to IT enabled services is necessary. Guidance and counselling towards becoming entrepreneurs would also boost transition to the world of work.
- For educated women, creation of appropriate jobs including considerations such as timings, hours of work, flexibility etc, suiting their needs and with appropriate incentive structure can encourage their work participation. More research in this area can help in designing suitable jobs. Enhancing the safety of transport, including last-mile connectivity of metro stations, making all roads well-lit, etc. would aid women in this respect.
- Research studies indicate that women enter and exit labour market several times within a year in comparison to men. The reasons for this need to be explored.
- The Government has several programmes in the areas of skill development, career counselling, guidance for women entrepreneurs, provision of capital via MUDRA scheme, etc. But evidence indicates that outreach of such programmes needs expansion and the design of the programmes may also be improved with feedback for beneficiaries and aspirants. The up-coming local Saheli Samanvay Kendra, in particular, which will be a local incubation hub covering a few Anganwadi centres, and which will link with working women to provide childcare services, among others, holds a lot of promise for the women workers in the informal sector.

Inaugural Session

*Welcome and
Introductory Remarks* : Jahnavi Andharia
Alakh N. Sharma

About the Seminar : Aasha Kapur Mehta

Keynote Address : Gita Sen

Vote of Thanks : Rajib Nandi

The inaugural session was started by Ms. Priyanka Tyagi, Senior Manager, Program, Administration and Communications for Institute for Human Development who outlined the overall structure of the virtual seminar and explained how viewers could access it via Zoom and YouTube. The welcome and introductory remarks in the inaugural session were delivered by Dr. Jahnvi Andharia, Director and Research Fellow at the Institute of Social Studies Trust (ISST), and Dr. Alakh N. Sharma, Director, Institute for Human Development (IHD), respectively.

JAHNVI ANDHARIA, Director and Research Fellow, Institute of Social Studies Trust (ISST) pointed out that the seminar was an outcome of collaboration between IHD and ISST. She saw the collaboration as a way to break the silos brought in by specialization and to build bridges across different domains of knowledge building. She emphasized that such collaboration as well as the digital platform for the seminar led to a greater outreach as well as greater impact of the seminar.

ALAKH N. SHARMA, Professor & Director, Institute for Human Development (IHD) Dr. Alakh N. Sharma expressed his gratitude to Dr. Gita Sen, an economist of international repute, known for her work on gender and development, for agreeing to deliver the keynote address. He said that while female workforce participation rate (FWPR) in India is low and declining, and measurement issues do exist. But it does not fully explain the low FWPR since the issue of measurement affects other countries as well. Yet Bangladesh has increasing FWPR. As for Delhi, it is one of the richest states, but has always had low labour force participation for women. He also noted the high unemployment rate for women in Delhi, especially for educated women. Jobs appropriate for women are not getting created, although there is enormous scope for increasing

the income and output of the state by expanding women's employment.

AASHA KAPUR MEHTA, Chairperson at the Centre for Gender Studies, IHD, gave an introduction to the seminar by providing the structure over the two days where a total of twelve papers were to be presented over four sessions. For each session one Chairperson and three panellists were identified, who were all experts in their own field. In addition to the inaugural session, a concluding session was also planned at the end of the second day. Dr. Kapur Mehta welcomed all the participants to the seminar. She introduced Dr. Gita Sen by highlighting two key reports and papers written by Dr. Sen on gender and health equity. Dr. Mehta also contested the official statistics showing low and declining FWPR, saying that these do not reflect the real situation and that there are gaps in the process of measurement.

GITA SEN, Director & Distinguished Professor, Ramalingaswami Centre on Equity & Social Determinants of Health (RCESDH) Public Health Foundation of India described her keynote lecture as a stepping back "to look at the forest before we look at the trees", and titled it - Freeing the canary or killing it- Concerns about women's work in a tumultuous time.

Dr. Sen compared women to the proverbial 'miner's canary' where the singing bird gave an early warning to the miners about poisonous gases. The miners were saved by the warning but the birds died in the process. Women, like the singing canary, work all the time till they are exhausted and their situation acts as an early warning system in the economy. The women and their work are the first to get adversely impacted in distressing times. But they are also in danger of getting extinguished like the canary. This is particularly true of recent post-Covid times, when

women's work burden is very high. Dr. Sen points to the fact that the choices we make in our future policy work will either kill the canary or save her.

Dr. Sen noted that women's work is shaped by structural factors such as the capitalist system of production, patriarchy and caste hierarchy. Workers are basically a tool for production in the capitalist system, so they constitute a 'cost' and are not regarded as an investment. Women face unequal power relations within the household, have unequal access to assets and have to bear most of the unpaid work. The unequal power relations have intersections with age, ability, education and other factors.

This inequality has widened in the neoliberal era as these inherent tendencies of the capitalist economic system have strengthened considerably with increased globalization. Those with better access to higher education have better access to employment since employment is linked to the global economy. Secondly, economic growth and jobs now have close links with IT, which results in downward pressure on wages in other sectors and there is also increasing informalisation within the formal sector. Thirdly, there are constraints on government expenditure due to increasing pressure of fiscal responsibility.

All the factors are adversely affecting work participation of women as we see that the FWPR has declined from 34% in 1995-2000 to 26% in 2005-06 to 20% in 2019-20. From UPA I government till the present, there have been two different directions to governance -- deeper democratisation or greater centralisation of executive. In both approaches neoliberal globalisation continues, with or without a human face. Overall, there is a need for deeper democratisation through higher access to RTI and such rights.

The downward trend in FWPR can be explained only to an extent by greater access to education. There is also absence of women-friendly work; global value chains have shrunk and there is shrinking work space for women in agriculture. There is also casualization of work. However, there is huge pent-up demand for work from young educated women.

Regarding measurement issues, Dr. Sen referred to Dr. Indira Hirway's work in the area and said that unpaid non-care work is supposed to be included in the 1993 non-SNA production boundary but in reality it is not getting included. Putting the matter succinctly, she said that it is not a question of whether women work, but what they are doing and whether they are getting paid or not.

With better healthcare and higher longevity, care work burden has also increased. There is also a lot of unmet demand for elder care. The unmet needs of childcare and eldercare in the neoliberal economy has been termed as a hidden tax on women and girls by Ingrid Palmer. Since women bear the brunt of care work, the care diamond in effect shrinks to a point—the household. However, there is some engagement from the public care providers.

Delhi has seen a lot of migration of female workers from states such as Jharkhand, Uttarakhand, etc. for the last 15 years or so, and the work of such workers was disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic. Quoting The State of Work in India report, Dr. Sen said that of the estimated 100 million jobs that were lost in May-June 2020, the majority had been recovered by December 2020. But as many as 15 million jobs still remained lost. This job loss had gender implication and disproportionately more women lost jobs. Initially 81% women lost jobs, compared to 37% of the men. By December 2020, 47% women were still out of work and the corresponding share for

out of work men was only 7%. Non-dalits and non-Muslim went into self-employment, which fared better, while Dalits and Muslims went into poorer paid wage work. Apart from the Covid-19 pandemic, introduction of the new Labour codes are also a feature which will impact the workers, especially women, adversely.

Dr. Sen indicated several measures which are needed to support women's work: some form of urban MGNREGA, IT enabled services support which is critical for educated women, formalization of healthcare, childcare and education sector (for ASHAs, AWWs, etc. who are still called 'volunteers'), access to social security and reduced burden of unpaid work—both care and non-care. This underscores the critical importance of childcare facilities, and safe &

affordable transport. There should simultaneously be a sustained movement to end violence against women and girls including sexual harassment at the workplace.

Dr. Asha Kapur Mehta acknowledged the wide range of issues covered by Dr. Sen and discussed various questions raised by the audience. Questions ranged from reframing measurements on labour force participation, the inclusion of sex work especially in the context of the pandemic, causal linkages between time poverty and unpaid labour, how the capital- gender- 'jaati' nexus be broken, and who will pay for care work done by women.

RAJIB NANDI, Associate Director and Research Fellow at ISST ended the inaugural session with a vote of thanks.

Session 1

Women's Work and Challenges Faced by Women in Informal Employment

Chairperson : Renana Jhabvala

Panelists : Radhica Kapoor
Farzana Afridi
Sunita Sanghi

Paper Presenters : Monika Banerjee
Balwant Singh Mehta
Swati Dutta

RENANA JHABVALA, President, SEWA Bharat. The Chairperson of the session, Ms. Renana Jhabvala, President, SEWA Bharat said that the NSS data underestimate FWPR and therefore declining FWPR is questionable. NCAER data do not show any decline in FWPR. Citing Dr. Ashwini Deshpande's recent work she mentioned the lack of suitable work for women as a reason behind poor work participation of women.

MONIKA BANERJEE, Research Fellow, ISST presented on the topic '*Understanding Care Work as Barrier to Economic Empowerment of Women Informal Workers in Delhi*', revealing that absence of childcare facilities is a prominent barrier for working women in the informal sector. She focussed on understanding care work as barrier to economic empowerment of women workers engaged in waste picking, street vending, domestic and construction work, selecting those who have at least one child less than 6 years as part of the sample. The study showed that North and South districts of Delhi have the highest percentage of women engaged in informal sector activities. Study respondents lived in unauthorized and resettlement colonies with inadequate public services like safe drinking water, sewage and other facilities, adding pressure of more household chores or higher cost to already existing paid work and childcare responsibilities.

The continuum of work within and outside the home was demonstrated well by the study. The respondents highlighted the centrality of their responsibilities at home, and paid work was organized around that. In fact, these workers did not acknowledge themselves as 'workers'. Various strategies to manage both children and work involve leaving the child alone at home or with their siblings. Anganwadi Centres (AWC) cannot provide the requisite care facilities since these lack toilet facilities, are open for just one

to two hours, and are also not perceived to be a safe space by the respondents for leaving small children. Leaving small children in the care of siblings who themselves are quite young has adverse implications for the latter's education and health as well as child's safety. The informal sector women workers prefer to find work near home due to the childcare responsibility and even then, suffer from time poverty. In fact, they often end up taking more leaves due to childcare. Lack of care and time impacts the health of women, siblings who miss out on time to study, and safety of children. The study concluded by highlighting the need to consider childcare provision as a right for women workers.

BALWANT SINGH MEHTA, Fellow, IHD presented a paper '*Choice and Participation of Women in the Workforce in Delhi*'. Identifying female participation in the labour force is an important driver (and outcome) of growth and development, he noted that in the overwhelmingly urban economy of Delhi, despite its high per capita income, only around 2 out of 10 adult females participate in the labour market, which stands at the 5th lowest among the major states in India. Gender gap is wide in LFPR and WPR, with participation of men much higher than that of women. However, the gap has been narrowing over time as during 2012-2019, male WPR declined slightly from 46% to 45%, while female WPR showed a slight increase from 14% to 16%.

The share of unemployed is high among adult women and very high among the young women. Unemployment rate for highly educated women is rising, and it is possible that suitable jobs matching their aspirations are not available in the market. Among those not engaged in paid work, 84% are in domestic activities. Majority of these women indicated preference for part-time work. A very high share of around 56% female youth are not

in education, training or employment (NEET). It is an encouraging development that the share of adult women in regular employment in Delhi has increased from 61% in 2000 to 74% in 2019. But, 70% of them were informal workers (without social security benefit), and 54% were engaged in informal or unorganised sector.

Around half the women workers in Delhi are working in unskilled or low skilled low-paid occupations such as peon, helper, construction labour, housekeeping, restaurant service worker, salespersons, etc. Some 27% are in high or medium skilled jobs such as teaching, IT professionals, emerging gig economy, information services, financial services, etc. which are the upcoming sectors. Sector-wise, the bulk of women are employed in public administration, education, health and household services (54%), followed by those in manufacturing (18%), finance, banking and real estate (14%) and trade, hotels and restaurants (12%).

During 2000-2019, women's employment opportunities in Delhi increased in the trade, hotels and restaurants sector, followed by transport, storage and communication and some other sectors. The construction sector, and agriculture and related sectors witnessed a decline. Some domestic workers lost jobs due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Following the presentation by Dr. Mehta, the Chairperson for Session I opined that NSS data for Delhi should be challenged. She indicated that the number of domestic workers are shown to be far less in the official statistics than is implied by micro level data.

SWATI DUTTA, Fellow, IHD presented next and discussed women's attitude and aspirations to become entrepreneurs and the gender inequality that exists in this domain in her paper *'Who Wants to Become an Entrepreneur? A Gender-based*

Analysis'. Setting the background, she said that India ranks low in terms of encouraging educated women for research and training. Women face financial, cultural and legal barriers to initiate and grow business.

The study presented by Dr. Dutta was based on a primary survey, undertaken in Delhi NCR in 2016-17 in 28 educational institutions. It aimed to assess the attitudes and perceptions towards entrepreneurship among youth in the higher education institutions, assess the gender dimensions related to entrepreneurial intentions among final year students from various courses and to find out the relation between personality traits and gender gap in choosing entrepreneurship as a career option among the educated youth.

An Individual Entrepreneurial Aptitude (IEA) score was estimated where the items of the IEA score comprised assessment of autonomy, general self-efficacy, innovativeness, locus of control, optimism, pro-activeness, competitiveness and risk tolerance.

The findings indicated that a high share of 62 percent of the respondents wanted to take entrepreneurship as a career option at any point of time (within 5 to 10 years down the line) and that entrepreneurship as a career option among the female respondents was also quite high at 59 percent. A higher number of students who wanted to become an entrepreneur belonged to private institutions, higher income class, family background of entrepreneurship etc. The average IEA score of women was found to be lower than the average IEA score of men, indicating that their entrepreneurial aptitude was relatively lower.

The obstacles for women in following the entrepreneurship path were: difficulty in getting bank finance, lack of family support and business experience. Further, poor women are more vulnerable than poor men due to lack of

opportunities, limited choices of employment, inability to access economic opportunities, discriminatory attitude and restricted mobility.

The Blinder-Oaxaca decomposition of the gender gap observed in choosing entrepreneurship as a career, with male proportion higher than female, indicated that 39 % of the gender difference is not explained within the model and will be explained by unobserved variables such as government policy, skills, institutions, etc. Dr. Dutta concluded that colleges offering independent courses on entrepreneurship act as positive components to inspire students to become entrepreneurs.

RADHICA KAPOOR, Sr. Visiting Fellow, ICRIER, New Delhi. The panelists' comments followed the three presentations. Radhica Kapoor, Sr. Visiting Fellow, ICRIER, New Delhi, appreciated the findings of Dr. Mehta's presentation. She remarked that both FWPR and quality of their employment has improved in Delhi, but it is still informal, and wanted to know whether measures such as the Maternity Benefit Act dis-incentivised hiring of women. She also urged exploration of wage discrimination. Regarding Dr. Banerjee's presentation, she highlighted the older children's role in sharing childcare and enquired whether their health and school participation are getting adversely affected. She stressed the significance of establishing childcare facilities which will not only facilitate women but also the elders and older siblings who are often left engaged in childcare. Dr. Kapoor urged Dr. Dutta to distinguish clearly between entrepreneurship and self-employment (which is more in the survivalist mode). She also felt it would be good to find out in which sector the women want to become entrepreneurs.

FARZANA AFRIDI, Professor, Economics and Planning Unit, Indian Statistical Institute, Delhi, felt that in the urban context, it was important

to examine from the demand side, given the kind of skills that women have, whether available jobs are attractive enough for women to come out and work. Showing appreciation for Dr. Banerjee's paper, she enquired whether lack of good schools nearby might provide an explanation for opting for childcare by older siblings. Referring to the U-shaped curve between women's education levels and work participation, she highlighted how poor women lack access to market services and are forced to either earn for survival or depend on male members or children to earn for the family. Afridi suggested that the 2018 Time Use survey data be used to explore water and sanitation services available in the areas surveyed by Dr. Banerjee. There was a need to investigate the state of public programmes/provision for water and sanitation as well as education.

Afridi asked Dr. Mehta to enquire who the women workers are; how the economy of Delhi is changing and why it cannot accommodate young educated women. Regarding Dr. Dutta's presentation, she pointed at the likelihood of 'yes' response bias in the survey and asked her to delve more into socio-economic data, as well as unpack the unexplained variation.

SUNITA SANGHI, Former Principal Advisor, Ministry of Skill and Entrepreneurship, Government of India discussed the role of women in childcare in the Ministry of Child Development and Skill Development. She said that the government has come up with many new ways to make entrepreneurship attractive and has undertaken capacity building and skill development programmes to encourage entrepreneurship in general, and to help women to fulfil both the responsibility of childcare as well as earn money, in particular. Regarding Dr. Mehta's presentation, Ms. Sanghi observed that women moving away from traditional to non-traditional occupations was a welcome trend, but was surprised how

women's WPR in construction sector has declined. She urged that wage differential be explored and also why male LFPR has declined. Educated women's unemployment can be explained by the fact that such women, from better-off families can afford to wait for suitable jobs. With reference to Dr. Banerjee's paper, Ms. Sanghi pointed out that waste-pickers' employers (who employ a minimum of 30 workers) are supposed to provide childcare facility. It should be probed whether existing regulations are being adhered to. Ministry of Labour and Employment has flagged the need for schools near construction sites. Ms. Sanghi asked Dr. Dutta to look at existing government policies to boost entrepreneurship such as e-haat (for marketing assistance), Mudra loan, etc. She also asked her to look at the issue of career counselling.

Open Discussion

Ms. Jhabvala responded to the panellists' comments by noting that women workers are fewer now in construction because in Delhi construction work is carried out by big companies in the formal sector which do not hire women. Dr. Mehta responded that construction work is now more in NCR, where women are employed.

He also said that not only is formal sector getting informalised, but there is also evidence that some informal sector workers are moving to the formal sector, even being in informal employment, and this signals some improvement in employment quality.

Dr. Banerjee said that women in construction sector are usually in 'support' role as helpers and they need skilling. She reiterated that childcare should be seen from a rights-based perspective. In this context, she pointed at the need for convergence as ICDS is under MWCD and women workers are under Ministry of Labour and Employment.

Dr. Dutta responded to the panellists' comment by saying that she was not looking at self-employment, but rather at entrepreneurship. She agreed that bias in responses was possible. She felt that there was a need for guidance for start-ups. Respondents were not aware of government programmes, and also doubted the effectiveness of the same. The study had examined some case-studies of entrepreneurs in healthcare, IT products for children, pet-care, etc. but the women entrepreneurs reported that they faced many challenges.

Session 2

Addressing Constraints to Women's Work

Chairperson : Ashwini Deshpande

Panelists : Amrita Datta
Neetha N
Suneeta Dhar
Ashwini Deshpande
Padmini Swaminathan

Paper Presenters : Balwant Singh Mehta
Gurpreet Kaur
Deeksha Tayal

ASHWINI DESHPANDE, Professor of Economics, Ashoka University. The session was chaired by Ashwini Deshpande, Professor of Economics, Ashoka University.

In his presentation titled ‘*Women’s Employment Opportunities and Challenges: A Panel Data Analysis of Informal Sector in Delhi?*’, Dr. Balwant Singh Mehta, Fellow, IHD, said that ideally the urban informal sector should act as a stepping-stone for the formal sector, but in India it has a persistent presence. It contributes 52.4% to the national economy and accounts for 81% of the total workers. However, available research on informality largely overlooks the dynamism within the informal sector. The present study found evidence in Delhi of significant increase in regular employment for women within the informal sector during the last decade.

The study is based on a repeat survey (panel) of 900 working women residing in the informal settlement and slums of Delhi in 2019, out of 1400 women who had been surveyed in 2010. 81% of the women workers were engaged in the informal sector in 2019. Three-fourth of the women workers in informal sector were in regular employment, followed by one-fourth who were self-employed and only 2% were casual labour. More than half the women workers were engaged in domestic work.

The study found that 3 out of 10 females surveyed changed her job between 2010 and 2019 and out of them 21% moved from informal to formal sector, while 10% had a reverse movement from formal to informal sector. With rise in educational qualification, as well as with rise in household income level, women are less engaged in informal sector employment. Women belonging to SC/STs and those from migrant households are more involved in informal sector jobs. Dr. Mehta observed that women workers mainly moved out from low paid industries like construction,

households and trade, hotel & restaurant sectors and into finance, business, and real estate; manufacturing and transport, communication, and storage.

Women with more experience, higher educational qualification, hailing from high-income general caste households, have higher probability of mobility from informal to formal and also less productive to higher productive sectors compared to other groups.

The challenges of working in the informal sector relate to work conditions, hiring practices, wage discrimination, lack of social security, etc. Changing technologies also pose a threat to their jobs. There is lack of awareness regarding Government policies and poor access to benefits. The barriers in accessing benefits from Government schemes are illiteracy/low level of education, lack of knowledge of scheme, lack of documents, and corrupt practices. There is need to expand provision of social security to the informal sector workers by effective enforcement of appropriate existing laws/schemes. The creation of a national database on informal workers and regular updation for proper planning and implementation of support schemes, as well as provision of linkage of this database with support schemes would be of assistance. Gender-sensitive infrastructure eg. ladies’ toilets, crèche facilities, etc. are needed.

GURPREET KAUR Research Consultant, ISST presented a paper on ‘*Home-based Work in Informal Settlements: Integrating a Lens of Women’s Livelihood in Urban Infrastructure?*’. With reference to the home and work continuum where both home and work are gendered spaces, this paper looks at home-based work through a) the broad perspective of gendered work and the informality around it; b) home, habitat and work of home-based workers; and c) Covid-induced challenges to the vulnerability of home-based workers.

Dr. Kaur points out that the existence of home-based work in its current form reinforces and promotes the idea that women are the primary caregivers, and that is why they chose to do home-based work, which is supplementary in nature. Although these women work seamlessly throughout the day, their labour goes unrecognised and is invisibilized. Therefore they often cannot access the social security benefits that comes from formal regulations. Although the recent mode of 'Work From Home' finds many women working from home, similar to the practice for home-based workers, the latter do not even recognize themselves as 'workers'.

Reporting findings from a study conducted by ISST in two urban locations among home-based workers, Dr. Kaur highlighted the lack of home-based work which could provide decent wages and regular payments. Due to the mix of household responsibilities and workplace negotiations, as well as the poor quality of infrastructure and public services near their homes, the workers have to find innovative ways of balancing their work and enhancing their income. The study highlighted the need to focus on the women worker's right to the city space, given that these women from marginalized households look for opportunities close to their homes in order to balance their household, care and paid work responsibilities.

From a policy perspective, it was suggested that the contributions and struggles of home-based workers be made more visible by highlighting their contributions to product supply chains and addressing the macro-economic trends and policies that have created avenues for the outsourcing of home-based work. Besides, as these workers are more directly affected than others by government policies and practices regarding housing, basic infrastructure services and zoning regulations (notably, whether commercial activities are allowed in residential areas), the settlements with

large concentrations of home-based workers need serious policy interventions to ensure that they have adequate provisioning of shelter, water, sanitation, healthcare and rations. They also need to be organized enough to demand regular work, decent wages and adequate provisioning of public services

Citing some findings from a recent study by ISST, Dr. Kaur reported that in the post-COVID situation, 92% of the surveyed women reported severe job loss and income loss and unavailability of work continues to remain a challenge.

DEEKSHA TAYAL Senior Researcher, IHD presented the findings from the paper *'Persisting Servitude and Gradual Shift Towards Recognition and Dignity of Labour: A Study of Employers of Domestic Workers in Delhi and Mumbai'* by Preet Rustagi (late), Ritu Dewan, Balwant Mehta and Deeksha Tayal. The study was sponsored by ILO and the survey was jointly conducted in 2015 by IHD in Delhi and the Centre for Development Research and Action (CDRA) in Mumbai.

Domestic workers are increasingly becoming a large segment of urban workforce reflecting a rise in both the labour supply and demand for such work. The study aims to capture the demand-side story of female domestic workers by focusing on the perspective of the employers. The primary survey conducted in Delhi and Mumbai tried to answer the following questions: a) How does the labour market for domestic workers function? b) How do the employers recruit domestic workers? c) How are wages and conditions of work fixed? d) What is the perception of employers on imparting skills/training to domestic workers? and e) Do the employers accept that domestic work is a legitimate labour market activity conducted in an employment relationship?

The findings from the study covering more than 1,000 households indicated that domestic workers

are generally hired through informal channels like neighbours, relatives, friends, and other domestic workers. Formal recruitment channels are avoided because of high commission rates. Besides, labour market for domestic workers is getting more work oriented and preferences are shifting away from traditional factors such as caste, religion, region etc., of the domestic worker; commonly desired characteristics are tidiness/appearance, punctuality, attitude towards work, efficiency, age, past experience of similar work, etc.; preference for younger workers, who are seen as energetic and efficient in carrying out tasks.

The wages are governed by tasks undertaken by the worker and the prevalent wage rate in a particular locality. On an average, a part-time domestic worker earns Rs. 1,500 per month, and a full-time live-out or live-in earns Rs. 5,000 per month. Tasks of washing utensils, sweeping and swabbing the floors are at the bottom of the ladder, while payment for babysitters, cooks and healthcare workers are at the higher end. The points for bargaining are the time spent, family size, prevailing rates, knowledge of employer's nature or temperament from others in the neighbourhood, etc. Workers demand at least 2-3 days off every month while negotiating their work and employers grant leave without deducting wages. The employers opined that domestic workers are becoming less servile. Most of them have children attending school.

Given the employers' reluctance to pay a higher wage to a skilled/trained domestic worker, there is absence of any prospects for upward mobility or transition from domestic work. Labour legislations do not provide protection to domestic workers and their rights and employers do not acknowledge that paid domestic work is a legitimate labour market activity. Domestic workers are not entitled to any minimum wages or social security benefits, working conditions

or hours of work are also not regulated. Employers are against the formation of workers union because such unions are seen as raising unnecessary demands and exploit the employers. There is need for some form of understanding among the workers regarding the prevailing wage rate, number of leaves, and conditions of work. In sum, regulation and formalization of the domestic employment relationship is in the interests of both workers and employers.

AMRITA DATTA, Assistant Professor of Development Studies, Department of Liberal Arts, Indian Institute of Technology, Hyderabad. The panelists' comments followed the three presentations. Amrita Datta, Assistant Professor of Development Studies, Department of Liberal Arts, Indian Institute of Technology Hyderabad, said that the economy of Delhi presents a paradox as it has always had low FWPR despite being a rich state, with good infrastructure and a lot of opportunity. Education is a clear marker for FWPR and it would be interesting to see at what level women re-join work. Referring to Dr. Mehta's study, she enquired whether women drop out of work between 2000 and 2019 and if so, under what conditions. She also asked whether the data capture lack of appropriate jobs for women. Secondly, she noted the jobless growth India experienced followed by job-loss growth. Therefore job availability is less for everyone. In addition, in times of crisis, women lose jobs disproportionately. The 'World Values Survey' report cited that many respondents felt that men have more right to a job than women at the time of job scarcity. Thirdly, in the context of measurement issues whereby official statistics under-estimate women's work, home based workers are a case in point. Domestic workers are a fast-growing segment but there is a lot of resistance against their recognition and regulation.

NEETHA N., Professor, Centre for Women's Development Studies New Delhi . In her comments as a panellist, Dr. Neetha N., Professor, Centre for Women's Development Studies New Delhi, said that issues of measurement, working conditions, household income, social/cultural restrictions are all important constraints for women work participation. Home-based workers show the continuum of paid work and care work. However, in Delhi the FWPR increased from single digit to double digit over 10-15 years, indicating there are opportunities for women.

Dr. Neetha referred to a study done by CWDS which shows that among women workers in Delhi many are in the age group of 30-45 years. The opportunity is mostly in domestic work, sales work, etc. But there are many women who also leave work after having worked for some time and the main reasons for leaving were found to be marriage & childcare, health reasons, termination of contract, relocation and wage-matters. The double burden of paid work and unpaid work is likely to lead to health problems and exhaustion and thus care work burden provides an explanation for low women work participation when wages are low and working conditions are poor

SUNEETA DHAR, Co-Founder, South Asia Women Foundation, India. The next panellist to speak was Ms. Suneeta Dhar, Co-Founder, South Asia Women Foundation, India. She said that there had been a long wait for domestic workers' rights and it should be realized now. Many domestic workers come from marginalized communities, have faced eviction, and their private chores often take place in a public space because their homes are very small. They need identity as workers. Ms. Dhar noted that India and South Asia have not ratified Convention 189 (Domestic Workers Convention) and India has not ratified Convention 190 (eliminating violence and harassment at workplace).

Open Discussion

Dr. Ashwini Deshpande mentioned that the low work participation by women may arise, because, as CMIE data show, women workers enter and exit the world of work several times in the course of a year. Evidently social norms cannot explain this pattern fully. This entry-exit is not captured by NSS/IHDS possibly because of the types of questions asked in these surveys. An explanation proffered by Dr. Sonalde Desai is that the demand for women's work is sporadic and that women are not counted as workers due to shorter work period which is not included in the 'majority time criterion'. It has also been observed that demand for female workers is declining over time. Dr. Deshpande also wondered with reference to Dr. Mehta's paper whether the self-employed were included in informal workers or whether they were treated separately.

Responding to the panelists' comments, Dr. Mehta said that as the study was conducted in 2010 in 2019, there were missing responses as some workers left their jobs. The reasons for workers leaving job are household work burden, low wage rate and employer's harassment. In the 2019 survey, many workers got engaged in beautician job. Some did not get salaried job and got placed in far off place. He also said that the self-employed were included in informal workers.

Dr. Padmini Swaminathan suggested that we can learn from other countries about their experience in institutionalising domestic workers. She also said that home based workers are usually part of global value chains, and the linkages may be explored.

Dr. Kaur said that there is a need to clearly define 'work' and 'worker' and she felt that home-based workers suffer from occupational hazard.

Dr. Tayal, in response to a related question said that both employers and worker need to register in order to increase their bargaining power. In response to a comment regarding whether it was difficult to interview employers, she said that the survey team took permission from residence welfare associations to interview the employers of domestic workers.

The Chairperson concluded by saying that the Delhi-NCR is among the richest regions of the

country with good infrastructure. The reasons behind the paradoxical low work participation by women must be explored more thoroughly. Dr. Deshpande noted at the same time that all research questions need to be examined with reference to a larger policy context and it was clear that with limited resources, there is increasing informalization even within the government. Thus the overall trend towards informalization of work was not surprising.



Session 3

Adolescent Aspirations and Future of Women's Work

Chairperson : Vinita Aggarwal

Panelists : Ishani Sen
Ishita Mukhopadhyay
Soumya Kapoor Mehta

Paper Presenters : Mubashira Zaidi
Sudeshna Sengupta
Anweshaa Ghosh

VINITA AGGARWAL, Director General, National Skill Development Agency, Government of India. This session was chaired by Ms. Vinita Aggarwal, Director General, National Skill Development Agency, Government of India. She pointed out that it is only recently that women have got the opportunity to aspire.

MUBASHIRA ZAIDI, Research Fellow, Institute of Social Studies Trust (ISST), Delhi presented her paper titled '*Aspirations of Adolescent Girls in an Urban Low- Income Scenario*'. Interpreting the term 'Aspirations' as 'Future-oriented positive state of being with the potential to improve socio-economic conditions', she presented her views regarding understanding the concept of aspirations in a low income, disadvantaged, urban scenario in Delhi from the view of everyday negotiations and from the gendered lens. The main research question included understanding the influence of socio-cultural and economic factors on aspirations of adolescents and young adults. The study was based on a survey with 13-17 year old girls and boys and their parents living in and around Kalyanpuri in east Delhi which is an urban slum.

Ms. Zaidi noted that apart from parents and siblings, teachers played a key role in the adolescents' lives. Relatively higher number of girls were self-motivated. There are boundaries that are drawn around what can be spoken with whom in terms of interaction with influential actors in the adolescents' lives and the lines of communication appeared to be quite gendered. Regarding who played a major role in deciding careers, high proportion of respondents stated that they themselves decided. However, in case of selecting partners for marriage, there were more actors in the lives of girls than boys. Elder brothers play a key role in this context and neighbours, too, to an extent.

The challenges that were raised by adolescents and their parents was mainly around safety and security for girls and boys. Children spoke of the environment that was violent, and addiction at home and community was commonplace. Opportunities were curtailed because safety and security concerns were much deeper. There was huge concern around sexual violence in case of girls which were magnified and reinforced. The parents' dilemma in case of girls also centred around 'honour'. While education was noted as an opportunity, pressure to marry early was the key challenge for adolescent girls. Strategies identified to overcome these barriers were improving their own confidence levels, mastering English language skills, technology, etc. The aspirations noted for most girls was to become teachers in the government sector for job security, maternity benefits, retirement benefits. They were also interested in fashion and beauty industry. Boys were interested in having their own business and entering Police services.

In conclusion, Ms. Zaidi noted the stark gender differences in aspirations which were largely socially determined. Girls showed high self-motivation and were ready to take up the challenge and the difficult route. Parent and community control over girls was high and garbed in discourses of honour, and protection of girls against ever present threats in a violent environment. Girls faced the imminent problem of discontinuation of education and early marriages, while boys faced the real threat of getting involved in violence in public and substance abuse. As a result, educational outcome for both boys and girls suffered. Two types of traps were identified: those driven solely by external constraints stemming from poverty, and behavioural traps adhering to patriarchal gender norms. Given these traps and socially determined nature of aspirations, there is a higher probability of future aspirational

failure. Three immediate implications for policy and programmatic practice were identified as: i) enhancing children's informed choices and agency (capacity to aspire), ii) work against the projected behavioural traps ahead of time (with significant actors in children's lives), and iii) promoting community and state accountability against external constraints (such as safety and security on the streets).

SUDESHNA SENGUPTA, Visiting Fellow, IHD, Delhi presented her paper titled '*Organising Work as Migrant Domestic Workers and Construction Workers in the National Capital Region*'. She focussed on the crisis faced by women migrant informal workers who had been living invisible lives in the cities. Her paper brings forth the work lives of paid domestic workers and construction workers who came to the National Capital Region (NCR) in search of livelihoods and the paper aims to reveal the multiple marginalisation faced by them. Majority of workers surveyed were from SC and minority communities. The social and economic marginalisation was already there when they migrated. Three types of migrants were interviewed: (i) those who had made cities their homes and did not intend to go back to the villages, (ii) temporary migrants who were in the cities as long as there was work, mostly between 9-11 months and they did not intend to settle down in the cities; (iii) workers who had trans-local work lives—they were in the cities for 4-8 months working as construction workers and the rest of the months they were in the villages providing unpaid labour on their own farm lands. Most workers migrated due to agrarian distress. Even the marriage migrants joined construction work within few days of migration.

Ms. Sengupta noted that social networks from villages play an important role in accessing paid work in the cities or to find *jhuggies* to move in as a family. Women organised their paid-unpaid work

continuum using multiple strategies. For the paid domestic workers, it was a continuum of paid and unpaid reproductive work. Some of these workers who had children in their villages worked 8-12 hours a day to maximise their earnings. Many construction workers living on labour camps on construction sites had their school going children in the villages and the younger ones with them. The workers considered themselves lucky to have a crèche on the site even though it was mandated under the Building and Other Construction Workers' Act, 1996 (BOCW Act).

Arbitrariness and localized working conditions for the same work was observed in both occupations. The commonality was that they all participated in gendered labour processes. All contracts were verbal and employment existed only till employers needed them. Wages were determined locally in both occupations and workers had no information on wages in other areas. For domestic workers the negotiation on wages happened with the employers on a one-to-one basis and never collectively. But they did voice their needs individually at times. For construction workers, wages were locally determined even though they were protected by BOCW Act. Across the occupations no system of weekly leaves was observed. As long as the construction workers were in employment, no leaves were allowed.

In terms of social security provisions in the form of maternity entitlements and childcare services, the women workers accepted the crèches provided by the employers on construction sites as an act of benevolence. None of construction workers were seen to be availing of maternity benefits mandated under the BOCW Act, 1996 in her study.

Ms. Sengupta concluded that it is important to underline the intertwined social and economic work relations and structures that influence

women's productive and reproductive continuum. The reproductive responsibilities were mainly borne by women. Under patriarchal family hierarchy, labour markets behaved as gendered institutions making profit by exploiting and oppressing migrant women workers who were subject to other forms of social marginalisation and the regulator state was not implementing its own laws. The structures functioned in an interconnected manner and not in a mutually exclusive way.

ANWESHAA GHOSH, Research Fellow, ISST, Delhi presented her paper titled '*An Exploratory Study on Women Workers in the Gig Economy*'. The gig economy refers to labour market activities that are coordinated via digital platforms which includes mainly two forms of work i.e., crowd work/freelance and on-demand platform-based economy wherein the workers are designated as independent contract labour or partners and the platform acts as the contractor. These platforms are highly gendered as it was seen that verticals for women are mostly focused on domestic work and beautician's work.

Ms. Ghosh felt that the limited representation of women in the gig economy is indicative of a larger trend in the Indian labour market and opportunities to earn gets curtailed owing to gender norms, restriction of mobility, unpaid care work responsibilities. The digital divide is accentuated by lack of access to technology, skills and ownership of smart phones. The 'flexibility' in the gig economy may suit women. However, this very fact continues to maintain the status quo at the household level and women continue to be the primary caregivers. This often affecting their ability to earn more or skill up.

A mapping of app-based and web-based service providers was done for the study followed by individual follow ups in Delhi-NCR, Bangalore

and Mumbai covering sectors such as domestic work, beauty work, cab driving and food delivery. Based on her study findings, Ms. Ghosh differentiated between (i) the 'Gig' Model wherein gender specific policies are not widely seen as a priority except in sectors where women workers are more visible such as beauty and (ii) the 'Hybrid' model, a newer model with gender sensitive structures and policies. It is difficult to scale up the hybrid model, which has a fixed salary, since risks are borne by the platform. The Freelancers – or the 'individual contractors' model was the more preferred model due to its potential to earn higher and promise of 'freedom and flexibility'. The platform economy uses a dual approach of incentives and penalties to keep the workforce productive and disciplined, respectively.

Safety is a major concern for women workers with reference to sexual harassment, unsafe timings, long distances, unsafe or remote places. Safety mechanisms evolved by the platforms do not always work. In terms of personal care and unpaid care responsibilities, Ms. Ghosh noted that cab drivers and food delivery agents depend on the public infrastructure to access toilets but in some cases the platforms create an enabling environment for the women workers. Worksite of beauty workers and domestic workers is other people's homes and workers had varying experiences which included facing discrimination and bias. The claim of flexibility absolved the platforms of the responsibility towards childcare arrangements. This resulted in time poverty and burden on the women workers. Challenges faced by such women workers related to women's unpaid care work responsibilities (training requirement, longer duration), access to resources for training, gender stereotypes, restriction on mobility, low wage return, low job opportunities, lack of time, limited education.

Collective Bargaining is difficult for gig workers due to lack of shared spaces and invisibility among workers, lack of uniformity between platforms, invisibilization of the management, etc. There was some evidence of collectivization following the COVID-19 pandemic. Collectivization of women workers is even more challenging due to invisibility of women's voices and issues in unions, restrictive gender norms around women's mobility and care responsibilities. The gig workers are included in the Code on Social security 2019 which gives them recognition as a separate category of workers. However, they are not included in any of the other three labour Codes.

Ms. Ghosh highlighted the need for gender-disaggregated data for gig workers, to recognize gig workers as 'employees' of the companies and platforms rather than independent contractors, inclusion of gig workers under the Sexual Harassment of Women Act, 2013, guaranteeing safety at work, among others. She also recommended to explore the idea of platform cooperative adopted by some countries; allowing workers to own and control the technology and set their own terms of work. Above all, for inclusion of women workers, it is imperative to recognize and redistribute care work, negotiate gender norms and to ensure their safety.

ISHANI SEN, Lead, Learning Voyages, PRAVAH, Delhi and Member, Vartaleap Coalition. Among the panellists, Ishani Sen, Lead, Learning Voyages, PRAVAH, Delhi and Member, Vartaleap Coalition, noted for Ms. Zaidi's study that the process of aspiration building is formed in the context of the socio-cultural norms and ideas and women constantly negotiate to attain the aspirations as a young girl. There is also a gendered layer of building aspiration. There is a need to focus on what can be done rather than what cannot be done. Insight can be obtained about agency-building by asking questions around

what makes youth make a decision. During future research it could be studied if there is a difference between boys and girls of same socio-economic background where some of them have actually gone through a process of how to build their aspiration and how to articulate their aspirations contrasted with children who have not gone through such processes. There is generally a marked difference.

Aspirations equate to possibility and the question of possibility is determined by the socio-cultural norms and the psycho-social aspect of youth or adolescent programming is important in this context. Holding intergenerational dialogues are very important as is ability to take responsibility for own aspirations. In order to do this, the youth need a safe space such as schools, colleges, community centres, etc. where they can articulate their views without fear.

ISHITA MUKHOPADHYAY, President, Indian Association for Women's Studies and Professor, Department of Economics University of Calcutta commented on women in the construction sector and domestic workers. She urged researchers to unpack the word 'skill' into cognitive and non-cognitive parts. She highlighted the non-cognition part which corresponds to the psycho-social aspect. While the 'cognition' part is universal for the entire society, the element of non-cognition is governed by socio-economic factors, gender norms, etc. Cognition is also conditioned by intergenerational inequalities. In case of informed choices, there are prioritization of these informed choices given by the non-cognitive part as well as the conditioned cognitive part. She highlighted on the continuum of paid and unpaid work, of education and marriage and gap between aspiration and outcomes which is increasing. She noted that the aspirations are rising and the outcomes are falling, and when the outcomes fall there is a directional change in the aspirations.

Calling the gig economy a ‘floating sector’, she pointed out that platforms are usually managed by large corporations and felt that the investment policy should explore this issue.

SOUMYA KAPOOR MEHTA, Head, IWWAGE, New Delhi noted about the condition of work of domestic workers, construction workers and street vendors who have very little rights; particularly the domestic workers relating to wages and facilities given to them. Domestic workers in India are increasingly being feminized due to their traditional roles, proximity to their house etc. But they do not get minimum wage, leave or social security provisions. She said that there had been a long struggle to move towards recognition of domestic work as ‘work’, but that the related bill had faded around 2017. Regarding gig work, a study conducted at IWWAGE revealed that women workers in this sector usually regarded this work as better than what they would access otherwise and felt that it accorded them more dignity as workers. Regarding adolescents’ aspiration, Dr. Kapoor Mehta said that youth from disadvantaged segments of society aspire for more these days and indicated that a large

study showed that aspiration is the single biggest predictor of moving out of poverty.

Open Discussion

The Chairperson of the session, Ms. Aggarwal, said that the government has introduced many schemes for the informal sector workers and there was a need for evidence regarding which schemes worked and which did not. She also said that with gig economy, the lines between wage employment and self-employment are getting blurred.

In response to questions from the audience, Ms. Ghosh highlighted the lack of availability of gender-disaggregated data with enterprises. She also said that there is a sudden increase in demand for live-in domestic workers, but that such employment came with safety issues, especially for young girls. Gender norms were evident even in gig work as women are often employed as cooks in households, while the men work as chefs in the hospitality industry. Ms. Zaidi highlighted the use of education as a tool for aspiring girls said that they use distance-learning to realize their aspirations; even earn themselves to pay their fees.



Session 4

Women's Work During the Pandemic and Creating Opportunities

Chairperson : Ratna Sudarshan

Panelists : Padmini Swaminathan
Ritu Dewan
Ratna Sudarshan

Paper Presenters : Tanuka Endow
Sneha Jha
Ashmeet Kaur and
Risha Ramachandran
Deeksha Tayal and
Aasha Kapur Mehta

RATNA SUDARSHAN, Trustee and Former Director, ISST. This session was chaired by Ms. Ratna Sudarshan, Trustee and Former Director, ISST.

TANUKA ENDOW, Professor, Institute for Human Development (IHD). The first presentation titled as *‘Is the Multiplier Effect from Urban Women’s Employment Leading to Generation of Good Quality Employment? A Look at the Female Domestic Workers in Delhi NCR and Kolkata-Asansol’* and was presented by Dr. Tanuka Endow from IHD. She clarified that the study referred to the pre-pandemic period and was part of a bigger study on the multiplier effect of urban women’s work which was formulated and led by Preet Rustagi (late) and Rajarshi Majumdar. The current presentation was based on the survey on quality of work of domestic workers in Delhi NCR and Kolkata. Dr. Endow also clarified that the aspect of sexual harassment was not covered in the study.

The overall context of the study was the low and declining workforce participation amongst women in India. However, between 1993-94 and 2011-12 there was an increase in the absolute number of employed women in urban areas. The study noted that due to increased female work participation in the urban sector, a second round of vacancies were being generated in the family space with higher demand for care workers, such as domestic workers, cooks, etc. who are mostly women. Thus, a multiplier effect of female work participation was being created.

Dr. Endow noted that the main survey, which was conducted during 2016-2017 and covered 424 households, found significant evidence of multiplier effect. To investigate the quality of employment created in the second round, primary survey of 80 female domestic workers across Delhi (20), Noida (20), Kolkata (20) and Asansol (20) was carried out.

The survey findings showed the female domestic workers belong to poor socio-economic strata; they are poorly educated and largely unskilled. The workers in Kolkata and Noida reported monthly wages above minimum wages in the country, while those in Delhi and Asansol, reported average earnings less than the minimum wages. The wages in Asansol were particularly low. Still, anecdotal evidence suggests that in Delhi NCR some domestic workers save money and send home (in the villages that they come from) to buy plots of land, build own house, over a period of time. A high rate of job-switching was observed in West Bengal because of low wages. In Delhi NCR few respondents reported switching jobs and the main reason for doing so was employers shifting to new localities.

Dr. Endow highlighted the precarious informal nature of the domestic workers’ employment which follows from the fact that workers lose their jobs following the re-location of an employer. In the absence of a formal contract, employers can replace the workers without much notice. Sickness and disease also add to the uncertainty in this work. Given the double burden of income-earning work and own domestic work, the female domestic worker is crucially dependent on her health and strength. They incur considerable health-related expenditure. In particular, major episodes of illness and associated out of pocket expenses can be a significant setback, and it also poses the risk of losing one’s job due to prolonged absence.

With the dual responsibility of income-earning work which involves cleaning, cooking, washing utensils, etc. and responsibilities of similar nature in own household, over and above care work for children and elderly at home, the domestic worker does not get adequate time for rest. The time-use information shows that their daily life revolves around physical work comprising earning

work outside home which includes commuting/walking and domestic chores such as cooking, cleaning, washing, taking care of family members, etc. Thus, there is a continuous exhausting cycle of work with very little rest for them.

This dependence on continued good health for her livelihood makes the domestic worker vulnerable. This vulnerability is deepened given the lack of any social security such as fixed medical leave, health insurance, pension, etc. as well as the considerable out of pocket expenses for medical treatment.

However, the survey findings indicate domestic workers supplement their household earnings. With average household earnings in Delhi NCR at Rs 18,000-20,000 a month, domestic workers' earnings can comprise up to a third of the total. Moreover, they have autonomy in the household regarding meals, medical treatment, communication with natal family, such as visiting them, talking to them over phone, etc. Autonomy is less in the domains of large expenditure, social visits, etc.

The working conditions for the female domestic workers, the need for social security, their low wage levels, are all areas which need much more attention from policy-makers. Health insurance as well as pension plans are schemes that would benefit the domestic workers greatly, given that their work involves requirement of robust health and, preferably, the strength that youth brings with it. Dr. Endow ended the presentation with strongly recommending guaranteed minimum wages, old age support, a basic income and access to healthcare for all domestic workers for their indispensable care work.

SNEHA JHA, ASHMEET KAUR AND RISHA RAMACHANDRAN, Research Consultant, ISST. The second presentation in Session 4 was titled '*Locating the Processes of Non-*

state Relief Work during the COVID19 Lockdown in Delhi' and was jointly presented by Ms. Sneha Jha, Ms. Ashmeet Kaur and Ms. Risha Ramachandran from ISST. This study focused on the role of non-state frontline workers including community volunteers, civil societies and local groups in providing care and support to the communities. The presentation shared the findings from the study carried out by ISST from January to March 2021. It was a qualitative study using in-depth semi-structured interviews in four slum settlements of Delhi- Seelampur, Sanjay Camp, JJ Colony Bawana and Yamuna Khadar. The presentation provided findings from two of these areas --Seelampur and Yamuna Khadar --focusing on the voices of the communities experiencing this crisis and relief work by the non-state actors.

Setting the context of the study, Ms. Risha explained that Seelampur is an urban slum dominated by Muslim inhabitants. It had witnessed communal violence in the past and hence has shown a strong support from women based NGOs. Yamuna Khadar is an unauthorized JJ colony with mostly Hindu families, and has an unstable and precarious environment, with little presence of NGOs.

Ms. Jha briefed about frontline workers who were mostly community leaders, religious leaders, young men from the community with networks, men and women affiliated to local political party. Some community based organisations such as youth groups had emerged over time ('Manthan group'); and also slum-based collectives like Basti Suraksha Manch in Yamuna khadar and Mahila panchayats in Seelampur. Presence of NGOs were higher in authorised slum areas. The pre-existing network of NGOs played a significant role in relief work. The Action India women frontline workers played an important role in Seelampur. Other state actors such as political

parties, ASHA workers, Aanganwadi workers and police also took charge of care work. In Seelampur the frontline groups were led under the name of an NGO, in Yamuna Khadar they emerged from the community. However, these groups were interconnected.

The process of relief work started right after lockdown without waiting for any government authorities to come forward. The awareness and acknowledgement of the vulnerability in both these locations played an important role in taking prompt actions. Seelampur had recently witnessed riots while in Yamuna khadar there is hardly any accessibility to government mechanisms for social security. It was either not functional or not enough.

The identification of support/care receivers was based on the presence of frontline workers from the community which had helped them to identify people in need. Their prior engagement with children, women and youth groups was useful. Those who were identified were mainly daily wagers, tenants, non-ration card holders, single women, widow, elderly were other categories. These groups mostly needed food, money, cooking gas, sanitary napkins, medicines and medical assistance among several others. They also needed support in registering for e-coupon for non-ration card holders. The key strategies to meet these needs was through door to door visit using pre pandemic networks in Seelampur, social media, personal visits and community kitchen. The major challenges faced, as reported by the respondents were related to resistance faced from the side of families of female frontline workers, communal conflicts or contestations amongst groups and fear of getting infected.

Ms. Ashmeet explained about the Women's experiences in the relief work, where she argued

that idea of women giving care was reinforced in pandemic. The lens of shifting sites of unpaid care work was used to explain the women fetching food and other social provisioning for households. While, they negotiated and amidst the discrimination and increased violence in the pandemic, they also fought the gendered digital divide and mobility their work as frontline workers brought them more social legitimacy.

DEEKSHA TAYAL, Senior Researcher, IHD and **AASHA KAPUR MEHTA**, Chairperson, Centre for Gender Studies, IHD presented third and last presentation on the topic titled '*Delhi Metro and Covid-19 – A Case Study of Working Women in Delhi-NCR*'. The study (i) explores the impact of the Metro on the commuting pattern of working women in the Delhi-NCR region; (ii) captures the changes in the perception of women towards using public transport in enabling mobility and (iii) it identifies the travel related challenges faced by women that were magnified during the pandemic.

The study was based on a primary survey conducted in the Delhi-NCR region. Quantitative and qualitative information was collected from 462 women in the age cohort of 20-65 years. The women respondents in the sample comprised: (i) those who never travelled for work outside the home; (ii) those who earlier travelled for work outside the home but left their job due to some reason(s); (iii) those currently travelling for work outside the home. The survey was conducted during April-November 2020.

The study found that 47.6 % respondents use metro regularly, 28.3 % use metro occasionally and 24.1 % never use metro. A higher share of women (almost 80%) use metro regularly when metro covers their entire route or partial route (within 3km). More women in younger cohort (20-35 years) use metro regularly for commuting

and women with low-income levels prefer to commute by public transport. With increase in income level, dependence on personal vehicle tends to increase which may be because of their ability to afford a vehicle for their personal use. Dr. Tayal argued that the usage of the metro helped working women to manage their household work better by saving time.

Young women considered metro to be the most comfortable means of commuting to their educational institutions, and for job search. The metro connectivity has been particularly beneficial for women traveling long distances between home and workplace. Despite unsupportive attitude of the family members, availability of metro facilitated women to engage in diverse occupations.

The issue of overcrowding was flagged by 70 % respondents while 45.7% raised affordability as a major concern. Total daily commuting expense includes: metro fares plus e-rickshaw, auto-rickshaw, cycle-rickshaw, buses, which is difficult to afford by many women from low income households. Pandemic has brought into sharp focus the affordable aspect of the Delhi metro. The case studies of daily wage earners showed that salary cuts and unaffordable metro fares left them with no option but to walk to-and-from their workplace. Almost 16.2 % women also raised safety as a concern. The last mile connectivity, the gender sensitive spatial conditions after the metro ride were also important while ensuring safe metro ride for women to enable and facilitate their mobility in the city.

Dr. Aasha Kapur Mehta made recommendations to overcome challenges such as overcrowding by increasing the frequency of trains and the number of coaches in each train. She added that the monitoring of CCTV footage must be on a real time basis and immediate remedial

action taken where any kind of misbehaviour is noticed. To improve last mile connectivity, she suggested functional street lights, frequent plying of e-rickshaws and taxis operated by women in the evening hours, better police patrolling, etc. Besides, she emphasized that the metro system needs to be more user-friendly and the difficulties faced by the elderly or those who are disabled in any way, need to be addressed.

PADMINI SWAMINATHAN, Former Professor and Director, Madras Institute of Development Studies, Chennai. Following the three presentations, the first panelist Dr. Padmini Swaminathan, former Professor and Director, Madras Institute of Development Studies, Chennai began with her comments on first presentation, where she questioned how the term multiplier was used in this paper. She suggested presenters to explain about the rationale for choosing their field sites. She also asked the presenter to elaborate on the term ‘formalisation of female domestic workers’ and on how the domestic workers supplemented the household income. Another query was whether there were any best practices available for studies on domestic workers at the international level, which would help the Indian policymakers. Regarding the third presentation she encouraged the authors to engage with the question that what does investment in public transport mean for women? She also asked for clarification on the relationship that authors cited between domestic work and usage of public transport.

RITU DEWAN, Visiting Professor, IHD and Former Professor and Director, Dept. of Economics, University of Mumbai. The second panelist Dr. Ritu Dewan, Visiting Professor, IHD and Former Professor and Director, Dept. of Economics, University of Mumbai raised her concern regarding the post pandemic conditions

of domestic workers, suggesting that these are not conducive for working in many cases and hence asked presenters to elaborate on that. She also sought more discussion on the difference in decision making process of single women or women not living in a typical patriarchal setup. Dr. Dewan said that the health expenditure by domestic workers made it clear that public health services needed to be stepped up. She suggested that the authors could conclude by presenting a scenario which details on the post pandemic job scenario of workers, since 'work from home' may reduce demand for domestic workers. An inclusion of issues of labour code and how domestic work is viewed would be also insightful since these de-recognize domestic work. For the second presentation, Dr. Dewan alluded that elaboration on pre-pandemic marginalization which existed would be helpful in understanding where the actors are coming from, which would also help readers to understand the dynamics of intersectionality, vulnerability and marginalization. For the third presentation, she cautioned the presenters about the recommendations made for enhancing female mobility and suggested that they could address it at a more structural level.

RATNA SUDARSHAN, Trustee and Former

Director, ISST. The third panellist as well as Chair of the session was Ms. Ratna Sudarshan, Trustee and Former Director, ISST. Regarding the third presentation, she suggested that there be an effort to establish a deeper connection between transportation and work and to look at women empowerment from a wider lens other than that of fast transportation for work. To the first presenter, she sought thorough clarifications about regional differences in the paper, while asking her to reflect on the increased vulnerability of domestic workers post pandemic.

Open Discussion

Dr. Endow responded to the panelists' comments and said that the multiplier concept had been formulated by the authors of the main study for which the survey the conducted had been in 2016-17. The sample for the study had been drawn from amongst two Tier-I cities or megacities and two Tier-II cities of India to have a comparison between the dynamics in the different types of cities. Also, geographically two cities from North India and two from East India were taken to look at the regional dimension of the issue. The presenter here had presented the findings from surveys undertaken in 2019 (Delhi NCR) and Kolkata-Asansol (2016-17).

Concluding Session

Panel Discussion on Women's Work in Delhi: Perspectives and Way Forward

Chairperson : Rashmi Singh

Panelists : Shalini Sinha
Jeemol Unni
Ravi Srivastava
Hema Swaminathan

*Highlights of Main
Deliberations of Seminar* : Tanuka Endow

*Closing Remarks &
Vote of Thanks* : Ratna Sudarshan
Aasha Kapur Mehta

RASHMI SINGH, Spl. Secretary cum Director, Department of Social Welfare and Women and Child Development, Government of NCT of Delhi. The session was chaired by Dr. Rashmi Singh, Spl. Secretary cum Director, Department of Social Welfare and Women and Child Development, Government of NCT of Delhi.

Dr. Singh said that in Delhi, the persisting challenge is that despite high per capita income, there exists a gender gap in female labour force participation and other indicators. In the current scenario of a pandemic, studies indicate that women are disproportionately affected, particularly in terms of loss of livelihood. There is a need to understand whether this is a temporary or permanent phenomenon. While formulating the way forward, there is a need to understand the different kinds of vulnerability women face today.

TANUKA ENDOW, Professor, IHD gave the highlights of the deliberations in the two-day virtual seminar. One of the points that came up repeatedly was that Delhi is a rich state, but paradoxically the female labour force participation rate is low here. A positive development noted in one of the presentations was that there has been some improvement in the share of women's regular employment. However, most of the employment for women is informal as there is increasing informalisation in the formal sector.

High levels of unemployment among educated women was also flagged as an important issue. Studies on informal workers such as home-based workers, domestic workers, street vendors, construction workers, etc., all indicate a continuum of work for women. This happens because the women are engaged in paid work and at the same time bear the brunt of care responsibilities. It is an irony that the women workers in the informal sector do not acknowledge that their round-the-clock responsibilities actually is 'work'.

Yet women work participation in India, including in Delhi, continues to be low, according to official statistics. A reason behind this paradox is that the unpaid care work of women remains uncounted, and, even possibly some of the paid work is not counted, particularly in case these are of short duration. Social and cultural norms is another well-established fact, whereby marriage and motherhood act as barriers to their work participation. Studies have also found that in Delhi, many middle-aged women leave their work due to health-related problems and it is likely that the double burden of work for women at home and outside may be linked to this. The crisis in the job market, and especially in the post-Covid time, when women have lost out of employment disproportionately, are also behind low women work participation in the official statistics. For educated women from higher income category, it is possible that there is a wait for suitable jobs till they participate in work.

Other areas that have been explored in the seminar are female entrepreneurship and adolescent aspirations. Another emerging area post-Covid is the gig economy. Despite the flexibility and better salary, it also suffers from drawbacks for women, in terms of gendered occupational choices, safety concerns, etc. Their traditional role as care-givers is continues to be emphasized through focus on flexibility.

The U-shaped curve for education and women work participation shows higher work participation among women with very low education such as the domestic workers, waste pickers and construction workers as well as among women who are highly educated. Research studies revealed that for the former group of women, public provisioning of services such as the availability of water, sanitation facilities, health services, etc. is inadequate. Anganwadi services are available

for short duration and cannot provide childcare services needed by these women workers in the informal sector.

Transport services impact women at both ends of the spectrum, although the workers at the lower end always try to find work that involves less commute. For the higher educated women, research shows that access to metro has made a lot of difference for the employed women in terms of accessing and continuing work. But the need to improve safety and last-mile connectivity was articulated by the commuters. Another finding from the studies presented was the reportedly inadequate outreach for aspiring women in educational institutions vis-à-vis programmes on counselling for start-ups.

Dr. Endow ended the recapitulation by recalling the example of the ‘miner’s canary’ given in the inaugural session by Dr. Sen, and said that to keep the canary singing and thriving, women workers need access to effective provisioning of public services, including healthcare. They need access to social security, recognition of work, improvement in working conditions, young educated women need support of IT enabled services, the cultural barriers to women’s work participation need to be addressed, and where necessary, suitable jobs must be designed for women.

SHALINI SINHA, the India Country Representative, Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO). Discussion by panelists began with Ms. Shalini Sinha, the India Country Representative, Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO). She raised the question of how do city policies and planning impact informal workers, particularly informal women workers? City development plans can embrace and promote the informal economy by using a different lens. Many workers work in informal spaces in the

city like streets, dumpsites, construction sites, as well as at home. When the place of work varies, the insecurities that arise due to it also vary. So, while talking about providing decent working conditions, these informal spaces and conditions of women’s work in such spaces must be considered.

For women home-based workers, space is an important issue. They have to pick up the costs and burden linked with space for work. In Delhi, they mainly reside in J.J clusters or resettlement colonies where the fear of eviction is high, so that tenure insecurity is also an important issue for them. Moreover, the home-based workers are not homebound. They use public transport for buying stuff and getting work, costing them in terms of time and money, which adversely impacts their productivity and income. If the resettlement colony is cut off from the main city, the men go out for work. Women home-based workers become vulnerable to take work at any rate at which it is available.

Delhi is recognized as a place of embellishment and embroidery for home-based workers because of the work that comes from the global supply chain. A lot of work is outsourced from the local areas. For instance, around Patparganj industrial area, there are several clusters of home-based workers. Pushing industrial units to the periphery of the city will have repercussions on such workers which must form a point of consideration for policymakers.

In the cities, certain laws and policies empower some informal economy sectors. An example is the Street Vending Act which mandates that the town vending committee decide the vending zone. The solid waste management rules also have a spatial component to de-centralize solid waste management. It is essential that city planning is in coherence with such rules and laws.

In addition, there is a strong connection between where people work and where they stay. For instance, domestic workers like to stay near their place of work so that they can walk to their place of work. At times, they have to pay high rent for their place of residence. So, the housing policies of the city should take into account such rental burdens of informal workers.

All the above discussion is important because, with the Master Plan of Delhi 2040 currently undergoing formulation, there is a possibility of moving the situation in favour of the informal workers. The Master Plan is important because it can help us address the questions linked with the spatiality of work and provide formal spaces for the informal workers. There is now an effort to map all the areas in Delhi where home based workers are living as part of evidence-building so that the Master Plan would be able to take cognisance of this input.

Finally, Ms. Shalini stressed how the master plan or the planning process can be supportive to informal livelihood. The first step is the recognition and registration of the women workers. Second is the promotion of formalized spaces for the informal workers. The third is the consideration of housing facilities as an economic asset for the poor workers. Fourth is the provisioning of infrastructure with a specific focus on the needs of women burdened with care responsibilities. Fifth is the focus on public transport, which is affordable, safe, and frequent for the workers. All such dimensions need to be built into the city urban development plan.

Ms. Shalini closed her submission with the statement that city plans and policies have the potential to develop cities built on the strong foundation of equity and justice, which recognizes the women informal workers.

JEEMOL UNNI, the India Country Representative, Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO) presented a perspective linking women's work with education. She stressed the point that it is the education of higher secondary level that serves as a threshold for getting better job opportunities. Using the PLFS data for 2018-19 and 2019-20, she showed a U-shaped curve exists between education level and work participation rate in urban India and Delhi. The share of regular salaried employment rises for both men and women with higher secondary education. At higher secondary education, the opportunity cost of staying at home is high, and hence there is a decline in the proportion of men and women in the out of the labour force category.

Dr. Unni presented a cross-classification of workers by the informal sector and informal employment based on 2011-12 NSS employment data. For India as a whole, 50% workers are informally employed in the informal sector, 33% are formally employed in the formal sector, 13% are informally employed in the formal sector, and 3.5% are formally employed in the informal sector. Similar findings from a 2010 IRMA-IHD survey of Delhi and Ranchi showed that 86% of the workers are informally employed. 69% were in the informal sector, and 30% were in the formal sector. Using 2004-05 and 2009-10 NSS employment data, a vulnerability index was created. It included four dichotomous variables of the size of employment, place of work, type of work contract, eligibility for social security and leave benefit. Vulnerability declines with an increase in the education level to secondary and above.

The Covid-19 pandemic has led to a rise in unemployment. The negative impact of lockdown on education may have an adverse effect on

employment over the longer term. After the pandemic, there may be greater impediments to cross the threshold of higher secondary education. This may further deter private investment in education despite better returns. This may result in a vicious cycle of low education and low income for a large majority.

RAVI SRIVASTAVA, Director, Centre for Employment Studies, IHD, said that over the last 20 years, we had created an exclusionary city space for the rich. In Delhi, too, large public spaces have been handed over to the rich in the name of RWAs (Residents Welfare Associations). During the pandemic, we could see a degree of xenophobia in such areas towards poor women workers, particularly migrant domestic workers.

As a general framework for analytical purposes, Dr. Srivastava divided women's work into three broad categories: (i) those directly in paid work, i.e., those receiving salary; (ii) those in indirectly paid work; and (iii) unpaid care work. The social and economic environment and policies affect each of these. It involves the distribution of work.

Problems have been raised on capturing women's work from macro level datasets and the concerns are partially correct. However, notwithstanding measurement issues, it is important to understand that macro surveys provide patterns and trends which are important to see. It provides the activity status of all the above three categories of women's work.

Though after years of discussion, the ILO has moved to a much wider notion of work inside and outside the general production boundary, the Indian statistical system has not yet shifted towards an alignment within this broad definition. In India, despite greater and better employment opportunities as well as better education averages in urban areas, women's participation

in remunerative work tends to drop. Looking at the broad canvas, the main difference in women's participation between rural and urban areas is due to agricultural and livestock activities in the latter. Since no such option is available for women in urban areas, they are pushed to unpaid and care work.

Delhi is a major growth centre, and yet participation of women in remunerative work is low at about 15% by PLFS. This low participation rate of women is a regional pattern. The rates for urban women are lower than the national average in the Northern states like U.P, Bihar, Delhi. But the participation rates are higher than the national average in the Southern states of India. Patriarchal norms undoubtedly play a significant role in the supply side of the labour market.

Besides this social frame of patriarchy, there are three analytical factors in understanding women's work in urban areas in general and Delhi in particular. First, there exists a U-shaped relation between women's education and their work participation rate. The underlying fact is that women's participation rate can only be partly understood in relation to men's work. Intersectionality between social origin, class origin, spatial origin, educational origin, and the life cycle situation of girls and women are also factors that help to understand women work participation. Secondly, the ways in which capital and capitalism subsume and take advantage of women's role of social reproduction for providing low-cost female labour is a factor to be considered. This is best brought out by the location of women home-based workers employed in value chains of Delhi. In the apparel sector of Delhi, 70% of the women workers are home-based workers. Thirdly, there is discrimination within different types of work and between different types of work that men and women do.

Social and economic policies have to shift and eventually redistribute power relations at the family and society level so that women work participation can get a boost. Socializing and redistributing the burden of social reproduction is very important. Removing discrimination, having more effective labour regulation, having effective policies for dealing with sexual harassment both in public places and informal labour market, and putting in place a universal social security system are other important dimensions requiring attention.

HEMA SWAMINATHAN, Associate Professor, Centre for Public Policy, Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore, stressed that missing in the discussion over the last two days was the situation of women employed in the formal sector. Do they experience discrimination in terms of the wage gap, promotion, etc.? How have the government provisions like maternity benefit impacted women? A survey has shown that it might have had a negative impact on hiring of women. In the context of such social support policies, it is important to understand what more is required from the government so that companies, particularly smaller ones, make these accessible to women.

The relationship between women in the formal sector and women in the informal sector also needs to be probed. Women in the formal sector are able to work because they are able to hire women in the informal sector for household care responsibilities. Inequality among women is another spectrum of research which requires attention. In this context of intersectionality, discrimination may also exist due to the religion of women. For instance, Muslim domestic workers are relatively more vulnerable than others.

On the demand side, there is a need to research employers' perspective on recruiting women. The

span may include smaller enterprises to large corporates and address question such as: Are they willing to hire young married women? Are they willing to hire women at the cusp of motherhood? What are the reasons for their choices?

Dr. Swaminathan also pointed out that in order to understand the patriarchal mind-set and make inroads into it, there is a need to talk to men as well. What are the reasons, according to them, which stops women from working outside the home? Other areas to explore may include the role of state and policies in subsuming women's work. What is the impact of shrinking in state services on women's work?

The chairperson Dr. Rashmi Singh appreciated all the presentations made during the concluding session. She said that all the issues need to be viewed in the backdrop of shrinking availability of resources. She underscored the various factors such as family-members' attitude within the household which also impacts double burden of work, lack of workspace, etc. and constraints such as public safety, public service provision, etc. which limits the realization of full potential for women. Education is an important tool in this context. Dr. Singh also discussed the use of 'satellite accounts' to account for care work. She welcomed the initiatives for mapping the urban informal workers' clusters and said that it can provide the evidence needed for the Master Plan to incorporate their needs. She also mentioned that the Government plans for local 'Saheli Samanvay Kendras, in particular, which will be a local incubation hub covering a few Anganwadi centres, and which will link with working women to provide childcare services, among others, an initiative which holds a lot of promise for the women workers in the informal sector.

The Closing Remarks and Vote of Thanks were given by Ms. Ratna Sudarshan, Trustee and

Former Director, ISST and Dr. Aasha Kapur Mehta, Chairperson, Centre for Gender Studies, IHD.

RATNA SUDARSHAN, Trustee and Former, Director, ISST. Ms. Sudarshan, in her closing remarks, thanked Professor Alakh N. Sharma and the entire IHD team for joining hands with ISST for this joint seminar. She reiterated four issues from the point of view of future work in which the organizations may be engaged: - (i) there is a need for macro data to understand the patterns, trends, etc. but due to gaps in the same, there is also the importance of critiquing it so that over a period of time, more robust surveys around women's work can be undertaken. (ii) It is important to focus on the quality of work and conditions of work and to generate work that meets certain standards. Otherwise, it will not lead to women's empowerment and sustained economic growth. (iii) There is enormous heterogeneity among various groups of women workers with respect to their age, education, geographic location, etc. Qualitative micro studies would help to capture context specific information. (iv) Both the demand and the supply dimensions of women's work need

to be understood and researched and these need to be in sync with one another.

AASHA KAPUR MEHTA, Chairperson, Centre for Gender Studies, IHD. Dr. Kapur Mehta agreed with the observations made by Ms. Sudarshan and said that there is a need to push for more accurate and reliable estimates of female workforce participation. Not only the care work done by women, their economic activities, too, are not accurately captured in the macro datasets. She stressed that for this purpose, a large, well-funded survey is needed. Flagging the issue of the quality of life, she said that the number of hours of work put in by women, both in the formal and informal sector, tends to lead to poor work-life balance.

Finally, Dr. Kapur Mehta said that the papers presented in the two days of the seminar and the comments received were very enriching. She thanked everyone from IHD and ISST for taking this initiative forward and making it a success. She also thanked the chairpersons, panellists, and paper presenters for participating in the seminar as well as the attendees who had participated in the two-day virtual seminar with such interest.



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