

Workshop Report: Gender at Work – Building Respectful, Inclusive Workspaces

Date & Time: 24 March 2026,

10:30 AM – 4:30 PM

Venue: Indian Adult Education Association (IAEA) House, New Delhi



Session 1: Setting the Stage – Gender Sensitization

Time: 11:00 AM – 12:30 AM

Resource Person: Dr. Sujata, Associate Professor, Shyamal College, University of Delhi

Session Chair – Mrs. Nishat Farooq, Former Director, State Resource Centre, Jamia Milia Islamia

Session Overview

In the opening session, Dr. Sujata provided a conceptual understanding of gender as a socially constructed phenomenon that shapes everyday behaviours, expectations, and opportunities. Through interactive exercises, participants were encouraged to reflect on their own perceptions and internalized norms.

Objectives of the Session

- To introduce the concept of gender and its social construction
- To examine how gender roles influence daily life and decision-making



- To critically reflect on societal expectations and stereotypes
- To understand how silence and social conditioning reinforce inequality

Session Activities & Discussions

Exercise A: “A Typical Day in a Married Woman’s Life (Urban Indian Setting)”

Participants were asked to map a typical day of a married working woman in an urban Indian context.

Key reflections from participants:

- Women manage multiple roles simultaneously—household responsibilities, caregiving, and professional work
- Their work, especially unpaid domestic labor, often goes unrecognized and undervalued
- Even when employed, women are expected to take primary responsibility for home management
- A common perception emerged that women with multiple responsibilities “have more issues,” which was critically discussed as a biased societal assumption
- It was emphasized that jobs and responsibilities should be equally shared, and the burden should not fall disproportionately on women



Exercise B: “What People Will Say”

This activity explored how societal judgment shapes gendered behavior.

Participant responses highlighted:

- Pressure to conform to socially accepted norms of appearance, behavior, and roles
- For men: expectations of being financially strong, decisive, and dominant
- For women: expectations around being well-dressed, polite, modest, and socially “appropriate”
- Decision-making authority is often associated with men, especially in financial matters

- Social approval (“*log kya kahenge*”) acts as a powerful control mechanism, limiting individual freedom and reinforcing stereotypes

Exercise C: “Don’t Tell Anyone – How Silence Shapes Our Gender”

This exercise focused on the role of silence in sustaining gender inequalities.

Key insights:

- Participants noted that issues like eve-teasing, harassment, and abuse are often silenced and dismissed as “personal matters” (“*ghar ki baat*”)
- Silence is socially encouraged, especially for women, to maintain family reputation and avoid conflict
- This normalization of silence leads to underreporting of issues and continuation of injustice
- The discussion emphasized that breaking silence is essential for challenging gender based discrimination and violence



Key Learnings from the Session

- Gender roles are not natural but socially constructed and reinforced through everyday practices
- Women’s contributions, particularly in the domestic sphere, remain largely invisible and undervalued
- Societal expectations significantly influence individual choices and behaviors
- Silence acts as a powerful tool in sustaining inequality and discrimination
- There is a need to challenge stereotypes, redistribute responsibilities, and encourage open dialogue

Session 2: Understanding Gender & Workplace Norms

Time: 12:30 AM – 1.30 PM

Resource Person: Prof. Rajyalakshmi, Professor, Janki Devi Memorial College (JDMC), University of Delhi

Session Chair : Dr. Gyanendra Kumar, President, Voluntary Health Association, Delhi

Session Overview

This session focused on understanding how gender biases operate within workplace structures and practices. Prof. Rajyalakshmi highlighted that despite progress in education and employment, deep-rooted gender biases continue to influence hiring, role allocation, promotions, and everyday workplace interactions.



Objectives of the Session

- To understand the difference between gender and workplace norms
- To identify visible and invisible forms of gender bias in professional spaces
- To examine how institutional practices reinforce inequality
- To encourage critical reflection on fairness, equity, and inclusion at work

Session Discussions & Key Themes

Understanding Gender Bias in the Workplace

The session began with a discussion on how gender bias is often **subtle, normalized, and embedded** in workplace systems. Participants explored how stereotypes about men and women influence perceptions of capability, leadership, and commitment.

Types of Workplace Gender Bias

1. Hiring and Selection Bias

- Biases often appear during recruitment processes
- Employers may prefer male candidates for roles perceived as “demanding”
- Women are sometimes evaluated based on assumptions about **marriage, family responsibilities, or continuity at work**
- Selection decisions are not always merit-based but influenced by **gendered expectations**

2. Interview-Level Bias

- Women are frequently asked questions related to **marriage, maternity plans, and family responsibilities**
- Such questions reflect an assumption that women may not be “stable” or “long-term” employees
- These practices were discussed as discriminatory and limiting women’s opportunities

3. Maternity and Career Progression Bias

- Maternity leave, though a right, is often viewed negatively in workplaces
- Women may face **reduced responsibilities, slower promotions, or career breaks** due to maternity
- The burden of caregiving is disproportionately placed on women, reinforcing inequality

4. Salary and Pay Gap

- Persistent **gender pay gap** across sectors
- Women are often paid less than men for similar roles and responsibilities
- Lack of transparency in salary structures further deepens inequality

5. Role Allocation and Work Distribution

- Women are often assigned roles aligned with stereotypical expectations (e.g., supportive or administrative tasks)
- Men are more likely to be given leadership or decision-making roles
- This creates unequal opportunities for growth and recognition

Session 3: Legal Awareness – POSH Act, Prevention and Redressal Mechanisms

Time: 2:30 PM – 3:30 PM

Resource Person: Advocate Nilofar Khan, Advocate, Supreme Court

Session Chair: Dr. Geeta Mishra, Associate Professor, Department of Continuing Education and Extension, University of Delhi

Session Overview

This session focused on legal awareness regarding workplace sexual harassment, with a detailed discussion on the **Prevention of Sexual Harassment (POSH) Act**. Advocate Nilofar Khan explained the legal framework, complaint mechanisms, institutional responsibilities, and challenges in implementation. The session emphasized the importance of awareness and access to justice in creating safe workplaces.

Objectives of the Session

- To familiarize participants with the POSH Act and its provisions
- To understand the complaint and redressal mechanisms available at workplaces
- To explain the structure and role of Internal Complaints Committees (ICC)

- To highlight challenges in implementation and access to justice
- To encourage reporting and accountability

Session Discussions & Key Themes

Understanding the POSH Act

- The POSH Act provides a legal framework to prevent and address sexual harassment at the workplace
- It defines sexual harassment broadly, including physical, verbal, and non-verbal conduct
- The law applies to all workplaces—organized and unorganized sectors



Historical Background: Vishakha Guidelines & Bhanwari Devi Case

- The session traced the origin of the POSH Act to the landmark Vishakha Guidelines
- These guidelines were framed by the Supreme Court to address the absence of specific laws on workplace harassment
- The case of Bhanwari Devi was discussed as a turning point, highlighting the urgent need for legal protection for women at workplaces

Internal Complaints Committee (ICC)

- Every organization with 10 or more employees must constitute an ICC
- Composition of ICC:
 - Presiding Officer (a senior woman employee)
 - At least two members from the employees
 - One external member (NGO or legal expert)
- The ICC is responsible for:
 - Receiving complaints
 - Conducting inquiries
 - Recommending action

Complaint Mechanism & Process

- A complaint must be filed within a **stipulated time period** (generally within 3 months of the incident)
- The process includes:
 - Submission of written complaint
 - Inquiry by ICC
 - Opportunity for both parties to be heard
- Confidentiality must be maintained throughout the process
- The aim is to ensure **fair, unbiased, and timely resolution**

Role of District Authorities

- In organizations with **less than 10 employees**, or where ICC is not constituted, complaints can be made to the **Local Complaints Committee (LCC)**
- The District Magistrate plays a role in:
 - Constituting LCCs
 - Ensuring implementation of the Act at the district level
 - Providing access to justice for employees in smaller establishments

Challenges in Implementation

- Lack of awareness about the POSH Act among employees
- Fear of stigma, retaliation, or job loss prevents reporting
- Inadequate or improper constitution of ICCs
- Bias or lack of sensitivity during inquiry processes
- Organizational reluctance to address complaints transparently

Key Learnings from the Session

- Legal awareness is crucial for ensuring safe and respectful workplaces
- The POSH Act provides a structured mechanism for prevention and redressal
- Proper functioning of ICCs is essential for justice delivery
- Confidentiality and sensitivity are key in handling complaints
- There is a need to strengthen implementation and awareness at all levels
- Breaking silence and reporting incidents is critical for systemic change

Session 4: Envisioning an Inclusive Workplace – Do's and Don'ts

Resource Person: Dr. Chayanika Uniyal, *Assistant Professor, Dept. of History, Shayama Prasad Mukharji College, University of Delhi*

Time : 3.30-4.30 PM

Focus: Building a Gender-Sensitive and Inclusive Workplace

The final session, led by Ms. Chayanika Uniyal, was highly interactive and solution-oriented, focusing on participants' perspectives on what an ideal workplace should look like. Drawing from participants' responses and group discussions, the session emphasized practical approaches to fostering an equitable, respectful, and inclusive work environment.

The session began with participants being divided into groups and encouraged to reflect on their own workplace experiences and expectations. They were asked to identify



key elements that promote inclusivity as well as practices that hinder a positive work culture.

Key Insights from Group Discussions:

Group 1:

- Emphasized the need for flexibility in work, ensuring that roles and responsibilities are not rigidly defined by gender.
- Highlighted that facilities and opportunities should be equal for all employees, irrespective of gender.

Group 2:

- Suggested that POSH training and gender sensitization should be integrated into induction programs, ensuring awareness from the very beginning.
- Stressed the importance of clear and respectful communication among employees.
- Called for transparency in organizational processes, including decision-making and grievance redressal.

Group 3:

- Focused on maintaining professionalism and a healthy work culture.
- Highlighted the importance of awareness of laws and rights, especially related to workplace safety and equality.
- Strongly emphasized zero tolerance for discrimination based on caste, gender, religion, or any other identity.

Do's and Don'ts for an Inclusive Workplace:

Do's:

- Promote equality and fairness in recruitment, roles, and growth opportunities
- Ensure awareness and implementation of workplace policies like POSH
- Encourage open communication and safe spaces for dialogue
- Provide equal access to facilities and resources
- Build a culture of respect, professionalism, and accountability

Don'ts:

- Avoid gender stereotyping in roles and responsibilities
- Do not tolerate discrimination or biased behavior
- Refrain from suppressing voices or discouraging reporting of issues
- Avoid lack of transparency in decision-making processes
- Do not ignore the importance of continuous sensitization and training

Dr. Niyal concluded the session by reinforcing that creating an inclusive workplace is a shared responsibility, requiring commitment from both individuals and institutions. She encouraged participants to actively practice these principles in their professional spaces.

Conclusion of the Programme:

The session concluded with a Vote of Thanks delivered by Ms. Neha Gupta, Documentation Officer, IAEA, who expressed gratitude to all the resource persons, participants, and organizers for their valuable contributions and active engagement throughout the sessions.



Participants' feedback was also collected, reflecting their appreciation for the interactive nature of the workshop and the practical insights gained on gender sensitization and workplace inclusivity. Certificates were distributed to all participants and resource persons.

Overall workshop feedback

- **Overall Organization:** 70% of participants rated it as *excellent*, indicating the workshop was very well organized. 25% rated it as *good*, and 5% as *average*.
- **Relevance of Topics:** 65% rated the topics as *excellent*, reflecting strong appreciation for the content. 30% rated it as *good*, and 5% as *average*.
- **Quality of Speakers:** 65% rated the speakers as *excellent*, 30% as *good*, and 5% as *average*.
- **Clarity of Presentations:** 60% rated presentations as *excellent*, 30% as *good*, and 10% as *average*, indicating overall clear and effective delivery.
- **Interactive Activities:** 70% rated activities as *excellent*, highlighting strong engagement. 25% rated them as *good*, and 5% as *average*.

Learning outcomes

- **Understanding of Gender Issues:** 45% of participants *strongly agreed* that their understanding improved, 45% *agreed*, and 10% were *neutral*.
- **Confidence in Identifying Bias:** 55% *strongly agreed* their confidence increased, 30% *agreed*, and 3% were *neutral*.
- **POSH and Workplace Policy Awareness:** 40% *strongly agreed* their awareness improved, 55% *agreed*, and 5% were *neutral*.

Reflection

Participants highlighted that the workshop provided valuable information on the POSH Act, women's rights, women empowerment, and gender sensitization for staff. It enhanced understanding of workplace policies and emphasized the importance of fostering a respectful and inclusive environment. The sessions were insightful, engaging, and practical, helping participants effectively recognize and address gender biases.

Recommendations

They recommended conducting such workshops regularly to reinforce awareness and skills among employees. Additionally, they expressed that they would highly recommend this workshop to others, as it supports both personal growth and the development of a more equitable workplace culture.