Improving Workplace Conditions for women in Renewable Energy Industry

VOLUME 1 – Office

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- **compiled by- Catherine Leon**

BACKGROUND

Diversity fuels innovation, resilience, and growth, making it essential in renewable energy, where creative solutions are crucial for addressing climate change. Although the RE sector holds enormous potential for women's participation, a significant gender gap persists. Women remain underrepresented across various levels of the RE value chain, from technical and field positions to leadership roles. For the sector to maximize its contributions to a clean, secure, and sustainable future, closing this gender gap is critical. Women bring unique perspectives that can accelerate the transition to sustainable energy and expand solutions for energy access and efficiency, thus playing a crucial role as change agents in this pivotal industry.

According to the World Energy Transitions Outlook 2022 by the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), by 2030, the energy transition could generate approximately 112 million jobs globally, with around 38 million in renewable energy. This growth represents an unprecedented opportunity to reskill and diversify the workforce, enabling balanced, inclusive progress toward climate goals. However, women currently represent only one-third of the global RE workforce, facing barriers to education, technical training, and opportunities for advancement.

Gender inequalities are often driven by unequal access to skills, insufficient organizational support, and limited pathways to leadership.
. In India, these disparities are even more pronounced. Women make up a mere 11% of the RE workforce, significantly lower than the global average of 32%.[1] This gap reflects structural challenges rooted in historical male dominance in the energy sector, coupled

[1] https://www.iea.org/reports/women-working-in-the-rooftop-solar-sector

with restricted access for women to skill-building resources and networks. Moreover, a recent study [2] by McKinsey estimates that empowering women to participate in India's economy on an equal basis with men could add $3 trillion to the national GDP by 2025. By promoting gender equality in RE, the sector not only stands to benefit socially and economically but also to unlock a diverse talent pool crucial for innovation and sustainable growth.

Private sector entities in India's RE sector are in a unique position to drive this change. By fostering a gender-responsive work culture, these organizations can directly address structural disparities and promote a more inclusive RE landscape. Embracing gender-sensitive hiring policies, establishing fair promotion practices, and ensuring women's representation across the value chain—particularly in leadership—are vital steps toward structural reforms that align with global sustainable development goals (SDGs). Inclusive practices in RE will create an environment that values all contributions, regardless of gender, race, or background, thereby enhancing the sector's capacity to meet future challenges.

[2] https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/employment-and-growth/the-power-of-parity-advancing-womens-equality-in-india

ABOUT WISE

The National Solar Energy Federation of India (NSEFI) recognized the pressing need for a dedicated forum promoting gender inclusivity within the Renewable Energy (RE) sector, leading to the establishment of the Women in Solar Energy (WISE) initiative in 2022. Supported by the BSW – German Solar Association and the Skill Council for Green Jobs (SCGJ), WISE is designed to promote skill development across the renewable energy landscape and aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to ensure equal opportunities in the green energy transition. WISE aims to drive gender equity across the RE sector through programs and resources that focus on capacity building, policy advocacy, and career guidance specifically for women professionals.

In September 2022, WISE held its inaugural committee meeting, bringing together senior leaders from member organizations to conceptualize and map out the program's objectives for the upcoming year. This meeting set the initiative's foundation as a major milestone in the Indian RE landscape, establishing a roadmap to support women's growth and leadership within the industry. The initiative formally launched in November 2022 at the annual event "Women in Energy - Empowering India," inaugurated by the Honorable Finance Minister of India, Ms. Nirmala Sitharaman. The event saw the participation of several key figures in Indian RE, including Dr. Vandana Kumar, former Additional Secretary at MNRE, and Ms. Suman Sharma, Managing Director of SECI, as well as representatives from various women's organizations across the country.

During the launch event, the WISE Portal was introduced—a comprehensive platform that centralizes resources, job opportunities, leadership development tools, and career guidance for women in the Indian RE sector. Designed to be a one-stop resource hub, the portal supports women from diverse backgrounds by offering guidance, training, and mentoring opportunities. Its reach extends to an average of 20-25 monthly users, with

participation from both industry professionals and semi-urban entrepreneurial women seeking institutional support. At the launch event, SEWA sisters shared inspiring grassroots stories about the transformative effects of renewable energy in their businesses, highlighting how using solar and biogas technologies not only boosted profitability but also facilitated business growth, inspiring attendees with examples of renewable energy's impact on the lives of women entrepreneurs.

By the end of 2022, WISE hosted a significant panel discussion featuring leaders in sustainability, climate change, renewable energy, and start-ups, further underscoring the need for initiatives like WISE in addressing gender gaps across the sector.

In September 2023, the WISE Committee reconvened in a virtual meeting to discuss its upcoming focus areas and solidify a roadmap for the next year. The group collectively decided to initiate a comprehensive study on "Improving Working Conditions for Women in the RE Sector." This multi-phased study, beginning with "Women in RE in Urban Office Settings," will progressively explore other environments like manufacturing floors and installation sites, seeking to understand the unique conditions and challenges faced by women across the renewable energy value chain.

The study officially began in October 2023 with an internal discussion that established the study's core areas. Attended by WISE Committee members, chairs, HR professionals, and representatives from renewable energy organizations, the meeting laid the groundwork for the study's direction. In November 2023, an anonymous online survey was distributed across the industry, collecting quantitative data on the current workplace conditions for women in RE.

In January 2024, WISE conducted a workshop to explore qualitative insights as part of the study "Improving Workplace Conditions for Women in RE Office Settings." This interactive session brought together women professionals across RE to discuss workplace challenges, share best practices, and identify actionable strategies for building inclusivity and gender equity within the sector.

Building on the insights from the workshop and baseline survey data, WISE has compiled this report to provide recommendations that encourage gender-sensitive policies, aiming to foster more supportive workplaces and empower women to succeed in the RE sector.

With its continued focus on advocacy, capacity-building, and resource accessibility, WISE strives to create an inclusive environment where women are equipped to lead, innovate, and contribute meaningfully to the RE sector's growth. As renewable energy continues to expand, WISE's role in promoting gender equity remains crucial for ensuring a balanced, socially sustainable transition in India's green energy journey.

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

The renewable energy sector is positioned to play a central role in India's transition to sustainable energy sources and its efforts to combat climate change. Despite the renewable energy sector's promising potential, women are still notably underrepresented, especially in technical, managerial, and leadership roles. To address these disparities and ensure that the sector fully benefits from a diverse talent pool, the National Solar Energy Federation of India (NSEFI), under its Women in Solar Energy (WISE) initiative, launched a study to assess and improve working conditions for women in RE.

This study, conducted in January 2024, is designed to systematically understand the barriers that women face in the RE sector and through a combination of quantitative and qualitative data collection methods, the study aims to develop actionable strategies that address these challenges, fostering a more supportive and equitable workplace for women.

CONTEXT AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

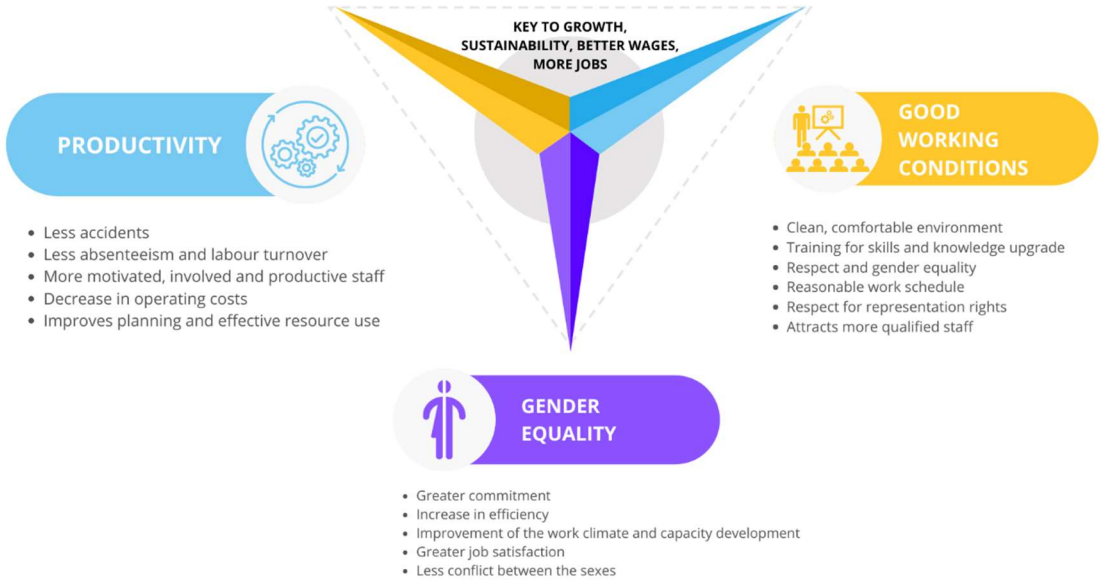
India's RE sector is set to grow substantially over the next decade, with a projected increase in job opportunities across various areas, from solar, wind, hydro, biomass, green hydrogen etc. This rapid expansion brings with it the potential to diversify the workforce, providing new opportunities for women to contribute to and benefit from the sector's growth. To maximize this potential, the study was launched with the goal of documenting the current state of working conditions for women in the office setting in the RE sector and identifying areas for improvement.

The initial phase of the study consisted of a baseline survey conducted in urban office settings. This survey gathered quantitative data on various aspects of the work

environment, including job satisfaction, career growth opportunities, training access, and health and safety measures. These findings provided an initial overview of the current scenario of women in workplace and set the foundation for subsequent stages of the study.

Building on the survey data, the study advanced to a qualitative phase that included a series of workshops. These workshops brought together women from various organizations in RE industry working in the urban office setting, allowing them to share their experiences, discuss challenges in detail, and offer recommendations for improvement.

The overarching objective of this study is to provide a detailed understanding of the workplace conditions in the RE sector and to not only to document them but also to provide clear, practical recommendations that organizations and the broader RE sector can adopt to create a more equitable and inclusive workplace.

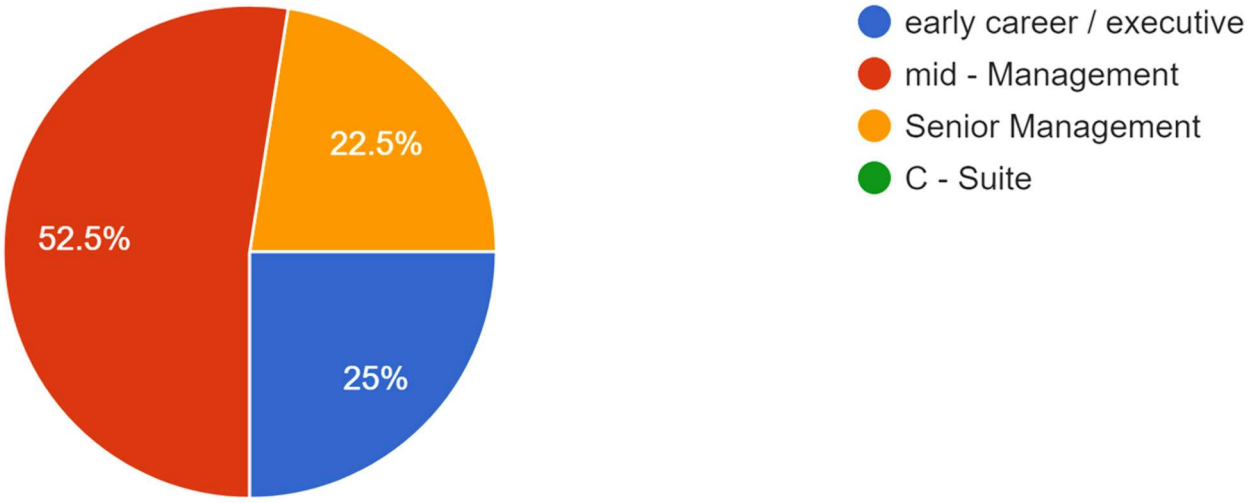


IL0 PARAMETERS FOR GOOD WORKING CONDITIONS

BASELINE SURVEY

1. DEMOGRAPHIC INSIGHTS

The survey conducted for the women working in the renewable energy sector at the office level reveals key insights into workplace conditions, training opportunities, safety measures, and overall satisfaction levels. Participants ranged across different levels of management, from early career executives to senior management, and represented various organizations within the sector. The survey aimed to understand the current state of workplace environments, the experiences, challenges, and needs of female employees in the renewable energy sector focusing on factors critical to the well-being and professional growth of women employees.



The survey began with a demographic survey, the respondents varied across different levels of experience and job positions, ranging from early career to senior management.

Most respondents belonged to mid-management positions, with varying years of experience from less than 5 years to more than 25 years.

2. TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

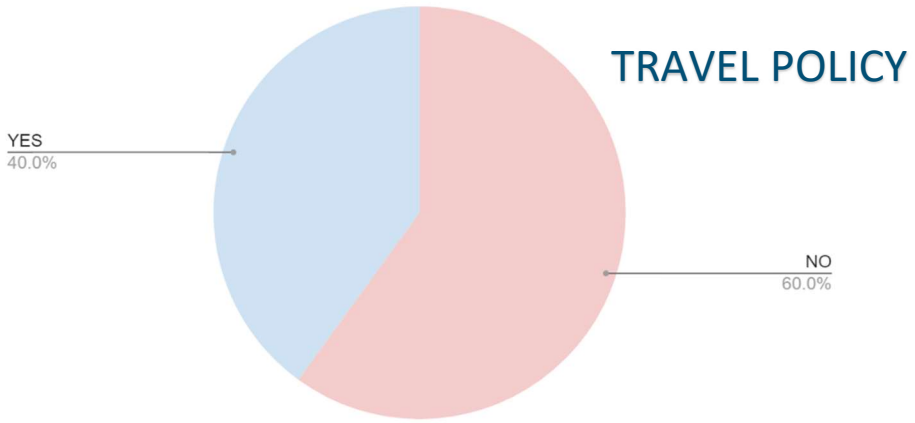
A majority of respondents indicated they had access to training and development programs within their organizations. These programs ranged from industry-specific knowledge on trends in renewable energy sectors like wind, solar, and hydrogen, to statutory training like POSH (Prevention of Sexual Harassment), HSSE (Health, Safety, Security, and Environment), and individual skill development (communication, leadership, team management, etc.). It is commendable efforts across various organizations to support women in the renewable energy sector via training and development programs with about 81.8% [3]women are being trained. Those who participated in these programs generally believed that they contributed positively to their career progression. However, significant gaps remain, especially on training opportunities that are being provided for industry related trainings which is a contributing factor to women not accelerating in the industry and being stuck in the mid-management level. Highlighting the need for more comprehensive targeted training interventions,

[3] **NSEFI, Survey for Women Employees on Workplace Conditions, 2023**

particularly in emerging areas of the industry and in personal development areas like mental health and work-life balance

3. SAFETY AND SECURITY IN THE WORKPLACE

About 90% respondents reported satisfaction with the physical security measures and access controls in their workplaces, indicating that organizations have generally succeeded in creating a secure environment. However, a few respondents expressed concerns, indicating incidents of safety breaches, although these were not widespread. Only a few organizations have a specific travel policy for women, which highlights a gap in addressing the unique safety concerns women may face during work-related travel. This is an area that could benefit from more attention, particularly in regions or situations where travel poses higher risks.



4. HEALTH AND WELL-BEING SUPPORT

A significant number of respondents were aware of mental health support services provided by their organizations. However, there were also calls for more proactive measures, such as routine mental health check-ups, stress management workshops, and counseling services. The lack of awareness about these services in some organizations also suggests the need for better communication and promotion of available resources.

Many respondents suggested the addition or improvement of health benefits, particularly those addressing women's specific health needs. Suggestions included routine examinations for breast and cervical cancer, comprehensive medical check-ups, and

support for managing conditions like PCOS, menopause, and hormonal imbalances. Some organizations already provide period leaves, sanitary products, and access to medical consultations, but these were not universally available.

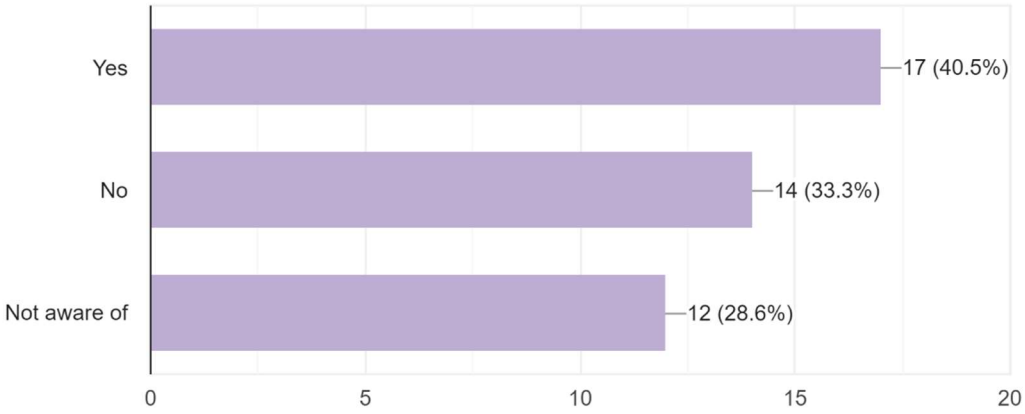
Respondents emphasized the need for various initiatives to enhance health and well-being in the workplace. Key recommendations include offering one-day period leave or six days per year for period leaves, access to tampons or sanitary napkins, painkillers, heating pads and pain relief roll-ons, and flexible Work from Home options for women during menstrual cycles. A well-tailored health check-up scheme, and awareness sessions on lesser-discussed topics with a comprehensive and routine medical check-ups for breast and cervical cancer examinations were highlighted as crucial needs. The importance of one-on-one therapy & counseling sessions along with a stronger focus on fitness, self-care to help manage work and home responsibilities to facilitate a work-life balance was also highlighted. Additionally, respondents suggested POSH training and A strong and robust need for female health policy was also stressed to better support for conditions like PCOD, PCOS, maternity care, hormonal imbalance, and menopause.

Awareness and implementation of the Maternity Benefit Act of 2017, which mandates 26 weeks of maternity leave, were widely acknowledged. However, not all organizations had provisions for a designated private mother's room for nursing mothers, indicating an area for improvement in supporting new mothers at work. To further support women post-maternity and ensure comfort and immediate care, the provision of resting rooms, and flexible work hours were proposed.

5. *Gender Equality and Fair Compensation*

Respondents were divided on whether their compensation was competitive and fair compared to their male colleagues. This perception of inequality is a critical issue that

organizations need to address to ensure that compensation practices are transparent and equitable.



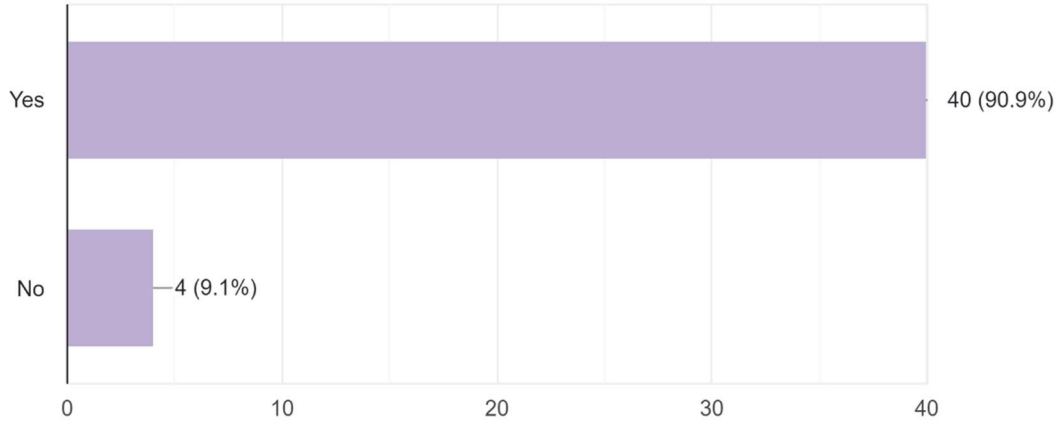
The survey revealed that some respondents had experienced or witnessed gender-based discrimination in their workplaces. This highlights the ongoing challenges of achieving true gender equality in the workplace, despite existing policies and frameworks intended to prevent such discrimination. Addressing the perception of unfair compensation and gender-based discrimination should be a priority. Organizations need to ensure transparency in their compensation practices and take active measures to eliminate any form of discrimination.

6. Handling of Sexual Harassment and Grievance Redressal

majority of organizations have internal committees to handle sexual harassment cases, in compliance with POSH guidelines. However, the effectiveness and awareness of

these committees varied, with some respondents unaware of the specific processes or the existence of these bodies.

Although most respondents reported that they had not witnessed or experienced sexual harassment, the few who did emphasize the need for stronger enforcement of policies and more accessible grievance redressal mechanisms. The grievance redressal systems in place were generally considered effective by the respondents who were aware of them. However, there was a call for more gender-specific grievance redressal mechanisms, as many systems were perceived as too general or not adequately supportive of women. There is a need for more awareness and accessibility of internal committees handling sexual harassment cases. Additionally, organizations could benefit from



establishing gender-specific grievance redressal systems to provide more tailored support for women facing workplace challenges.

KEY FINDINGS

This chapter explores the Key Findings highlighted by survey data and insights gathered throughout the study. While significant progress has been made in addressing the needs of female employees in the renewable energy sector, there are still several areas that require improvement. By enhancing training programs, improving safety and security measures, expanding health and well-being support, ensuring gender equality, and strengthening grievance redressal systems, organizations can create a more inclusive and supportive environment for their female workforce. These steps are not only essential for achieving gender equality but also for fostering an inclusive and empowering work environment with a more productive and engaged workforce in the renewable energy sector

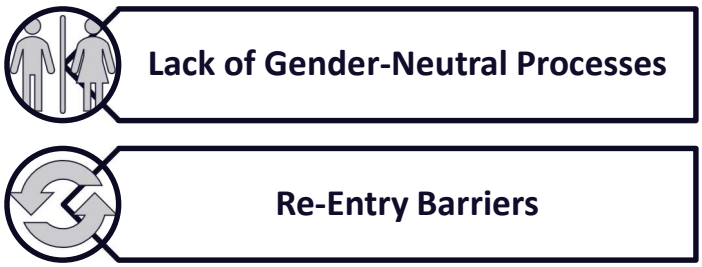
WORK CLIMATE

A significant challenge for women in RE is an unsupportive work climate that lacks psychological safety and offers limited growth opportunities. Many women report feelings of isolation, especially in male-dominated teams or fieldwork settings, which are prevalent throughout the sector. This sense of isolation often leads to imposter syndrome—a feeling of self-doubt despite being qualified and capable. Around 75% of

women in the sector experience imposter syndrome, largely due to insufficient mentorship, limited support from leadership, and biases that undermine their contributions.

This lack of support discourages women from seeking growth opportunities and engaging in team discussions, thereby stalling career progression. Furthermore, without access to mentorship programs, women lack the guidance necessary to navigate challenges, which men can often overcome through informal professional networks. Many women are also overlooked for high-visibility projects, such as those involving travel or hands-on field assignments, as they are assumed to be less capable or willing to take on demanding roles. This exclusion limits their exposure to crucial career experiences, hindering both personal growth and industry visibility

BIASES IN HIRING AND PROMOTION



Biases in hiring and promotion practices pose another significant barrier to women in RE. Although many companies have diversity and inclusion (D&I) policies, these policies often lack specific provisions to ensure fair recruitment and evaluation. Women, particularly those with family obligations, encounter biased hiring practices and interview questions about their marital status or family plans—questions rarely posed to male candidates. This reinforces stereotypes around women's availability and commitment to their careers, further discouraging qualified women from entering or advancing within the sector.

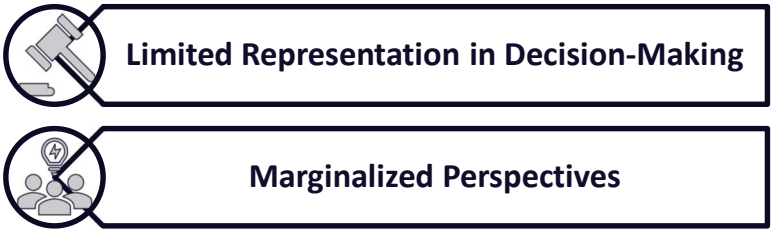
The baseline survey also revealed that women frequently experience career stagnation following maternity leave or family-related breaks. Despite their qualifications, women returning to work are often assigned to lower-paying or less visible roles, impacting their long-term career growth and financial stability. Additionally, the absence of formal re-entry programs limits opportunities for women to regain career momentum after a break. Women seeking leadership roles face similar challenges, as they are often sidelined in favor of male colleagues who are perceived to be better suited for executive positions. Without clear promotion criteria or unbiased evaluation, many qualified women miss opportunities for growth and advancement, reinforcing gender imbalances within senior roles.

PAY DISPARITIES

Pay disparity remains a critical issue in RE, with women often earning less than their male counterparts despite performing similar roles. This disparity is particularly pronounced in positions requiring travel or fieldwork, where women are often bypassed based on unfounded assumptions about their availability or capabilities. Career breaks for family care, especially maternity leave, further widen this gap. Upon returning, women frequently find themselves at a financial disadvantage, as they are often assigned lower-paying roles or receive minimal pay adjustments. This affects not only their immediate earnings but also their long-term financial security, including retirement savings.

Lack of transparency in pay practices further compounds the problem. While some companies conduct pay audits to address wage gaps, these audits are often infrequent and lack clear follow-through, leaving women uncertain about whether their compensation is truly equitable. The resulting pay inequity impacts job satisfaction and retention, as women may feel undervalued and less motivated to continue in roles where their contributions are not rewarded fairly.

VOICE INEQUALITY IN DECISION MAKING



Voice inequality, or the limited representation of women in decision-making processes, is another substantial challenge in the RE sector. Survey results indicate that women often feel excluded from high-level discussions and strategic decision-making forums, which limits their influence over organizational policies and direction. This exclusion not only marginalizes women's perspectives but also reduces the diversity of thought in decision-making processes, hindering innovation and growth.

Moreover, the survey highlights that many women feel hesitant to express their views in male-dominated environments, which further limits their participation. This lack of representation in decision-making bodies diminishes the likelihood that policies addressing gender equality will be effectively implemented. Additionally, disparities in leadership roles reinforce this imbalance, as male-dominated leadership often lacks awareness of the specific challenges faced by women. This disconnect results in organizational policies that are less responsive to gender-specific issues, perpetuating a cycle of underrepresentation and limited support for women's needs and perspectives.

WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND HEALTH CHALLENGES

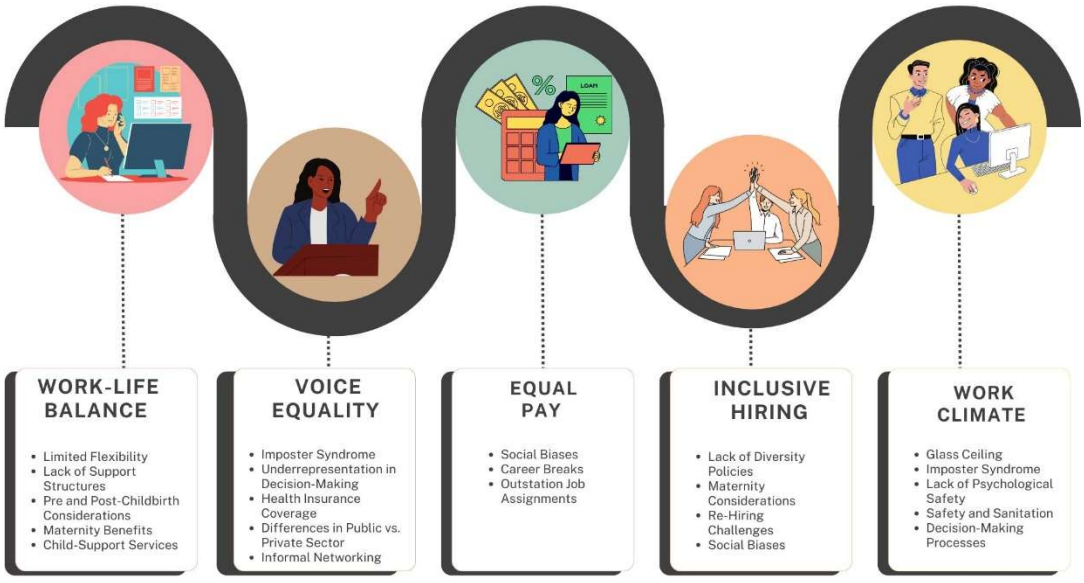
Balancing professional responsibilities with caregiving duties is a critical issue for women in RE. The baseline survey indicated that many women struggle with rigid work schedules, limited access to remote work options, and minimal support for family-related needs. Although flexible work arrangements—such as remote work, part-time roles, and flexible hours—can greatly improve work-life balance, they remain underutilized in the sector. Without flexibility, women face higher levels of stress and difficulty managing both their personal and professional responsibilities, impacting productivity and job satisfaction.

In addition to work-life balance, health and well-being support specifically tailored to women's needs is often lacking. Survey data shows that women feel their health concerns, especially those related to reproductive health, are not adequately addressed by current workplace policies. Access to wellness programs, mental health resources, and women-specific health services, such as gynecological consultations and support for conditions like PCOS or menopause, is limited in many organizations. This lack of support not only affects women's physical health but also reduces their sense of belonging and commitment to the workplace.

Maternity support is another area where the sector falls short. While the Maternity Benefit Act of 2017 mandates maternity leave, many organizations offer only minimal

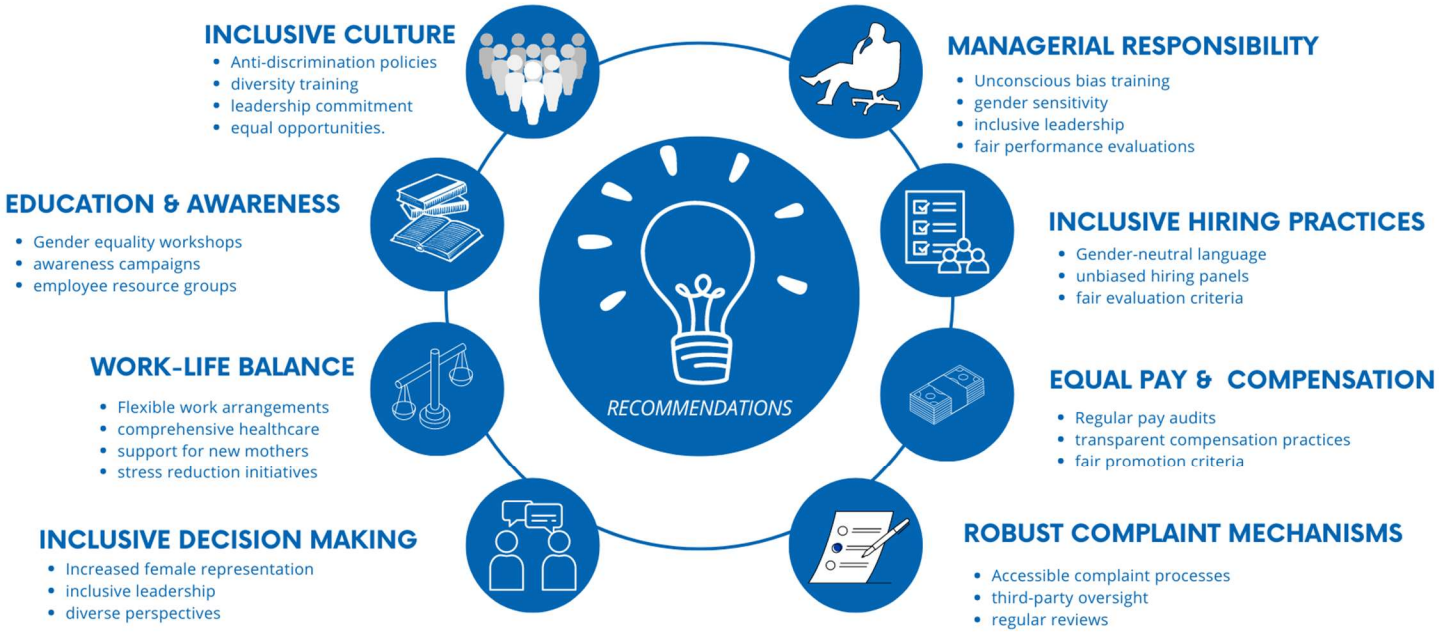
accommodations for new mothers. Survey responses indicate that many workplaces lack facilities like private nursing rooms or flexible return-to-work options, making it difficult for mothers to balance childcare with professional duties. Furthermore, few companies have structured policies for family leave or childcare, placing additional burdens on women as primary caregivers and making it challenging to fully commit to their roles.

Addressing these challenges requires a strategic shift toward comprehensive policies that tackle the deep-rooted gender disparities in the RE sector. By implementing targeted policy interventions and fostering an inclusive environment, the industry can not only bridge these gaps but also empower women to thrive in roles that drive innovation and sustainability. The following chapter outlines key policy suggestions aimed at promoting equitable hiring, fair compensation, supportive work environments, and robust career progression pathways. Together, these policies form a roadmap toward building a diverse workforce that strengthens the sector and aligns with global standards of equality and growth.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Building an equitable workplace for women in the renewable energy (RE) sector requires an integrated approach that combines actionable solutions and policy reforms. Based on the baseline survey findings, the following recommendations and policies aim to address the key challenges women face in RE, including work climate, hiring and promotion, pay equity, voice equality, and work-life balance. By implementing these strategies, the RE sector can foster an inclusive environment that supports all employees' growth and well-being.



GENDER SENSITIZATION

An inclusive work climate is foundational to gender equality in any industry, and the RE sector is no exception. The baseline survey highlighted that women often feel excluded from informal networks and lack the psychological safety needed for career growth. Creating an inclusive culture begins with clear anti-discrimination policies backed by ongoing training. Anti-discrimination policies should be designed to address both overt and subtle biases, ensuring that women are treated fairly in all aspects of their work.

Training sessions that cover gender sensitivity, unconscious bias, and inclusivity are essential for fostering respect across all levels of the organization.

Managers play a crucial role in shaping an inclusive work environment. Given their influence over team dynamics and employee growth, managers must be equipped with tools and training that promote fair and inclusive practices. Training managers to recognize and counteract biases in performance evaluations, promotions, and everyday interactions ensures that they support gender equality proactively. This managerial training should also emphasize psychological safety—creating a space where women feel empowered to share ideas and engage without fear of judgment.

The women are often excluded from informal networking opportunities, which limits their access to career development resources. To address this, companies should establish formal networking and mentorship groups specifically for women. These groups offer support, mentorship, and professional guidance, giving women access to the kinds of networks typically more accessible to their male colleagues. Interdepartmental networking events, workshops, and lunch-and-learn sessions can also broaden connections across various company levels, enhancing visibility for women in the organization. Furthermore, companies should encourage senior leaders, both men and women, to participate in these events to ensure that women have access to influential mentors.

REVAMPING HIRING AND PROMOTION PRACTICES

There is an urgent need for gender-neutral hiring and promotion practices in the renewable energy sector, as biases often restrict women's professional advancement, especially after career breaks. Fair hiring processes should start with clear, inclusive job descriptions that emphasize skills and qualifications without using gendered language or stereotypes. These descriptions should avoid assumptions about physical or emotional suitability, focusing solely on skill-based qualifications to ensure equal opportunities for all candidates.

Blind recruitment practices, where identifying information such as name and gender are omitted from applications, can also help minimize bias during the hiring process. This approach allows recruiters to focus solely on a candidate's skills, qualifications, and experience. Additionally, organizations should train hiring panels on unconscious bias, so interviewers are aware of and can counteract any gender biases. Inclusive hiring practices, supported by continuous monitoring, allow organizations to build a workforce based on merit and diversity.

Career progression must also be equitable and transparent. Women in the survey indicated stagnation in career growth, particularly post-maternity or post-career breaks. Organizations should establish re-entry programs designed to support women returning from career breaks. These programs may include skill-bridging workshops, mentorship, and flexible scheduling options to ease the transition back to full-time work. Structured re-entry pathways send a clear message that the organization values employees' contributions irrespective of temporary absences, encouraging long-term commitment and professional growth for women.

Transparent criteria for promotions are equally critical. Clear, objective benchmarks for career progression prevent favoritism and biases, allowing all employees to understand the requirements for advancement. Organizations can further reinforce fair promotion practices by conducting periodic audits of hiring and promotion data to ensure that women are represented fairly. Holding leadership accountable to these standards fosters a culture of trust and promotes inclusivity within the organization.

ENSURING EQUAL PAY AND FAIR COMPENSATION

The gender pay gap is a persistent issue in RE, with significant disparities in pay between men and women, particularly in roles involving travel or project-based work. Establishing equitable pay practices is essential for gender equality and retention. Organizations should conduct regular pay audits to identify and address any gender-based wage discrepancies. Transparent salary bands for each role provide employees with a clear understanding of their compensation relative to others in the same position, fostering trust and reducing the likelihood of hidden wage gaps.

Pay equity policies must also account for career breaks, particularly for women who take time off for childbirth or caregiving. Structured compensation policies can help ensure that returning women are compensated fairly for their experience and contributions, despite any temporary absences. Additionally, companies should implement policies that facilitate equal access to high-paying assignments, including fieldwork or project-based roles, which are often male-dominated. By assigning these roles based on skills and qualifications rather than gendered assumptions, organizations can create equal growth and earning opportunities for women.

Beyond immediate pay equity, long-term financial security for women must be supported through comprehensive benefits. Organizations should offer retirement plans, bonuses, and other long-term incentives that ensure women's financial stability, particularly for those who may have taken career

breaks. Providing family benefits, such as health insurance that extends to dependents, can also relieve financial stress and increase job satisfaction for women employees.

PROMOTING VOICE EQUALITY

Voice equality, or the fair representation of women in decision-making, emerged as a significant issue in the survey. Many women feel their perspectives are undervalued or ignored in key decisions, which not only impacts individual confidence but also limits the diversity of ideas within organizations. To address this, companies should actively promote women to leadership roles and ensure their participation in high-level decision-making bodies. Policies that mandate a minimum percentage of female representation in leadership positions can help accelerate this shift, normalizing women's presence in critical discussions.

Establishing diversity committees or employee resource groups focused on gender issues provides a formal platform for women to voice concerns, propose solutions, and influence policies. These groups allow women to engage with organizational decision-makers on issues like healthcare, work-life balance, and inclusive practices. Creating these platforms signals the organization's commitment to gender equality, empowering women to drive change within the company.

Mentorship programs tailored to support women's leadership development are another vital aspect of promoting voice equality. Pairing women with senior leaders, particularly female leaders, helps them gain confidence, navigate organizational structures, and develop skills that are critical for leadership. Additionally, giving women equal access to influential networking opportunities within and beyond the organization allows them to build the professional connections essential for career advancement. Organizations can facilitate networking by sponsoring women's attendance at industry events and conferences, ensuring that women's perspectives are well-represented in external forums as well.

Transparent, accessible grievance redressal systems also support voice equality by providing a safe space for addressing workplace issues. The baseline survey revealed that many women hesitate to report grievances due to unclear or ineffective complaint mechanisms. Establishing a robust grievance system that includes third-party oversight helps create a fair, unbiased process for resolving complaints related to discrimination or harassment. Regularly reviewing the effectiveness of the grievance process ensures that it remains responsive to employee needs, fostering a culture of trust and openness.

SUPPORTING WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Work-life balance is a critical issue for women in RE, particularly for those managing family responsibilities alongside their careers. Organizations can address this by implementing flexible work arrangements that support both personal and professional needs. Flexible work options, such as remote work, flexible hours, and job-sharing, enable employees to manage family responsibilities more effectively without compromising their careers. Remote work policies should include provisions that ensure employees working from home have equal access to career development and visibility, ensuring they are not disadvantaged compared to their in-office counterparts.

Health and wellness support tailored to women's specific needs is essential for an inclusive work environment. Many women in the survey indicated a desire for health programs that address issues like mental health, reproductive health, and general well-being. Organizations can meet these needs by offering wellness programs that include mental health counseling, routine health screenings, and support for reproductive health issues. On-site facilities such as lactation rooms and rest areas for pregnant employees provide additional support for women balancing health needs with work responsibilities.

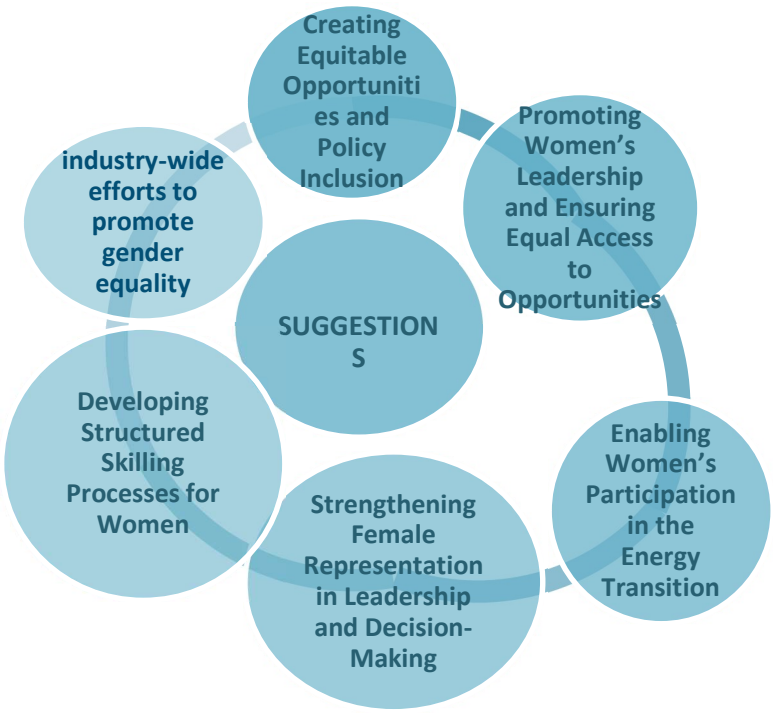
Maternity and family support policies also contribute significantly to work-life balance. Organizations should offer comprehensive maternity leave options that go beyond the minimum legal requirements, including flexible return-to-work policies. Offering paternity leave for partners and extended family leave for caregivers can further support employees managing family responsibilities, reducing the pressure on women to shoulder caregiving duties alone. Childcare services, either on-site or through partnerships with local providers, enable working parents to focus on their jobs, knowing their children are well cared for.

Regular wellness programs, such as fitness classes, yoga sessions, and nutrition counseling, also contribute to a healthy work-life balance. These programs encourage employees to prioritize self-care, which improves mental and physical well-being. Creating a supportive culture where wellness is valued as part of the work environment helps reduce stress and improves job satisfaction, leading to a more engaged and productive workforce.

SHARING BEST PRACTICES

Beyond internal policies, the RE sector can benefit from industry-wide efforts to promote gender equality. Collaboration between companies, industry associations, and non-governmental organizations amplifies individual efforts, creating a more inclusive and equitable industry culture.

Supporting initiatives like the Women in Solar Energy Federation (WISE) program enables companies to exchange best practices, establish standardized policies, and advocate for gender equality on a broader scale. These collaborations build a strong community among women in renewable energy, providing access to resources, mentorship, and professional development across organizations. Partnerships with advocacy groups and NGOs further help organizations develop gender-sensitive policies that promote inclusivity and support.



CONCLUSION

As the global paradigm is shifting towards sustainability, is at a pivotal point where the Indian RE sector must also lead in promoting gender equity. The findings of this study highlight the significant challenges women face in the sector, from gender disparities in leadership roles and pay equity to workplace harassment and health-related concerns. However, they also highlight the tremendous potential for positive change through targeted interventions and industry-wide collaboration.

The WISE initiative's focused group discussions brought to the forefront the urgency of addressing gender disparities in the renewable energy sector. These discussions emphasized the need for a holistic approach that not only involves policy reforms but also drives cultural shifts and implements targeted interventions. By doing so, organizations within the renewable energy sector can create inclusive and equitable workplaces that fully harness the potential of their workforce. Such efforts are not just beneficial for

women—they contribute to the overall productivity and innovation of the sector, driving both social progress and economic prosperity.

Achieving gender equality in the renewable energy sector requires a multifaceted strategy that addresses the unique challenges women face in the workplace. First and foremost, **Gender Sensitization** is critical. This can be achieved by equipping managers with the necessary tools and training to understand and address gender-specific issues. Promoting social awareness within organizations is also crucial, as it helps to mitigate unconscious biases that can hinder women's professional growth. Initiatives such as **gender sensitivity training and inclusive leadership programs can** play a vital role in creating a culture of respect and equality. To support women's professional growth, organizations should prioritize skill enhancement training, which can help women advance in their careers and take on leadership roles within the sector. Health and well-being emerged as a critical area in the study, and prioritizing this aspect is essential for supporting women in the renewable energy sector. Organizations must implement **comprehensive wellness programs** that are tailored to women's needs, including access to menstrual health products, regular screenings for women-specific health issues, and support for reproductive health conditions such as PCOS , Cervical cancer, Breast cancer, etc., Moreover, **enhancing infrastructure for new mothers**, such as providing on-site childcare facilities and allowing flexible work arrangements, will enable women to balance their professional and personal lives more effectively. . Additionally, awareness programs about available wellness initiatives can empower women to take full advantage of the support systems in place. Providing access services to **support groups and counseling** is also essential, as these resources can offer women the guidance and encouragement they need to navigate the challenges of their professional lives. **Flexibility in the work environment** is another critical factor in ensuring that women can thrive in their careers. Offering flexible working hours, remote working options, and part-time

roles can help accommodate the diverse needs of women, especially those with caregiving responsibilities. The study also calls for significant reforms in **organizational structures and policies**. This includes implementing equal pay policies, ensuring transparency in promotion and recruitment processes, and establishing clear guidelines to prevent workplace harassment. Creating mentorship programs and leadership development initiatives tailored specifically for women can help bridge the gap in leadership roles and ensure that women have the opportunity to advance in their careers. **Monitoring and evaluation** are crucial, establishing mechanisms to regularly assess the impact of gender-sensitive policies and practices will ensure that progress is being made and that areas needing improvement are promptly addressed. Feedback from female employees should be actively sought and used to inform ongoing efforts, creating a cycle of continuous improvement.

The importance of collaboration cannot be overstated. The renewable energy sector, characterized by its dynamic and rapidly evolving nature, must embrace collaboration among companies, industry bodies, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to drive the gender equality agenda forward. Sharing best practices, developing industry-wide standards, and participating in initiatives like the WISE program can help build a more inclusive and equitable industry. By working together, the RE industry can ensure that the sector remains at the forefront of social progress, setting a standard for other industries to follow.

The renewable energy sector has a unique opportunity to lead by example in promoting gender equality and inclusion. By adopting the comprehensive recommendations outlined in this report—ranging from policy reforms and cultural shifts to targeted health and wellness initiatives—the sector can create a work environment where all employees, regardless of gender, have the opportunity to thrive. The journey towards gender equality

in the renewable energy sector is ongoing, but with sustained effort, collaboration, and commitment, significant progress can be made. Through these efforts, the renewable energy sector can not only improve the working conditions for women but also pave the way for transformative change that drives both social and economic benefits.

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Annexure

VOLUNTARY GENDER INCLUSIVITY PLEDGE CHECKLIST FOR ORGANIZATIONS IN RENEWABLE ENERGY

1. Cultivate an Inclusive Work Environment

- Implement clear anti-discrimination policies and conduct regular gender-sensitivity and unconscious bias training.
- Establish formal mentorship programs and support networks for women to promote career development.
- Encourage managers to foster psychological safety, ensuring women feel valued and heard in all work environments.

2. Ensure Gender-Neutral Hiring and Promotion

- Use skill-based, gender-neutral job descriptions free from assumptions about physical suitability or availability.
- Conduct blind recruitment where possible and train interview panels on unconscious bias.
- Create structured re-entry programs for women returning from career breaks, including flexible hours and skill-bridging workshops.

3. Provide Equal Pay and Financial Support

- Regularly conduct pay audits to identify and address wage disparities, ensuring transparent salary bands for all roles.

- Design career breaks without financial penalties by maintaining fair compensation practices for returning employees.
- Offer long-term financial security through comprehensive benefits, including health insurance for dependents and retirement plans.

4. Promote Voice Equality and Representation in Leadership

- Set benchmarks for female representation in decision-making roles and high-level strategic discussions.
- Establish employee resource groups focused on gender issues to give women a formal platform for advocacy.
- Support women's professional growth through leadership development programs and provide access to industry events and conferences.

5. Support Work-Life Balance and Health Needs

- Implement flexible work options, including remote work, flexible hours, and part-time roles for better work-life balance.
- Offer wellness programs tailored to women's health needs, including reproductive health services and mental health support.
- Ensure infrastructure for new mothers, such as nursing rooms, on-site childcare, and family support policies.

6. Establish Robust Grievance and Redressal Mechanisms

- Ensure grievance systems are accessible, effective, and include gender-sensitive support options.
- Regularly review and update grievance procedures, providing clear communication on available reporting channels.

7. Commit to Sharing Best Practices

- Collaborate with industry bodies and NGOs, like the WISE program, to establish and share standardized policies.
- Engage in industry-wide initiatives that support gender equality and diversity to create a more inclusive renewable energy landscape.

BASELINE SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

1. **What is your Job position?**
2. **How many years of experience do you have?**
3. **Have you had access to training and development programs in your current organization which have helped you advance your career?**
4. **If Yes, Then what kind of training? (a few examples have been cited below for your reference - this is not an exhaustive list)**
5. **Are you satisfied with the physical security measures and access controls within the workplace?**
6. **Have you ever experienced or witnessed any safety concerns or incidents in the workplace?**
7. **Does your organization have a specific travel policy for women?**
8. **Are you aware of any mental health support services provided by your organization?**
9. **Are there any additional health benefits or services you believe should be added or improved to better support women employees' health and well-being?**
10. **If you have answered yes, can you please provide few examples**
11. **Does your organization have a provision for Period leaves?**
12. **Are there sufficient supplies of feminine hygiene products (e.g.: tampons or sanitary napkins, painkillers, heating pads and pain relief roll-ons) available in your workplace and are they easily accessible?**
13. **Does your organization follow the mandates of Maternity Benefit Act of 2017? (Where maternity leave for working women has been increased from 12 weeks to 26 weeks)**
14. **Is there a designated private mother's room available for nursing mothers that provides a clean and hygienic environment?**
15. **Do you believe that your compensation is competitive and fair in**
16. **comparison to your male colleagues?"**
17. **Have you ever experienced or witnessed gender-based discrimination at your workplace?**
18. **Does your organization have an internal committee (POSH) to handle sexual harassment cases?**
19. **Have you ever experienced or witnessed sexual harassment at your workplace?**
20. **Can you shed some light on the grievance redressal system at your workplace?**

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