



Changing Faces Women’s Leadership Seminar

Women as Innovators and Entrepreneurs

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Oahu ♦ Maui

Draft Action Plan

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“Explore Non-Standard/Flexible Working Arrangements in the Organized Sector for Educated Urban Women in India”

Issue/Problem Statement

Educated urban women in India are leaving the workforce in growing numbers. Years of productivity are lost during their prime working age of 25-40. Even those who re-join the workforce are forced to accept entry-level jobs and ignoring their education and experience.

As per the National Family Health Survey (NFHS 2015-16), in the last 10 years, the proportion of working women (employed married women, ages 15-49) sharply declined to 31% from 43% in 2005-06. A 2015 McKinsey Global study suggested that India’s GOP could grow by 16-60% by 2025 if women participated in the economy on par with men.

Some key contributing factors for the lack of women participating in the workforce include:

- a) Sociocultural (including extended family influences) pressures of childcare, other life stage demands, patriarchal attitudes, and a challenging environment, etc.
- b) Organizations (especially SMEs) reluctant to deal with female employee issues like physical safety, sexual harassment, maternity leave, late working hours, and government mandated requirements like day nurseries, special committees, etc.
- c) Lack of alternative employment models despite technological advances.

Mission & Project Description

To evangelize non-standard, flexible work opportunities; employ and retain educated women in the workforce; and transcend challenges caused by life-stage changes. Over a period of the next year my project will consist of below actions:

A	Address Women Entering the Workforce
	Engage with colleges and education institutions to address women entering the work force.
	Conduct seminars on career path planning and life-stage planning.
	Build knowledge on financial management and the need for financial independence.
	Conduct workshops on work-life balance and how to manage priorities efficiently.
	Develop negotiation skills for flexible work arrangements.

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B	Build Knowledge on the Impact of Women Leaving the Labor Force
	Engage industry associations to encourage non-standard work arrangements.
	Engage with other organizations already helping women access second careers.
C	Create a Toolkit & Access to Non-Standard Work Opportunities
	Create a digital platform to map opportunities for temporary, part-time, project-based or contractual work.
	Create an employer toolkit for engaging employees in non-standard work arrangements.

Currently a few large corporations have a second career policy for women who want to get back to work, which allows flexible working hours, remote working etc. A few social entrepreneurs have helped women return to work. However, this effort must be scaled to reach out to the greater population of educated women across India. It will take a concerted effort to reach out and find women right as they re-enter the workforce and to continually engage with them by partnering with their employers. It will also require a change in mindset for both the women and their employers.

Personal Role

Currently, as a recruiter of talent, I am frequently faced with a request from women-in-transition looking for opportunities that are part-time, home-based or short term. However, very few clients wish to provide such opportunities due to misplaced concerns in managing women and non-standard work arrangements. My role will therefore be about influencing a change of perspective with respect to women employees and crafting innovative employment models or non-standard work arrangements aided by technology.