

Regional Consultation on “Female Labour Force Participation in India” held at GNLU

Gandhinagar, January 04, 2020: National Commission for Women held Regional Consultation on “Female Labour Force Participation in India” at Gujarat National Law University (GNLU), today.

The Regional Consultation is organized by the National Commission for Women in collaboration with Gujarat National Law University and V. V. Giri National Labour Institute, Noida.

The consultation was inaugurated by **Dr Rajul Desai, Member, National Commission for Women.**

In his welcome speech, GNLU Director Dr Shanthakumar said that “Gender gap at the workplace is a global challenge. However, it is more acute in Arab states, Northern Africa and Southern Asia. The Female Labour Force Participation rate in India is quite low as compared to even other Asian countries. But, what is alarming is that India is witnessing a declining trend over the past few years. While a lot of work has been done in this area, concerted efforts are required to achieve a more equitable and inclusive labour market that is essential for attaining the gender equality that we all aspire for.”

In her inaugural address, NCW member Dr Rajul Desai said, “women comprise half of the Indian population but make up less than a quarter of the labour force. The extremely low level of participation of women in the labour market is a massive hurdle in India’s economic development. The decline in the female labour force participation (FLFP) rate, particularly during the last 15 years of the strong economic growth, projects a hazy situation. The National Commission for Women has, therefore, decided to organize regional consultations in five regions to obtain views and opinion of the rightful stakeholders.”

Ms Lilaben Ankolia, Gujarat State Commission for Women gave an overview of the measures taken by the State Government in promoting the share of women in the labour market and reducing the violence against women both at the workplace and outside.

The consultation was in the form of panel discussions in which different stakeholders from the academia, NGOs and Government participated. The discussions revolved around three major themes:

1. Identifying Factors Causing Decline in the Female Labour Force Participation
2. Impact of Existing Legislation on Women Workers

3. Impact of Child Protection Policies on Female Labour Force Participation (FLFP) and Policy Perspective for addressing the declining FLFP

Deputy Chief Labour Commissioner (Central), Government of India, Dr Onkar Sharma gave a brief overview of the legislative framework on gender issues at the workplace and said that “with 26 weeks of fully-paid maternity leave, India can boast of the highest fully-paid maternity leave benefit anywhere in the world.”

Dr Ellina Samantroy Jena, Fellow at the V.V. Giri National Labour Institute said, “One of the prominent reasons for the decline has been women's constant engagement with domestic duties and unpaid work. As multiple activities create excessive time burden on women and constrain them to undertake short-term employment and confine themselves to the household. It is important to capture both market and non-market activities of women to have a true reflection of the realities of men and women. It is important to conduct a Time Use Survey which has the potential to capture all kind of activities undertaken by men and women including multiple and simultaneous activities.”

This was the first of the five regional consultations the National Commission for Women is planning to hold across the country to understand employment trends for women in India and factors responsible for the declining female labour force participation. The other four consultations will be held in Cuttack, Guwahati, Bengaluru and Delhi. After ascertaining the views and opinions of various stakeholders through these consultations, the NCW will develop a set of recommendations for policymakers to increase the female labour force participation and allied matters.

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