HBL P@SHA
Pakistan IT Industry Association

Women Empowerment through Technology
WHITEPAPER

Skills Policy Roundtable
ITCN 2024

In today's dynamic world, with technology driving unprecedented change across industries, bridging the gender gap in digital skills and opportunities is a catalyst for sustainable development and inclusive growth. In the purview of this, P@SHA organized a roundtable discussion on Women Empowerment through Technology.

The main themes of the roundtable were as follows:

- Identify solutions and areas of improvement in access and use of technology for women
- Explore innovative initiatives and best practices for promoting women's participation and leadership in technology

Research indicates that if women are fully integrated into the labor force and given equal opportunities, Pakistan's GDP could surge by up to 60% by 2025.[7] Over recent years, the trend of women pursuing education and obtaining formal degrees has also increased. As a result, they have become more proactive and career-driven, contributing significantly to the workforce and the economy.

[7] https://www.theigc.org/blogs/gender-equality/women-economic-empowerment-key-pakistans-development#:~:text=The%20Global%20Gender%20Gap%20Index,at%2095%20for%20political%20empowerment.
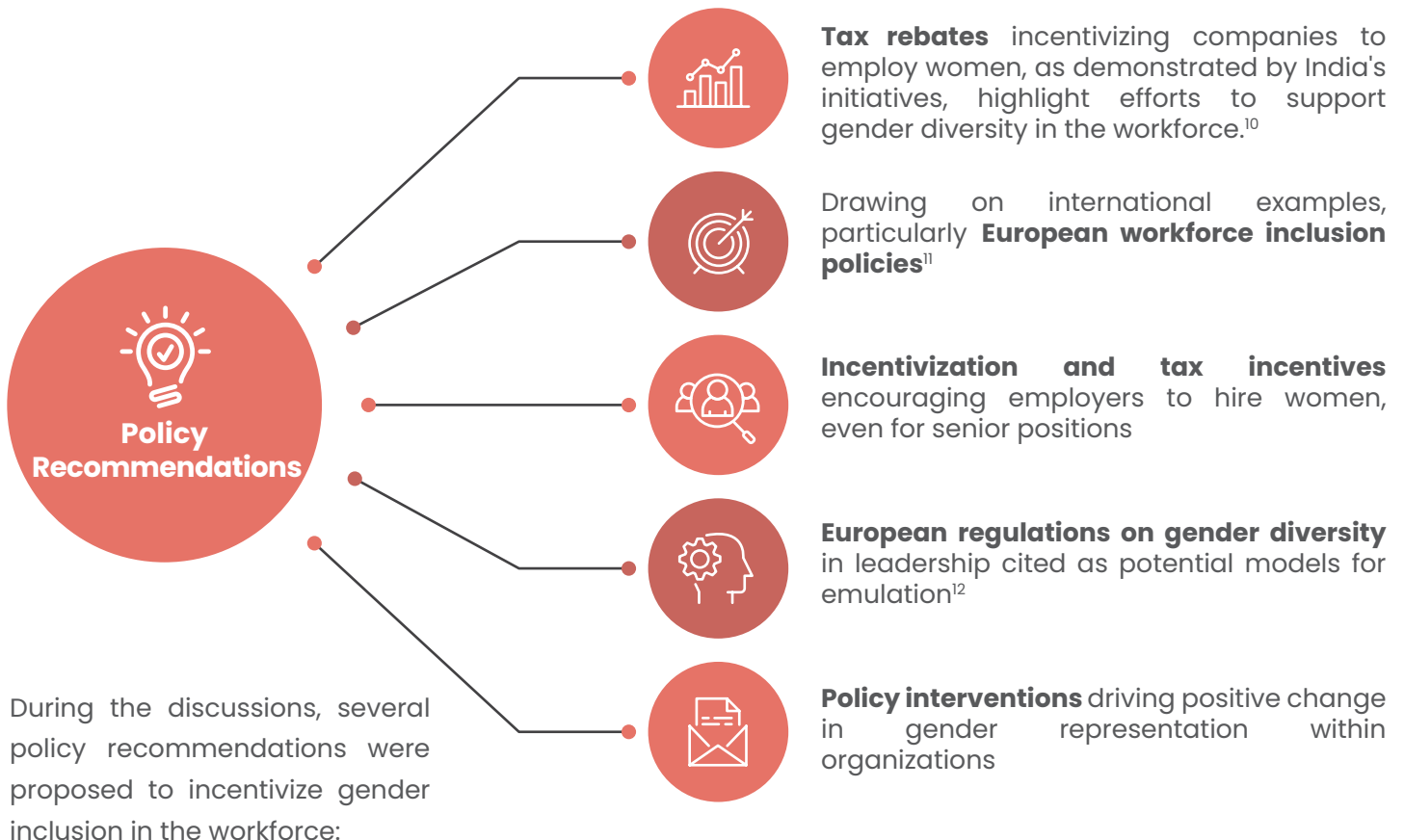
Empowerment Through Technology:

Participants emphasized the pivotal role of technology in empowering women. Initiatives aimed at providing education, training, and mentorship were recognized as crucial steps towards women's empowerment. Technology, particularly AI, plays a crucial role in empowering women by providing access to education, training, and mentorship. Instead of fearing AI, people should see it as an opportunity.

Given the significant gender gap in the labor force, with 82%[8] of men and only 24% of women.[9] Utilizing AI as a tool can close this divide and it presents a notable opportunity for inclusion and empowerment. AI enables women to learn essential skills without the need for extensive formal education. It also facilitates personalized learning experiences and mentorship connections, empowering women to enter the workforce confidently and break traditional barriers.

Participants underscored the pivotal role of technology in empowering women but also raised concerns about infrastructure challenges such as electricity shortages and limited internet access. They emphasized the importance of addressing these issues alongside providing education and training, recognizing that access to basic facilities is crucial for equitable opportunities for women.

Tailored Solutions:

The significance of public-private partnerships was highlighted as a crucial avenue for addressing the multifaceted challenges faced by women. Collaborative efforts with organizations like P@SHA and UN Women were recognized as effective strategies in this regard. Moreover, speakers emphasized the need for tailored solutions catering to diverse needs and skill levels of women. They mentioned programs ranging from basic digital literacy to advanced entrepreneurship training as examples of how through these partnerships, programs, and training courses can be tailored for different needs.

Policy Recommendations

Tax rebates incentivizing companies to employ women, as demonstrated by India's initiatives, highlight efforts to support gender diversity in the workforce.[10]

Drawing on international examples, particularly **European workforce inclusion policies**[11]

Incentivization and tax incentives encouraging employers to hire women, even for senior positions

European regulations on gender diversity in leadership cited as potential models for emulation[12]

Policy interventions driving positive change in gender representation within organizations

During the discussions, several policy recommendations were proposed to incentivize gender inclusion in the workforce:

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[8] https://bmcpublichealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-021-11376-6
[9] https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.FE.ZS
[10] https://cleartax.in/s/income-tax-slab-for-women
[11] https://commission.europa.eu/about-european-commission/organisational-structure/people-first-modernising-european-commission/people-first-diversity-and-inclusion_en
[12] https://disabilityhub.eu/en/news/employment-policies-social-justice-europe

Success Stories:

Million Woman Mentor:

Launched in 2020 and successfully completed its pledge in 2024, the Million Woman Mentor initiative has made significant strides in empowering women in Pakistan. Through strategic collaboration with S&P Global, the program has mentored and trained over 20,000 women who have graduated from colleges and universities. With more than 200 sessions conducted, participants have been equipped with diverse IT skills and guided on entrepreneurship ventures.

Inclusion Lab:

The Inclusion Lab is dedicated to fostering digital skills among women, particularly those from rural areas. Beyond skill development, the lab facilitates the transformation of non-tech products into tech-enabled solutions, thus fostering entrepreneurship and digital inclusion. By providing access to essential tools and facilities, the Inclusion Lab is not only empowering women but also expanding the horizons of the digital industry.

She Fixes Program by NAVTTC:

NAVTTC's She Fixes program is pioneering efforts to break gender stereotypes by training women in traditionally male-dominated industries. Starting with technical skills related to industry appliances, the program progresses to encompass a broader spectrum of societal work. By empowering women with practical skills and knowledge, She Fixes is fostering inclusivity and gender equality in the workforce.

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