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PRIA

Engaged Citizens, Responsive City

Workshop on Diversity Matters: Managing Human Resources for Smart Governance in Cities



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This project is implemented
by PRIA



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PRIA, under its European Union supported program 'Engaged Citizens Responsive City'¹, has conducted a participatory research to understand the gender diversity in the sanitation departments of three urban local bodies of Ajmer (Rajasthan), Jhansi (Uttar Pradesh) and Muzaffarpur (Bihar). PRIA shared the insights captured through the study and a discussion on various related aspects were undertaken at the workshop. The workshop attempted to elicit thoughts on improving gender diversity at workplaces of urban local bodies with the following objectives:

- Sharing findings of PRIA's study on gender diversity
- Discussing issues and challenges in gender-equal work places
- Inviting views from various domains like corporate, public sector and non-profits
- Drawing lessons on enhancing gender diversity at municipalities
- Discussing ways forward

Ms. Shashi Shikha, Senior Program Officer, PRIA welcomed all the participants. She began by introducing the participants about Engaged Citizens, Responsive Cities project of PRIA. She also told that under ECRC project, PRIA has conducted a participatory research to understand the gender diversity in the sanitation departments of three municipal corporations of Ajmer, Jhansi and Muzaffarpur. The objective of ECRC is to develop organisations and capacities of urban poor so that they are able to participate in the planning, implementation and monitoring of the sanitation services.

Panel Discussion 1: Diversity in Municipalities

Mr Vivek Gupta, Consultant, PRIA began his presentation by stating that there has not been much work that has been done on diversity assessment in terms of workplaces, especially in Indian context. He conveyed that the study aimed to understand diversity in terms of work force and how it is distributed among the sanitation department of the municipalities.



He went on to explain the Participatory Research methodology which involves doing research with people rather than doing research on the people or for people. He further explained workforce diversity in context of organisation represents the attributes due to which people of an organisation think, behave or work differently. One of the interesting insights that came out of his presentation was Gender diversity is poor in Urban Level Bodies. At the lower levels, there are more women in the staff. However, as we move upwards the ladder, the number of women staff decreases sharply.

He suggested several interventions on the basis of the results of the study:

¹ <https://www.pria.org/projectsdetails-engaged-citizens-responsive-city-30-549>

- Interventions for the sanitation departments of ULB covering workforce intervention and workplace interventions
- Long term and broader interventions like, creating a gender-equal society and developing ULBs as strong organisations.

Mr. Tikendar Singh Panwar, began by saying



that there is a transformation that is taking place and it is in this larger context of transformation that we must understand gender diversity. The driving force of transformation in the cities happens to be privatization. We have 28% of unemployment rate in the country and the largest ones to be affected by it are women.

Through we have 30% reservation for women in elected bodies. But he questions that has that really transformed the cities and caused the empowerment of women in these cities?

He further said that it is not only important to empower the elected bodies. It is also about empowering the common people. Ward Sabha plays a key role in the empowerment of common people. It is in the ward sabhas that a large number of women turn up and voice their opinions. Mr. Tikendar also shared how during his tenure as the deputy mayor, he did

not approve a plan unless and until it was approved by the ward sabha. Thus, eventually ward sabhas started taking place. Also, 10% of the money generated in the wards went to the ward sabha for its empowerment.

He proposed the idea of having an Urban Employment guarantee Act in the cities just like MNREGA in the rural areas and to include all aspects including planning. Also, it should be participatory so that more and more women can participate. He touched the root causes of what we are struggling with right now in the decentralisation and the poor implementation of 74th constitutional amendment act and the related policies we have since the last 28 years. He also touched upon how privatization and is making cities more exclusive than inclusive. It is not only in the sanitation department but in other departments as well, especially at the planning level. He further said that if we don't have women participation at the planning level, we cannot expect women sensitive workplaces and infrastructures in the municipalities.

Professor Subhash C. Kundu argued that diversity is an evolutionary process. He further added that may be today many women are not present at the planning level, but seeing the increase in the education level of women, they



will definitely be a part of the planning process in the future.

Another important thing that he said was that by giving reservations, we are just giving representation and not actually creating diversity. Diversity is competence based. If this competence is compromised, diversity won't be there in its truest sense. Thus, diversity is based on merit and not on the notion of preferring any disadvantaged or marginalised section of the society.

Diversity is the biggest untapped potential in most workplaces. However, we must acknowledge that diversity alone does not provide benefits. An open mindset in culture is required at first and has to be combined with inclusive processes and behaviors.

If we are not giving representation to women in corporates, in the coming 10-15 years, they will lose 50 percent of competence from the market. In 1960s, American researchers said that if an organisation wants to sustain in the market, they must maintain diversity, especially in terms of gender. However, in India, it is still not taken seriously because India is a power distant society and it has labour surplus market.

Panel Discussion 2- Engendering Municipalities

This session had a discussion on Engendering workplaces with a focus on municipalities. The purpose of the session was to draw lessons from other kinds of organisations- private and public sector and also international perspective.

Ms. Nitika Mehta, Partner Corporate International Tax, BSR &Co LLP, KPMG began the discussion by stating that an organisation through its enabling policies, its support, its love and trust that it gives back

makes an employee much stronger to carry out the journey and to say that "I can contribute to this organisation because the organisation has contributed to me". This trust which the employees develop in them about the organisation is the core essence of diversity and inclusivity.

Diversity is just getting them all there. Hiring different people from different walks of life are the easy part. But inclusivity is a much more important ingredient in this entire equation. Inclusivity is creating that environment that creates an enabling situation for the diverse mix to happen. It is about creating a culture and this culture cannot be built overnight.

She shared that at KPMG, inclusivity and diversity is not just a moral obligation, it is a business imperative. KPMG looks at gender diversity in form of five pillars- Gender; Disability; LGBTQ; Multi- generational and Multi- cultural.

She concluded that it has to be interplay of policies and also interplay of removing unconscious biases to create that enabling environment.



Ms. Aya Matsuura, Technical expert at ILO Decent Work Team for South Asia, New Delhi shared with the participants about how the ILO ensures diversity and gender equality. She said that the first and foremost thing that is required to ensure diversity is leadership commitment. Once the leadership commitment is ensured, work can be undertaken towards organisational policies to promote diversity. Once the policies are made, the list of programs of actions to implement those policies has to be made. It is also good to set targets. Baseline is also something that should be taken.



Not carrying out any discriminatory actions is not enough for any organisation. There is a need of active policy and practice in terms of recruitment. For instance, if there is a vacancy that is to be filled, and only men have applied for that post. Then, we shouldn't just go ahead and hire men saying that women are not interested in the position. We should dig deeper and try to understand why women are not applying for the job. Are there any clauses that are inconvenient for women? Thus, for promoting diversity, additional and proactive actions have to be undertaken to investigate why we are not doing well in that area.

Ms. Nandita Bhatt, Director, Martha Farrell Foundation began by stating the ILO data for

domestic workers which says that 52 million people are employed for domestic work worldwide. Out of them 83% are women. If we look at the data from ULBs, we will find that majority of the sanitation workers are also women. Thus she flagged some important questions for all. Why that is in domestic work, we only want women to do it? Why is it that for sanitation work, we only seek a woman to do it? On the contrary, why is that in the corporate world, we don't find as much women?

She talked about sexual harassment at workplace which is one of the most underreported forms of violence against women. It is also a gender challenge for the workplaces. Article 14,15 and 21 of our constitution talk about equality, freedom, workplace free from discrimination based on sex, religion, gender and race. Sexual harassment is a human rights issue? She however asked, "are we looking at it from that perspective"? The SHW act was enacted in 2013 but its implementation is still not happening properly. Martha Farrell Foundation conducted a RTI based study in 2017 and found out that only 29% of the districts in the country had local committees. Basic and fundamental mechanisms are missing.



She shared that Martha Farrell Foundation works with domestic workers on the issue of sexual harassment at workplace in the NCR region. The domestic workers themselves conducted a study among other domestic

workers and all of them recognized every single form of sexual harassment and also reported having every experienced every one of those forms of sexual harassment. Thus, it is extremely important to have a discussion about how we can build this culture within the ULBs, where discussions can happen.

Key Reflections and Questions:

- Historically, the municipalities have been longer in existence than the zila parishads. Still, why women in Panchayats are more assertive than the women in municipalities? Why the women SHGs in rural areas are more productive and competent than the SHGs in urban areas? Is there any issue related to the organisational culture? Can the culture in the municipalities be detrimental to encouraging gender diversity?
- The findings of the study done by PRIA resonate with the findings of other countries as well.
- There are global studies on the best practices that the ULBs might have adopted in any one of the functions. It may not be sanitation and could be housing or any softer functions where they are able to bring in more women. Can we take these global or national best practices and



replicate them to ULBs?

- Hiring a diverse group of people is easy. But how do we change the mindset of



people who are hiring? The whole concept of creating a culture where people are sensitized that while women go through various life-changing situations, if we are having enabling support system at that time, we can work with them and they can be equally profitable and useful to the organisation.

- It is believed that having women in MSMEs is a risk. So, there has to be a system that subsidizes the risk of having women in MSMEs. The system should give something back in the form of incentives to the smaller organisation for having done that.
- There is a need to create enabling structures for 'Returning- Mothers' where they can be trained on the skills they have missed out so that the gaps can be filled
- We can also push and advocate for policy or mechanisms where having gender equality or organisational diversity is a requirement for getting some kind of benefits from the government.
- Most of the Smart City Proposals just replicate the existing past structures. So, the questions like diversity and gender equality doesn't get addressed. Although some of the Smart City proposals have the mention of women associations, but they are very few.

Annexure I: Workshop Design

10.30 - 11.00 am	Registration
11.00 - 11.10 am	Welcome and Introduction- Ms Shashi Shikha, Senior Program Officer, PRIA
11.10- 01.00 pm	Panel Discussion 1 Diversity in Municipalities Moderator – Dr Anshuman Karol, Sr. Programme Manager, PRIA Mr Vivek Gupta, Consultant, PRIA - Presentation on Workplace Diversity Assessment with special reference to Gender Perspective at Sanitation Department of Municipal Corporations Discussants <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prof Subhash C Kundu, Professor, Haryana School of Business, Guru Jambheshwar University of Science and Technology, Hisar, Haryana• Mr Tikender Singh Panwar, Former Deputy Mayor, Shimla, Municipal Corporation Q & A
01.00- 02.00 pm	Lunch
02.00- 03.30 pm	Panel Discussion 2 Engendering Municipalities Chair and Moderator - Dr Kaustuv Kanti Bandyopadhyay, Director, PRIA Discussants <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ms Nikita Mehta, Partner-Corporate International Tax, BSR & Co LLP, KPMG• Ms Aya Matsuura, Technical Expert at ILO Decent Work Team for South Asia, New Delhi• Ms Nandita Bhatt, Director, Martha Farrell Foundation Q & A
03.30- 04.00 pm	Setting Future Agenda
04.00- 04.05 pm	Vote of thanks

Annexure II: List of Participants

S. No.	Name	Designation	Organization
1	Aarti Upadhyay	Assistant Program Manager	PRIA
2	Aditi Surie	Senior Associate- Academics and Research	IIHS
3	Amit Bhatt	Program Manager	PRIA
4	Anshuman Karol	Senior Programme Manager	PRIA
5	Anupama Ramaswamy		Athena Infonomics
6	Areeba Khalid	Assistant Program Officer	PRIA
7	Avantika Arjuna		ICLEI
8	Aya Matsuura	Technical Expert	ILO Decent Work Team for South Asia
9	Bindu Baby	Assistant General Manager	PRIA
10	Chhaya Bhanti	Founder, Creative Director	VERTIVER, New Delhi
11	Deboshree Mohanta	Senior Program Officer	PRIA
12	Himani Singh	Program Officer	Martha Farrell Foundation
13	Jigme Dechen Garwang	Research Assistant (Intern)	PRIA
14	Kaustuv Kanti Bandyopadhyay	Director	PRIA
15	Mukesh George		Smile Foundation
16	Nandita Bhatt	Director	Martha Farrell Foundation
17	Nikita Rakhyani	Program Officer	PRIA
18	Nitika Mehta	Partner-Corporate International Tax	KPMG
19	Paramita Datta Dey	Senior Research Officer	National Institute of Urban Affairs
20	Pooja Pandey	Program Officer	PRIA
21	Prakriti Sharma		Athena Infonomics
22	Prarthana Mitra	Research Assistant - Intern	PRIA
23	Radha Chellappa	Deputy Director - Poverty & Inclusion	Save the Children
24	Rajesh Tandon	President	PRIA
25	Samiksha Jha	Assistant Program Officer	PRIA
26	Sanghmitra Acharya	Professor	JNU
27	Shashi Shikha	Senior Programme Officer	PRIA
28	Shouvik Datta	Programme Manager	European Union
29	Subhash C Kundu	Professor	Guru Jambheshwar University of Science and Technology, Hisar
30	Sujit Sourav	Officer-Knowledge, Management & Learning	PRIA
31	Surbhi Kumar	Program Officer	Martha Farrell Foundation
32	Tanya Dikshit	Program Officer	PRIA
33	Tikender Singh Panwar	Former Deputy Mayor	Shimla Municipal Corporation
34	V. P. Gupta	Director	PRIA
35	Vivek Gupta	Consultant	PRIA
36	Yashvi Sharma	Program Officer	PRIA