



PRE BUDGET CONSULTATION 2025

*Reimagining
Resource Justice
for rights and gender
equality*

Feminist Policy
Collective

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Contents

Topic	Page number
Executive Summary & Recommendations	3
Introduction	10
Current Context	11
Thematic Areas & Participation	12
Day One - Inaugural Session	13
Working Session 1: Social Protection: Impact of Digitalization on Access	15
Working Session 2: Care Work and Livelihoods	21
Working Session Three : Structural Violence and Gender-Based Violence	25
Working Session Four: Institutionalizing Gender Responsive Budgeting	31
Closing remarks	
Day Two - Opening Session	38
Group Discussions to Develop Policy Recommendations	39
Policy Dialogue - Catalysing Change: Financing And Partnerships for	42
Gender Transformative Action on SDGs	
Acknowledgements	48
Annexure One: Agenda of the Sixth FPC Pre-Budget Consultation	49
Annexure Two - FPC PBC List of participants attending in-person & online	51
Annexure Three – Short Bios of Panel Speakers	54

Reimagining Resource Justice for rights and gender equality in the current crossroads**Sixth Pre-Budget Consultation of the
Feminist Policy Collective****Executive Summary**

The [Feminist Policy Collective](#) (FPC) is a voluntary platform that was formally set up in February 2019 by a mix of individual researchers, academicians, policy advocates and feminist organizations, as well as UN Women who have been working together on making the gender responsive budgeting framework more effective to transform the way policy and finance could change gender relations. The Feminist Policy Collective aims to contribute to policy and practice on Transformative Financing for Gender Justice that advances the rights of women in all their diversity. Transformative financing for gender equality, however goes much beyond gender responsive budgeting into policies for mobilization of revenues and the gender politics of allocation.

As part of its activities, the FPC has been organizing Pre-Budget Consultations (PBC), to identify policy priorities from an intersectional feminist lens to guide Union Departments and Ministries that are preparing for the imminent Union Budget, with the broader goal of transforming the socio-economic circumstances of women in the country and progress towards gender justice. The sixth in this series, PBC 2025 was organized on the **21st and 22nd of November 2025**, with the title: ***Reimagining Resource Justice for rights and gender equality in the current crossroads.***

This year's PBC took place in the context of pressure on the economy with savings and investments show stagnating trends. It is imperative to increase fiscal expenditure on social development and welfare policies; towards which the tax-GDP ratio needs to improve by increasing direct tax base and collection. With this backdrop the PBC was intended to discuss the immediate and long-term requirements for women's development and empowerment, including the investments in resources and policies for social protection, care work and livelihoods, addressing structural violence and gender-based violence and so on. Further, particular emphasis was laid on how Gender Responsive Budgeting can be institutionalized and improved. The recommendations below reflect voices of over 125 participants of the pre-budget consultation held by the Collective on 21-22 November 2025, including several gender experts, individual researchers, practitioners, and institutions.

Key Recommendations towards Union Budget 2026-27

Our first and overarching concern is with the **fiscal and federal autonomy of states**. We recommend that the Union Government ensure adequate financial devolution under the 16th

Finance Commission. To be truly responsive to gender concerns, the autonomy of States in administering and conducting social programmes must be strengthened. Budgetary allocations between the Centre and States must be focused on meeting the intended outcomes and not shifting the fiscal burden. Additionally, the fiscal responsibility between the States and the Centre should be timely and responsive during any crisis.

In terms of the thematic recommendations, we propose the following for the forthcoming Union budget 2026-27.

I. Social protection

While the Union government has been supporting multiple schemes for supporting the most vulnerable women, children and the elderly, we observe the need for strengthening and expanding social protection networks and coverage. Almost all service delivery mechanisms are linked with the digital identity of individuals, that often end up increasing the transaction costs for citizens, or becoming exclusionary. We therefore recommend the following:

1. Allocations for various welfare schemes need to be overhauled in the Union Budget, especially those targeted at women and children, moving beyond nominal increases after a thorough review and revision for providing adequate quality.
 - a. Allocations must be increased to reflect the true cost of living; all cost norms for allocating resources to the programmes (e.g. supplementary nutrition, pensions, maternity entitlements) must be, at the very least, inflation-indexed
 - b. Mandate the periodic updating of beneficiary databases based on the latest population projections. Adequate allocations must be explicitly linked to demographic expansion
 - c. The overhaul should also ensure just and adequate salaries for the frontline workers, who are mostly women and are primarily responsible and accountable for most of the service delivery tasks.
 - d. Provide disaggregated data on allocations and expenditures within umbrella schemes—for e.g. Mission Shakti includes multiple schemes, scheme-wise data should be provided, allowing for an analysis of actual allocations and of the trends in the same. Data on the main components of spending within each scheme must also be publicly available.
2. Development of a digital rights and inclusion framework to ensure that the various digital interventions in welfare programmes do not end up excluding vulnerable and gender-marginalised groups, reinforcing inequities
 - a. Review the current DPDP Act with the principal intent of protecting people's access to entitlements, right to transparency and accountability, along with their right to privacy and data protection. This would require a consultative process, which could be announced during the budget presentation.

- b. Issue an immediate moratorium on the use of Facial Recognition Systems (FRT) in social protection and welfare delivery due to risks of exclusion, privacy violation, mass surveillance, and inherent bias.
 - c. Make provisions for greater decentralisation in the operation and modification of MIS data and other digital portals. The APIs should be shared with state governments and below.
 - d. Transform the E-Shram portal from a registration database to a gateway for entitlements and integrate E-Shram with all existing schemes.
3. Amend the Social Security Code 2020, to explicitly and comprehensively include domestic workers and make provisions for expanding all the social security benefits to all informal workers.

II. Care and livelihoods

It is clear that under the leadership of the PMO, several ministries have undertaken the task of enabling women's participation in the economy via multiple strategies applying a whole-of-government approach to tackle the challenges of women's livelihoods and their participation in the care economy. The start has been positive in terms of prioritising childcare, the care workers in health and other care services, which are the most important agendas in the 'women-led development' trajectory, as envisioned under the Viksit Bharat 2047.

1. There is an immediate need to frame a comprehensive National Care Policy that approaches the solution to women's increasing role in the care economy by adopting a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach.
 - a. The national policy needs to identify the direct and indirect components of care and the complex challenges that women confront in negotiating care in their daily lives.
 - b. It must be integrated with the continuum of paid, unpaid and underpaid care work that defines women's existence.
 - c. This forward-looking, holistic policy guideline should be a consultative process and can be announced as part of the Union Budget presentation. There could also be a parliamentary committee formed to discuss the care economy and women's empowerment
2. Formulate a care labour policy using the ILO C-190 as a guideline.
 - a. Develop a labour structure that includes paid, underpaid, and unpaid care work, and lays down definitions of worker, employer, and workplace.
 - b. The policy should comprehensively and holistically cover all aspects of employment and decent work, including recognition of care workers and minimum wages for them, norms for care provisioning, and measures to address workplace violence, which can be announced through an ordinance or as part of the Union Budget.

3. Invest in the Care Infrastructure by developing integrated care and livelihood clusters with adequate facilities that take into account the spatial reality of working women and the significance of reducing the care burdens on women
 - a. Move all Anganwadi Centres to Government buildings which will then enable the use of the unutilized funds under JJM to ensure clean drinking water and functional toilets for the use of the children and the AWC workers, which are essential to achieve the health outcomes.
 - b. Create Common care Clusters that combines care services for very young children (through PALNA), Aanganwadis, space for after school care, care for the elderly, care of the disabled (physical and intellectual), provision for common laundry services and other care requirements such as care for the bed-ridden patients.
 - c. Expand care worker training and skilling in geriatric and palliative care, as well as regular and high-quality skilling for frontline and domestic workers, is critical
 - d. Draw and converge funding under various schemes, including Anganwadi centres, SAKSHAM, NHM, and provisions under the Panchayati Raj and Nagarpalika Acts. Examples like Kosinamane under NREGA show how panchayat offices can function as central hubs for providing care. Extending operational hours (e.g., 12-hour models) with reduced worker numbers, referencing models like Bogotá (Colombia), will be immensely beneficial.
 - e. The unit costs should distinctly reflect allocations for nutrition, staff, infrastructure and not be clubbed together within the “per Anganwadi” as the norm.
4. Strengthen data system for women’s work: Ensuring Labour Force surveys adequately capture women’s unpaid and care activities, and Time Use Surveys are conducted regularly, ensures better responsiveness
5. Budget allocations need to prioritise viable livelihoods and employment for women through the following targeted actions -
 - a. Redirect subsidies to MSMEs, especially while developing Public-Private Models, by developing guidelines to include MSMEs and offer subsidies to them, similar to those being offered to large corporations. There can be synergies between the large-scale women’s mobilisation under the NRLM and MSMEs to provide for various services required in rural and semi-rural areas.
 - b. Strengthen MGNREGA and rural livelihood programmes with gender-responsive provisions and skilling
 - c. Strengthen women-led groups/FPOs with credit, training, and institutional support, including access to formal low-interest credit and regulation on exploitative micro-finance practices
 - d. Invest in education, agency and leadership building of women in agriculture and ensure women’s meaningful participation in local resource governance (Water Users Associations, Forest Rights Committees, Watershed Committees)

III. Structural and Gender Based Violence

It is encouraging to note that many Ministries/Departments including MoRD, MHA, MoWCD, MoSJE, Department of School Education and Literacy, Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, and Department of Justice have all collaborated on the campaign against gender-based violence *Nayi Chetna 3.0 – Pahal Badlaav Ki*. We welcome the campaign message that calls for collective action with the message '*Ek Saath Ek Awaaz - Hinsa Ke Khilaf*,' aiming to create safe, inclusive spaces through convergent efforts, adopting a whole-of-society and whole-of-government approach. In the light of this we recommend addressing some aspects of diversity and effectiveness of these interventions –

1. Budget allocations should prioritise gender-sensitive survivor-centric services in the Gender Resource Centres across the states
 - a. Allocations under targeted schemes like the Nirbhaya Fund should be based on realistic estimates of demand and service requirements on the ground, focusing on the core interventions such as the establishment and effective functioning of One Stop Centres, strengthening the 24*7 helplines, and ensuring adequate and timely victim compensation.
 - b. In the case of PWDVA, dedicated budget lines at national and state levels and adequate allocations for core components and survivor-centric services, including full-time appointment of Protection Officers, running shelters, improving one-stop centres, counselling services and legal aid are required.
 - c. Such special funds (Nirbhaya) should not be utilised for infrastructural and service costs related to general law enforcement and crime-prevention under any circumstances, such as setting up surveillance systems, for police training, and safe cities' control centres, which should be sourced from the Ministries' own funds
 - d. Prevention of gender-based violence in women's workplace by extending PoSH protections to agriculture and allied workplaces and establishing local support and redressal systems; investments into prevention and education of agricultural and other informal sector workers;
 - e. Robust monitoring and public sharing of information on allocations and utilisation of funds for GBV would enable evidence-based planning and improve transparency, effectiveness of interventions and accountability (through annual reports, public dashboards, etc).
 - f. Budgetary allocations must focus on strengthening institutional mechanisms and coordination with a survivor-centric approach that allows ring-fenced resources for GBV services and prioritises timely and easy access of survivors to available provisions through faster case processing, localised follow-up models, centralised GBV data systems to track status, reformed rehabilitation policy, and immediate support for survivor expenses and well-being

2. Ensure adequate resource allocation for prevention of atrocities against Dalit and Adivasi women and girls
 - a. Increase investment towards strengthening infrastructure, financial resources and implementation of redress mechanisms to address caste-based atrocities against Dalit women and girls, including adequate funding for dedicated helplines,
 - b. Ensure publicly available records on the number of Dalit and Adivasi women survivors receiving compensation and relief
 - c. Establish the missing district-wise special courts for addressing such cases, with prompt judicial process, survivor relief and rehabilitation measures, including land allotment, pensions and employment support.
3. Allocate resources to end violence against diverse women from marginalised gender-sexual identities
 - a. Targeted allocations for a Task Force to develop guiding norms, standard operating procedures, institutional mechanisms
 - b. Develop a national database on the impacts of structural violence against women and girls from diverse gender-sexual identities through gender and caste-disaggregated data gathering and institutionalising monitoring to ensure the effectiveness of policy interventions.
 - c. Invest in training of service providers to sensitise them to cover end-to-end support for survivors of violence, including outreach for the last mile connectivity.
4. Invest in creating a strong institutional response to gender-based violence in digital spaces
 - a. Invest in strengthening gender responsive laws and regulations related to AI and digital spaces
 - b. Develop statistical frameworks for data and produce statistics to facilitate targeted resource allocations for its prevention and redressal.
 - c. Build the capacities of law enforcers and the judiciary in identifying and addressing the impact of online violence from a gender perspective.
 - d. Urgently develop institutional guidelines on gender-based violence in digital spaces

IV. Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB)

Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) has been recognised at national and state levels for nearly twenty years since 2005-06, as a tool through which the governments can use their fiscal policy to promote gender equality. Although significant efforts have already been made, coverage and impact remained limited, with only partial implementation. Only 38 out of 62 Union ministries have functional Gender Budget Cells, and despite 75% of Centrally Sponsored Schemes incorporating gender components, only half are reflected in the Gender Budget

Statement (GBS). The lack of accountability and outcome measurement remains a challenge. In order to further strengthen GRB as an effective tool, we recommend:

1. Based on effective needs assessment exercises, Gender Responsive Budgeting must begin with a focus on responding to the needs of the most marginalised, particularly Dalit and Adivasi women, OBC women, and gender-diverse workers in hazardous and informal sectors, in order to make it inclusive and intersectional.
2. A shift in GRB from being mainly about reporting on allocation-focused Gender Budgeting to outcome-focused monitoring, that ensure budgets translate into measurable gender impacts on the ground. Mechanisms must be introduced to ensure realistic cost estimations, effective utilisation of allocated funds, alongside assessments of the impact of major investments on gender equality and women's empowerment.
3. Complete clarity on inclusion and exclusion of schemes under different parts of GRB, shifting the focus of GRB from a tracking exercise to a strong accountability mechanism, with public transparency on allocations and results. Officials and people's representatives should be assigned clear responsibility and accountability with relation to specific GRB objectives and outcomes, to ensure proper utilisation of funds and achievement of intended outcomes.
4. Strengthening an intersectional and gender-disaggregated data ecosystem should become a core priority, to enable accurate output reporting, measurement, monitoring, and outcome assessment. All ministries and departments should establish robust MIS systems to collect beneficiary data, ensuring that this information is systematically reflected in the Gender Budget Statement.
5. Establishing Gender Budget Cells that remain fully functional across all departments of central and state governments. There is a need to expand and mandate GRB in the local government budgets as well, both in rural and urban areas. Defining clear outcomes, compliance and reporting on the Gender Budget Statement must be mandated for all departments, rather than remaining optional.
6. Institutionalisation of GRB in order to strengthen GRB processes further, with
 - a. clear institutional responsibilities for preparing, implementing, and monitoring GRB in every department
 - b. enforcement mechanisms with defined penalties for non-compliance with GRB commitments
 - c. mandatory outcome reporting, with periodic assessments and public disclosure
 - d. full budget lifecycle implementation of GRB
 - e. provision of adequate resource allocation for institutional supportive processes for GRB, such as capacity building, social auditing, GBS preparation and M&E processes.

Reimagining Resource Justice for rights and gender equality in the current crossroads**Complete Report of the Sixth Pre-Budget Consultation
of the
Feminist Policy Collective****Introduction**

The [Feminist Policy Collective](#) (FPC) is a voluntary platform that was formally set up in February 2019 following a national consultation co-organised by a core group of feminists and founding organizations. The initial group of the FPC comprised a mix of individual researchers, academicians, policy advocates and feminist organizations, as well as UN Women. Since the first informal discussions in June 2018, this group had been collectively working together on making the gender responsive budgeting framework more effective to transform the way policy and finance could change gender relations.

The Feminist Policy Collective aims to contribute to policy and practice on Transformative Financing for Gender Justice that advances the rights of women in all their diversity. Transformative financing for gender equality, however goes much beyond gender responsive budgeting into policies for mobilization of revenues and the gender politics of allocation. As part of its activities, the FPC has been organizing Pre-Budget Consultations (PBC), to identify policy priorities from an intersectional feminist lens to guide Union Departments and Ministries that are preparing for the imminent Union Budget, with the broader goal of transforming the socio-economic circumstances of women in the country and progress towards gender justice. During the PBC, key stakeholders critically analyse and provide recommendations for the Annual Union Budget through the lens of Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB). These recommendations are then shared widely with government officials, civil society members and the media.

The sixth in this series, PBC 2025 was organized on the **21st and 22nd of November 2025**, with the title: ***Reimagining Resource Justice for rights and gender equality in the current crossroads.***

The objectives of the PBC 2025 were to –

1. Rethink resource justice within a national and global context, towards attainment of the SDG Gender Goals
2. Broaden feminist dialogue on transformative financing and gender responsive budgeting, using an intersectional perspective,
3. Develop forward-looking recommendations towards strengthening initiatives on social protection, livelihoods and the care economy, addressing structural violence and gender-based violence.

The PBC was organized on an entirely collective and voluntary basis with various members contributing in their individual and organizational capacity. The Anchors of the Working Groups organized various panels and institutional members contributed through staff time for rapporteurs and other forms of support.

Details about the earlier pre-budget consultations are available in the website of the Feminist Policy Collective.



Current context of the PBC 2025

While the budget has the potential to affect gender justice in multiple ways, this year the consultation focused specifically on some aspects of current relevance. This year's PBC took place in the context of achieving a '*Viksit Bharat* by 2047' where '*Saksham Naari*' (the capable/empowered woman) is at the core of the vision. Nonetheless, there is a long way to go to achieve such a development trajectory by engaging more women and not only make rhetorical statements. At the outset, there is a need to accept that the economy is under pressure both internal and external: employment figures show improvement but data on earnings show a deteriorating trend, signifying an economic stress. The core macroeconomic indicators of sectoral growth, savings and investments show stagnating trends. Given this situation, there is a growing need to expand the social protection coverage, including in the gendered aspects of care. At the same time, the government is facing external tariff pressures from the US, which needs to be countered with increasing fiscal expenditure on social development and welfare policies; towards which the tax-GDP ratio needs to improve by increasing direct tax base and collection.

With this backdrop the PBC was intended to discuss the immediate and long-term requirements for women's development and empowerment and deliberate on how next year's Union budget could be potentially used to improve the existing conditions. The PBC 2025 analysed various initiatives of the government towards enabling the empowerment of women

in all their diversity. PBC 2025 sessions discussed in-depth the investments in resources and policies for social protection, care work and livelihoods, addressing structural violence and gender-based violence and so on. Further, particular emphasis was laid on how Gender Responsive Budgeting can be institutionalized and improved. Based on the presentations and discussions, the PBC has developed recommendations for women and the economy in the Union Budget 2026 as well as suggested actions and advocacy initiatives for feminist and women's collectives, for advancing the gender equality agenda.

Thematic areas of the PBC 2025

The thematic areas of the PBC 2025 covered diverse aspects related to the empowerment of women in all their diversity. They included -

- a. Social Protection and the impact of digitalization on access
- b. Care work and livelihoods
- c. Structural violence and gender-based violence
- d. Institutionalizing Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB): towards a legislative mandate
- e. Financing and Partnerships for Gender Transformative Action on SDGs

Each thematic area had a dedicated panel of speakers as well as group work for deeper discussions. (For the detailed agenda of the PBC 2025, see **Annexure One**) The Anchors and members of the FPC Thematic Working Groups are exploring these thematic areas over a two-year period, November 2024 – November 2026. They curated each session and the group work as part of their ongoing exploration of the thematic area.

Participation in the PBC 2025

The Pre-Budget Consultation 2025 was able to mobilize participation from a wide range of stakeholders who joined in person and online, as it was held in hybrid mode. The 115 participants included representatives of central government and state government, UN Women, universities, diverse think-tanks and policy research groups, budget advocacy groups, donor organizations as well as several campaign groups, NGOs and women's organizations.

For the complete list of PBC 2025 participants, see **Annexure Two**. For short descriptions of the speakers, see **Annexure Three**

Details of the proceedings - Day One 21st November Friday

INAUGURAL SESSION

The sixth pre-budget consultation of the Feminist Policy Collective began with a few words of welcome by **Jashodhara Dasgupta, Co-Convenor FPC**. Jashodhara reaffirmed the Feminist Policy Collective's identity as a voluntary, collaborative platform that has, over six years, contributed feminist analysis to policy and practice especially on transformative financing for gender justice, not only limited to gender budgeting but extending to tax justice and resource mobilisation. She emphasised that the Collective adopts an intersectional approach and works to advance the rights of women in all their diversity. She highlighted FPC's key contributions, including annual feminist analyses of the Union Budget (some published in EPW) and the India Gender Report 2024, described as a major collaborative knowledge product.



Jashodhara framed the objective of this year's consultation as rethinking resource justice within both national and global contexts, particularly in the wake of geopolitical and economic shifts, and aligning financing approaches with the SDGs, especially the goals around gender justice. She underlined the need to broaden feminist dialogue on transformative financing and GRB, and to develop forward-looking recommendations on social protection, livelihoods, the care economy, structural and gender-based violence, which would form the thematic focus for the next two days. Jashodhara ended by welcoming everyone once again and requesting a round of brief introductions.



The Keynote Address of the Consultation was delivered by **Prof. Jayati Ghosh, Department of Economics, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, USA** ([on video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3v9-sNQvwS0&t=69s))¹. Professor Ghosh opened by noting that global discussions on inequality show how easily inequality can be "misinterpreted or misunderstood" and how data are often "presented in ways that mislead rather than represent reality. She repudiated India's claims that it is now "the fourth least unequal country" and that poverty and inequality have

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3v9-sNQvwS0&t=69s>

fallen, arguing that such conclusions depend on “how the data are collected, manipulated, and on faulty measures.” From the G20 Inequality Report, she two major trends:

- ✓ the share of wages in national income has been coming down, while the share of capital has risen;
- ✓ growing “concentration within capital,” where the largest and then the mega-corporations of “favoured capitalists” capture the most profits. Parallely, wage inequality is increasing, with some workers (e.g., finance) doing much better while most face deteriorating conditions.

On women’s employment, she flagged how official claims of improvement rely primarily on increases among rural women working as unpaid ‘contributing family workers’, which should not be classified as employment in most global standards; meanwhile, women’s paid employment remains stagnant, with no real wage gains over the last decade. She urged the Collective to interrogate such distortions during budget analysis. Ghosh also emphasised the gendered impact of global trade shifts particularly labour and women-intensive sectors like textiles and garments already hit by U.S. tariff regimes, with no visible compensation, rehabilitation or sectoral support packages from the government.

On future trade agreements, she cautioned that U.S.–India negotiations are “completely opaque.” Drawing on Indonesia’s experience, she described how U.S. trade deals can lead to deregulation that removes “financial, environmental, land acquisition, and other regulatory constraints” for U.S. companies, enabling polluting industries, extractive activities, and “deeply ecologically damaging” crypto mining that “eats up huge amounts of power” and “drinks water.”

Ghosh pointed out the widening gap between the central government’s public messaging on social spending and the actual expenditures, much of which are being borne instead by state governments. While some states are better placed to absorb these responsibilities, opposition-ruled states face sharper constraints. She flagged additional concerns around women farmers with the lowest credit access - and capacities of women to absorb economic shocks, leaving them particularly vulnerable. She concluded by underscoring sector-specific risks, gendered impacts, and the need to scrutinise the “devil in the details” of macroeconomic claims and trade policy while preparing budget recommendations.

On behalf of the host organization, **UN Women, Dr. Sanghamitra Dhar** also gave a brief welcome address. Sanghamitra underscored UN Women’s long-standing leadership in the gender budgeting ecosystem in India,



describing its 15-year engagement as focused on bridging the gap between civil society and government systems. She emphasised that UN Women's approach to GRB spans the entire public finance cycle - from frameworks and planning to execution, audits, and evaluation - and is grounded in stakeholder engagement, transparency, and accountability. She noted that recent interstate cross-learning efforts show increasing demand from state governments, including typically overstretched departments, because they see GRB as scalable, administratively feasible, and capable of generating actionable improvements. With support from the Ministry of Women and Child Development, UN Women is now co-developing a national GRB guideline for states.

She highlighted the need for CSOs to engage more proactively in law and policy development, describing this as a missing link in the ecosystem. Sanghamitra stressed that gender budgeting is not only a tool but a systemic mechanism for translating macro-level gender concerns into step-wise administrative action, and that actionable recommendations must be short, implementable, and intelligible to frontline bureaucratic tiers, noting that long policy documents often fail because "the section officer who reads it first won't move it forward." She reiterated UN Women's commitment to supporting the Feminist Policy Collective and emphasised the importance of producing practical, state-ready and ministry-ready recommendations that can be adopted within existing government processes.

WORKING SESSION 1: SOCIAL PROTECTION: IMPACT OF DIGITALIZATION ON ACCESS?

There is a growing policy emphasis on the use of digital technologies in social security and welfare programmes in India. These reforms are often justified as measures to enhance



efficiency and reduce leakages. This session anchored by **Dipa Sinha** brought out with case examples how evidence from multiple sectors indicates that such digital interventions frequently lead to new forms of exclusion and disruption. Women, are disproportionately affected—both as beneficiaries navigating digital systems and as frontline workers responsible for their implementation. The session outline:

1. *Overview of Digitalization for social sector* - Saloni Mishra, IT for Change
2. *Case Studies*:
 - a. PDS and digitalisation – Vaani Tiwari, ANANDI
 - b. Digitalisation in Health – Jashodhara Dasgupta, FPC
 - c. ASHA workers and digitalisation – Sreerupa, ISST
3. *Remarks by the Chair* – Rajendran Narayanan, APU

Saloni Mishra, IT for Change, provided an overview on the *Digital Welfare State: Implications for Gender Justice in India*. Her presentation explored the impact of digitalization on welfare systems in India, particularly its implications for gender justice. It highlighted how digital welfare systems, driven by technologies like Aadhaar, biometric IDs, and algorithmic governance, have reconfigured the citizen-state relationship, shifting from a rights-based framework to a data-driven approach focused on efficiency and fraud prevention. Saloni highlighted some key aspects such as -



1. *Gendered Exclusions:*

- a. Women face barriers like biometric authentication failures, physical access issues, and database errors, leading to disrupted access to welfare benefits such as PDS, MGNREGA wages, and pensions.
- b. System design flaws, such as linking women's bank accounts to male phone numbers and English-only interfaces, reinforce patriarchal dependencies.
- c. Onerous documentation requirements and institutional inflexibility exclude marginalized groups like Dalit, Muslim, migrant, and tribal women.

2. *Data Exploitation:*

- a. Public-private partnerships and algorithmic governance commodify citizen data, prioritizing fiscal goals over human welfare.
- b. Weak data protection laws expose sensitive data, such as health records, to misuse, disproportionately affecting women and other vulnerable groups.

3. *Impact on Frontline Workers:*

- a. Workers like ASHA and Anganwadi are burdened with unpaid data collection tasks, shifting their roles from community care to administrative tasks.
- b. They face surveillance, job insecurity, and lack of labor protections, with their professional judgment often disregarded.

Saloni emphasized the need for reimagining digital welfare systems to align with constitutional principles of equality and due process. The current digital welfare state perpetuates gender, caste, and class hierarchies. These systems need to be viewed as "techno-institutional assemblages" rather than neutral technologies. Outcomes depend on how these systems are designed, who controls them, and whose interests they serve. The focus should be on reconfiguring digital systems towards prioritizing gender justice through deliberate exploration and reassembly, with the following Feminist Design Principles -

- i. *Data as a Site of Power:* Recognize that data systems exercise power and influence. Design choices must be evaluated through the lens of gender, caste, class, and other marginalized identities.

- ii. *Flexibility for Women's Lived Realities*: Digital systems should accommodate the complex, relational realities of women's lives, rather than imposing rigid, male-centric household structures.
- iii. *Robust Regulation and Governance*: Implement strong data governance frameworks to protect privacy, ensure safeguards for data sharing, and create mechanisms to redistribute data value for gender justice.
- iv. *Accounting for Time Poverty*: Address the unpaid labor and time poverty that women face, including the invisible work of frontline workers, by designing systems that reduce administrative burdens and inefficiencies.

Anita Gurumurthy, IT for Change, provided additional remarks. Anita noted that global trade deals are actively reshaping the world, highlighting that India has opened its datasets to the UK, a development that will significantly influence emerging governance arrangements. These shifts are contributing to the rise of a clientelist digital welfare state. This has resulted in a social contract in which citizens do not negotiate the terms; instead, these terms are unilaterally established. The new political economy is therefore not only recalibrating citizenship but is also altering the fabric and architecture of the Indian federal system. These structural changes carry significant implications for how women may organize collectively in the future.



Jashodhara Dasgupta, an independent researcher, who spoke about *Digitalization in Health*. Jashodhara began with highlighting the existing healthcare crisis in India, characterized by low public spending (1.2% of GDP i.e. Rs 2400 per capita). Low budgets and inequitable allocation of resources have weakened the public health system in most states, compelling users to seek care in private for-profit healthcare. At present around 70% outpatient care and almost 60% inpatient care is provided by the private for-profit health sector. The high out-of-pocket expenses lead inevitably to impoverishment and debt. In this scenario, the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY) launched in 2018, promises cashless hospitalization, including treatment, diagnostics and medicines, and beneficiary selection is based on the Socio-Economic Caste Census. However, rather than strengthening the public sector, 67% of PMJAY claims settlements in 2024 went to the private sector.

Issues with complete digitization under PM-JAY include serious digital access problems for the poor, for women and those with less education. All beneficiaries have to get ABHA (Ayushman Bharat Health Account) numbers linked to their Aadhaar. There are data privacy issues of special concern for marginalized populations such as religious or caste minorities and transpersons or PLHA (people living with HIV/AIDS) among others. Data protection is opaque

and questionable: technology giants are keen to use the data for commercial value, in 2021 the digital healthcare market was estimated at INR 524.97 billion. The data can be used to develop new algorithmic technologies based on the health status of enrolled people, which becomes crucial for the insurance industry to deny compensation based on risk predictions. While the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM) has an entirely centralized collection and management of health data, local and peripheral health managers are unable to make locally appropriate informed decisions. At this point, citizens are entirely visible to the government but not vice versa, which reverses the state-citizen relations, erasing the notion of state accountability and making the citizen a passive beneficiary who has to constantly authenticate her identity.

Vaani Tiwari, ANANDI provided an in-depth analysis of hunger, food insecurity, and the impact of digitization on food security policies in India, with a focus on Gujarat. India ranked 102nd out of 123 countries in the 2025 Global Hunger Index, highlighting significant challenges in addressing hunger. Data from the National Family Health Survey -5 (2019-2021) reveals stark disparities in malnutrition and stunting among Adivasi children and Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) communities compared to non-SC-ST children, with 44% of Adivasi children malnourished and 25.5% of adult ST women underweight compared to 19% overall. In a 2025 survey, they found that 1 in 4 families in Dahod live in hunger and rely on borrowing to eat, while 86% of people in Panchmahal district depend solely on a carbohydrate-based diet with no access to nutritious food.



The government has allocated ₹350 crore for digitization of the Public Distribution System (PDS) under the SMART2-PDS initiative for 2023-2026. Key features include eKYC for ration cardholder verification, electronic Point of Sale (ePOS) machines for biometric authentication, online tracking for allocation and distribution, and Aadhaar-enabled PDS (AePDS) for automated beneficiary verification. This digitization process has led to significant challenges for marginalized communities, particularly Adivasis and SC-ST groups. Coverage under the National Food Security Act (NFSA 2013) and the Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) is still based on outdated data from the 2011 Census, leading to the exclusion of eligible beneficiaries. Mandatory Aadhaar linkage has further excluded children, pregnant women, persons with disabilities, transpersons, and others without Aadhaar cards. Additional physical verification for Aadhaar cards for adults above 18 years is time-consuming and only available at select centers, causing delays and difficulties.

Introduction of ePOS machines has also added issues, including tampering and inaccuracies in digital records. In Gujarat, Aadhaar linkage with marital names is mandatory for pregnant women under the PMMVY scheme, leading to exclusion, with 55.5% of eligible women not receiving any installment and 6.3% receiving partial entitlements. Aadhaar authentication is also compulsory for children receiving meals at Anganwadi centers, excluding many and increasing the workload for frontline workers. The silencing of ration cards has been a centralized process with a lack of clarity and appeal mechanisms; online grievance redressal systems have weakened localized systems, with complaints often marked as "resolved" without proper contact or resolution.

The implementation of eKYC has also been fraught with challenges, including internet issues causing delays, multiple visits to PDS shops, and long waiting hours. Migrant families faced additional difficulties due to frequent relocations, while fair price dealers denied ration under the pretext of missing eKYC. Families were forced to pay up to ₹800 per person to complete eKYC due to fears of immediate ration card cancellation. Overall, while digitization aims to improve transparency and efficiency, it has led to significant exclusion and challenges for vulnerable populations, exacerbating food insecurity, and undermining the effectiveness of food security policies.

Sreerupa, ISST spoke of *Digitalisation at the frontlines*, describing the ASHA workers' experiences from two states of India, Haryana and Rajasthan to show two very different ways in which digitalization has been implemented. Her presentation investigated how digitalization in healthcare transforms ASHAs' lives post-pandemic, examining whether it empowers them or exacerbates their marginalization. On the one hand in Haryana, the top-down digitalization emphasizes ASHAs as "SMART ASHAs," focusing on data collection and surveillance. This approach has led to resistance and feelings of alienation among ASHA workers. On the other hand, in Rajasthan, worker-centric digitalization through tools like the Pregnancy, Child Tracking and Health Services (PCTS) app enables ASHAs to track their work and plan tasks, making them feel valued while fostering trust and respect.



An intersectional justice framework should be adopted to redistribute power and visibility. The digital systems should be co-designed and worker-friendly, using participatory approaches, with adequate recognition and compensation for care and digital labor. The government should invest in reliable digital infrastructure and community-driven data governance. It was also imperative to provide gender-responsive digital skill development tailored to diverse needs.



The discussant, **Rajendran Narayanan, Azim Premji University** highlighted how expanding digital systems in welfare programmes is reshaping the relationship between citizens and the state, often in ways that undermine access and rights. Reflecting on observations from field visits, he noted a stark contrast between the absence of basic services and the presence of highly sophisticated systems designed to monitor citizens. While state systems do not enable poor citizens to “see” what the government is doing, they are engineered effectively for the government to keep a close watch on people. Drawing from experience with the NREGA

database, he noted that while large numbers of workers were deleted, MIS and data operators lacked clear operational modules and often worked according to their own interpretations. Their actions were not necessarily driven by harmful intentions but resulted in new systemic problems. He pointed to the growing datafication of care, particularly in Anganwadis, with the increasing use of technologies such as facial recognition, leading to exclusion of thousands of beneficiaries. Digital processes such as mandatory eKYC, have led to an inversion of the state–citizen relationship—shifting citizens from rights-bearing individuals to entities treated more like customers. This reflects a privatization of citizenship, without a corresponding strengthening of grievance-redressal mechanisms.

He emphasized that data “does not come with a model on its back, but with a politics on its back,” underscoring that digitalization must be understood both as a set of rights and a set of practices. Governance priorities have shifted from inputs and processes toward outputs and outcomes. Invoking James Scott’s *Seeing Like a State*, he argued that such digital systems represent a modern, refined form of state surveillance and control. Developments such as the Special Intensive Revision of the electoral rolls and the emphasis upon e-KYC everywhere amount to an “annihilation of rights” and these approaches being adopted for digitalization is leading to massive deletions.



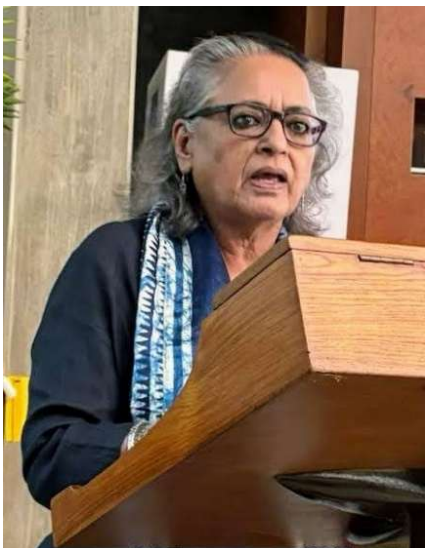
WORKING SESSION 2: CARE WORK AND LIVELIHOODS

Women's equal access to decent livelihoods and employment requires subsidised care, and public services, investment in care services and care infrastructure. This session anchored by **Jahnvi Andharia of ISST** presented a gendered overview of the challenges of the livelihood scenario in the current Indian context. It examined various dimensions of the emerging interest in the Care economy - its possibilities and persistent challenges. The Anchor introduced the theme by drawing attention to the strong interlinkage between the care burden and women's aspirations to secure decent and well-paid livelihood opportunities.

The session outline –

1. *Opening Remarks by the Chair* – Neetha N, CWDS
2. *Overview of political economy and macro-economic framing* – Ritu Dewan
3. *Unpaid Care Work and the Care Economy* – Mubashira Zaidi, ISST
4. *Livelihood: Current context* - Gautam Bhan, IIHS
1. *Closing Remarks by the Chair* – Neetha N, CWDS

The panel began with some opening remarks by the Discussant, **Neetha N. of CWDS**, who emphasized that while the contribution of care work is now marginally acknowledged, there remains a significant gap in recognizing its centrality to the lives of women, men, and children. She highlighted the importance of public investment in care and underscored that strengthening care infrastructure is essential. Access to subsidized care, she argued, should be treated as a right for every individual. Turning to state-led care policies, she referred to the *Palna*² scheme under Mission Shakti, which has replaced the earlier National Crèche Scheme. The current crèche provisions are designed to serve all mothers, regardless of their



employment status. She noted that there are two types of crèches operating: those run by Anganwadi Workers (AWW) and standalone crèches. According to the Ministry's website, around 52,000 children are currently benefiting from these services. She pointed out that although the Union Budget allocated ₹150 crore to Mission Shakti, only ₹40 crore had been spent by February. Finally, she noted that there are no structured provisions for elderly care apart from what is included under the National Health Mission.

The first speaker on the panel was **Ritu Dewan**, who provided an *Overview of the political economy and the*

² *Palna* scheme provides quality, safe crèche (daycare) facilities for children aged 6 months to 6 years of working mothers, offering nutrition, health, and development support to boost female workforce participation.

macro-economic framing. Ritu began by interrogating the conceptualization of care, insisting it must be understood within the lived realities of a developing country. She situated challenges around care and livelihoods within a broader trajectory of de-development, characterized by growth alongside de-industrialization, informalization, and labour market restructuring. The impacts of demonetization and the GST regime, she argued, remain insufficiently studied, particularly in relation to employment structures and the declining contribution of manufacturing to GDP. She emphasized that care and livelihoods are deeply interconnected, spanning paid, unpaid, and underpaid work. Macro-economic shifts in developing contexts raise fundamental questions about why people enter production, including petty production and the reproduction of goods and services within the social sphere. Ritu highlighted the dual phenomena of jobless growth and job-loss growth, noting that care is shaped not only by supply but also by demand factors at both micro and macro levels.

Gendered labour patterns were central to her analysis, with women and migrant men often engaged in unpaid or cost-saving activities within enterprises. She underscored rising wage inequalities, declining real wages, and a widening gender wage gap. Clarifying that entrepreneurship is distinct from self-employment, she stressed that many turn to self-employment out of necessity rather than choice. Ritu raised concerns about diluted labour protections under new Labour Codes and the Forest Rights Act Amendment, alongside pressures from global trade debates affecting industries such as garments. She critiqued schemes like Ladli Behna, where Direct Benefit Transfers to women are financed by cuts to other welfare programs, thereby sidelining discussions on women's work and dignity. She concluded by invoking Constitutional guarantees under Articles 19 and 39, affirming rights to freedom of association and economic justice.

Ritu ended by proposing recommended actions to address the crisis of Livelihoods and Care:
For Workers' Welfare

- Update the National Floor Wage, last revised in 2017.
- Build integrated housing for migrant workers, learning from the vulnerabilities exposed during COVID-19.
- Create community workplaces to reduce women's individual burdens of unpaid care work.

For Better Fiscal Management

- Release NREGA funds to states promptly to ensure timely wage payments.
- Link federal funds to states' performance on Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicators.
- Reform Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) methodology for greater impact.

Fostering a Pluralistic and Equitable Economy

- Actively Promote a Cooperative Economy: Leverage the new Ministry of Cooperatives to actively facilitate the formation of sector-specific or occupation-specific

cooperatives. This provides a vital third alternative (besides public and private sectors) that promotes local ownership and democratic control.

- Differentiate GST and Compliance for MSMEs: Recognise the distinct nature of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) by creating a differential GST structure and simplified compliance regime. Applying the same tax standards to MSMEs and giant corporations creates an unlevel playing field and stifles small business growth.



The second panel speaker was **Mubashira Zaidi, ISST** who spoke on *Unpaid care work and the care economy*. Mubashira presented a pre-budget analysis to highlight the critical issues surrounding unpaid and paid care work in India, particularly focusing on informal women workers. She emphasized the persistent underinvestment in care infrastructure, the economic subsidy provided by women through unpaid care labor, and the invisibility of care as a foundational economic infrastructure. Macroeconomic policies in India often treat care as a household responsibility, leading to fragmented and underfunded care systems. The 2025-26 budget included allocations for childcare, nutrition,

healthcare, and infrastructure, but it lacked a direct, structured approach to formalizing care jobs, providing universal social protection, and investing in large-scale care infrastructure. Women disproportionately bear the burden of unpaid care work, leading to depletion, time poverty, and "time stretching," which is further exacerbated by caste, class, and spatial inequalities.

Mubashira advocated for addressing these issues through formalization of care jobs, improved public infrastructure, proximity of resources, quality childcare and elder care, and ensuring dignity for paid domestic workers. She highlights the feminization of paid care work, with women constituting over 70% of the workforce, and emphasized the potential for creating 11 million new jobs through investment in the care economy. However, paid care workers often face poor working conditions, lack of minimum wages, formal contracts, and social security. Her key recommendations were to

- Call for strategic budget allocations to ensure fair wages, social security, and safe working conditions for domestic workers.
- The need for gender-disaggregated and intersectional data systems, universal and equitable care services, and the application of the 6R+ framework (Recognize Reduce, Redistribute, Reward, Represent, and Resource) to address care work
- The importance of treating care as foundational economic infrastructure and aligning policies with India's G20 commitments to support women's participation in education and employment.

The third speaker on the panel was **Gautam Bhan (IIHS - Indian Institute for Human Settlements)** who spoke on *Care in the context of women's livelihoods*. Gautam outlined ongoing initiatives at IIHS, including collaborations with the governments of Odisha and Meghalaya to implement the *Palna* scheme and evaluation of the *Koosina Mane* model in Karnataka. He framed the discussion around strengthening both care infrastructure and the care economy, emphasizing investment in women as mothers and workers. While welcoming the ICDS/Palna model for children aged 6 months to 3 years, he noted challenges, particularly in costing and the division of Central and State contributions. Without clear allocations for nutrition, per-child costs, infrastructure, and worker salaries, effective outcome-level improvements remain difficult.



Gautam identified several gaps: inadequate nutrition budgets that cannot be offset by reducing take-home rations; insufficient investment in Anganwadi Centre (AWC) repairs and upgrades; and weak convergence with water, sanitation, and infrastructure schemes. Gautam stressed that alongside macroeconomic reforms, pragmatic micro-level interventions are essential. Decisions about childcare infrastructure must be guided by workplace spatiality. Mapping women workers across cities—especially in vending, construction, and garment supply chains—can enable targeted crèche placement and strengthen livelihoods. IIHS is experimenting with workers' collectives establishing crèches, citing the Rajasthan Mahila Kamgar Union as an example. Gautam emphasized spatial targeting in policy design, supported by infrastructure measures such as rent and transport, with transport vouchers being particularly feasible.

He concluded by urging a shift in perspective: investment in care should be treated as capital expenditure, recognizing its role in enabling women's participation in the labour force. He also highlighted the need for incentives for workers during the transition of AWCs into *Palna* centres. Gautam made the following key recommendations -

- i. Provide the additional incentive to all eligible workers, without complex phasing.
- ii. Increase funding for nutrition to reflect actual costs, without requiring substitution from Take Home Rations (THR) or state budgets
- iii. Allocate dedicated funds for repairs and upgradation of Anganwadi Centres (AWCs)- target existing water, sanitation and infrastructure schemes e.g., Jal Jeevan Mission, Swachh Bharat

- iv. Expand the ecosystem of care services: Create funding lines for non-ICDS, public-care service delivery models to foster innovation and fill gaps
- v. Create spatial care infrastructure around areas where women workers are concentrated
- vi. Reframe Care as a Strategic Investment: Shift the narrative from social expenditure to investment in care infrastructure. There is a need to get out of "revenue expenditure to the capital expenditure and see it as an investment to convince the government".

An online participant urged shifting narratives to engage men in the care economy, beyond ASHA and Anganwadi roles. Current recommendations risk reinforcing gendered stereotypes about care. Rethinking perceptions, challenging norms that devalue care roles, and creating environments where men find dignity, opportunity, and recognition in care work is essential to reshape discourse and promote inclusivity.

In conclusion of the panel discussion, the discussant **Neetha N.** emphasized the importance of advocating for minimum wages and decent wages in care work. She further noted that the recommendation of creating community workplaces would have to take into account the highly stratified Indian society along the lines of caste and religion. Neetha also raised the question of how do we look at cash transfers that are being handed out to women? How are care facilities and infrastructure envisioned within these kinds of schemes and programmes because they are not bringing the agenda of social and gender transformation.



WORKING SESSION THREE : STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Systemic and everyday violence is embedded in the economic, social, and political institutions, causing immeasurable harm to Dalits, Adivasis, marginalized women and non-binary people. This perpetuates caste-based discrimination, gender inequality, and economic exploitation, effectively denying women access to fundamental human rights. This session anchored by **Suneeta Dhar (FPC)** presented evidence from research studies and budget analysis, advocating for long-term strategies that dismantle inequities, while demanding greater accountability and fiscal commitments. It called for centering voices of women survivors and

women's movement groups, to transform harmful norms, power dynamics and institutional apathy.

Session Outline:

1. *Overview of structural violence and its impacts on diverse women* - Navsharan Singh, Independent researcher, Scholar
2. *Case Study presentations (Online)*
 - a. *Structural violence on women in Agriculture* - Seema Kulkarni SOPPECOM & MAKAAAM
 - b. *Budgets for Dalit and Adivasi Women: A critical analysis* - Grijesh Dinkar, Advocate, NCDHR
 - c. *A decade of Nirbhaya Fund*: Ravi Duggal, Researcher
 - d. *PWDVA 2005³: Reflections on two decades* - Sanjida Arora, CEHAT
3. *Closing remarks and Policy asks*: Anupriya, JAGORI



Navsharan Singh, as Chair provided key remarks on ***Structural violence and its impacts on diverse women***, emphasizing how shifts in policy discourse tend to frame women primarily within the private sphere, even as they promote paid employment opportunities. Persistent issues - gender wage disparity, declining real wages, and wage stagnation - remain unaddressed. Although schemes aim to strengthen women's decision-making within families, they rarely scrutinize violence within the household or structural vulnerabilities such as land insecurity. Besides, rights-based welfare has been replaced by technology-driven models that emphasize benefits ("freebies") without ensuring entitlements, further weakening frameworks like Forest Rights Act (2006) and PESA⁴ (1996) that once protected marginalized communities.

³ Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005 (PWDVA)

⁴ The PESA Act (Provisions of the Panchayats Extension to Scheduled Areas Act, 1996) is a law extending the 73rd Constitutional Amendment's Panchayat system to Fifth Schedule tribal areas, empowering tribal communities with self-governance through the [Gram Sabha](#) (village assembly) for managing natural resources, traditions, and local development, ensuring decisions align with customary laws, though implementation faces bureaucratic challenges

A second shift noted was a proliferation of new women's empowerment schemes, often launched around election cycles - such as the *Mukhyamantri Mahila Yojana* or *Ladli Behna* initiatives across M.P., Maharashtra, and Jharkhand. These large-scale programmes promise improved skills, safety, and well-being, yet lack systematic evaluation, raising concerns about their actual efficacy and the diversion of significant state resources. Navsharan further emphasized that structural GBV is experienced differently across class groups, with marginalized women facing heightened vulnerability in relation to *jal, jangal, zameen* (water, forests, land - seen as crucial resources for survival). Families, institutions, and power structures remain insulated from scrutiny. She urged a deeper interrogation of how current policies may reproduce rather than resolve gendered and structural inequalities.

Case Study Presentations

a. Structural violence on women in agriculture: Seema Kulkarni of SOPPECOM, in her online presentation, highlighted how structural violence profoundly shapes the lives of rural women in Maharashtra, Telangana, and Punjab. Despite constituting nearly 77% of the agricultural workforce, women remain largely invisible in policy frameworks, unrecognized as farmers. Their recent study revealed that commercialization, mono-cropping, mechanization, and chemical-based farming intensify women's precarity, dispossessing them of land, restricting access to forests and water, and excluding them from entitlements such as credit, crop insurance, and PM-Kisan benefits. These disadvantages are most acute for women from Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and NT-DNT communities, who face early marriage, limited education, informalized work, poor health access, and heightened exposure to violence in domestic and agricultural spaces.

Seema critiqued election-driven "empowerment" schemes that divert resources without addressing fundamental rights to land, housing, irrigation, or dignified work. Women remain dependent on exploitative microfinance and SHG-based credit, which perpetuate debt cycles rather than enabling productive livelihoods. Legal protections like the POSH Act (2013) and PWDVA (2005) remain ineffective in rural contexts, as patriarchal norms and weak institutions make invisible violence over land, workplaces, and within families. Seema emphasized that women's collectives—SHGs, labour groups, and Farmer Producer Organisations—offer pathways to challenge inequalities, secure livelihoods, and strengthen bargaining power. Her recommendations call for the government to -

- i. Formally recognise women as farmers, expand farmer definitions to include cultivators, tenants, sharecroppers, and labourers; ensure women's ownership, access, control over land, water, forests, housing and commons.
- ii. Reform agricultural policies through a transformative gender lens to address structural violence.
- iii. Scale up agroecology and revive traditional cropping systems to ensure sustainability and resilience.

- iv. Strengthen collective farming, women-led groups/FPOs with credit, training, and institutional support; expand access to formal low-interest credit and regulate exploitative microfinance practices.
- v. Strengthen MGNREGA and rural livelihood programmes with gender-responsive provisions and skilling; ensure women's meaningful participation in local resource governance.
- vi. Extend POSH protections to agriculture and allied workplaces and establish local redressal systems; invest in community campaigns to advance education, end early marriage.
- vii. Conduct regular gender and caste audits of schemes, strengthen monitoring and accountability systems, mandate gender-disaggregated data in national surveys.



b. Budgets for Dalit and Adivasi Women: Grijesh Dinkar, National Campaign for Dalit Human Rights speaking online, highlighted the rise in violence against Dalit women, citing NCRB data to show the scale and persistence of the crisis. Crimes against Scheduled Castes increased from 57,569 cases in 2020 to 57,766 in 2023, including 8,505 incidents of sexual violence against Dalit women/girls, 3,069 assault cases and 4,240 rapes. Despite strong legal provisions under the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act and the Protection of Civil Rights Act, enforcement remains weak. Though chargesheets for SC/ST cases rose from 79.9% in 2022 to 81.1% in 2023, conviction rates fell from 34% to 31.7%, acquittals increased to 63.1%. Courts remain heavily burdened, with 93.8% (3,11,986) cases pending. Conviction rates in rape cases remain low at 30.5%, revealing deep failures in access to justice.

Grijesh noted that weak implementation, limited state capacity, and inadequate budgets hinder effective enforcement. Budget allocations under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment dropped from ₹500 crore in 2023–24 to ₹463 crore in 2025, even though these funds support judicial mechanisms, survivor relief and rehabilitation (including land, pensions, and employment), protection structures, awareness efforts, and special police stations mandated to prevent and address atrocity cases and the National Helpline for Atrocities. Most states lack functional special courts and protection structures, and there is no public data on

the number of survivors who receive compensation, significantly undermining protection and justice for Dalit women and girls. The key actions recommended by Grijesh include:

- i. Stronger state accountability with significant investments to address caste-based violence against Dalit women/girls.
- ii. Increased central allocations to the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act and the Protection of Civil Rights Act to ensure adequate funding for helplines for atrocities, judicial processes, survivor relief, and rehabilitation measures such as land allotment, pensions, and employment support.
- iii. Recording data on numbers of Dalit survivors receiving compensation or relief (currently no data is available); this must be publicly shared.
- iv. Establishing without delay Special Courts in all districts (as per Act, as many districts do not have it).

c. Nirbhaya Fund: Learnings from a decade: Ravi Duggal (online) highlighted that a decade



of the Nirbhaya Fund revealed “grossly inadequate resources and skewed spending,” noting that allocations dropped from ₹1,000 crore annually in the early years to under ₹500 crore more recently, even as crimes against women continue to rise. Of the ₹7,700 crore allocated since 2013, only about ₹6,000 crore has been spent, with 75–80% for the Ministry of Home Affairs for surveillance-oriented “Safe City” projects and other infrastructure, that

should be covered under core departmental budgets. In contrast, essential support such as One Stop Centres (OSCs) have received only ₹850 crore over ten years, and victim compensation funds remain severely inadequate: with around 30,000 reported rapes annually, the compensation guidelines require ₹7 lakh per case, the annual requirement is at least ₹2,100 crore, compared to the cumulative ₹200 crore allocated so far. He pointed to the stark gap between registered crime data and actual prevalence - NFHS-5 shows 27% spousal violence compared to just 0.07% registered cases - underscoring the need for cost-based budgeting grounded in service demands. Ravi concluded with three policy imperatives:

- i. *Adopt budget allocations grounded in realistic costing, aligned with ground realities* - if trends suggest approximately 30,000 cases of rape cases annually, compensation will require around ₹2,100 crore based on existing guidelines. Similarly, establishing and operating a One Stop Centre at the district level costs roughly ₹5 million per center per year, implying an annual requirement of about ₹400 crore for sustained operations nationwide.
- ii. *Prioritize expenditures on core services and avoid diversion of funds* - The Nirbhaya Fund should focus on essential interventions - running One Stop Centers, strengthening helplines, treatment, counselling and timely victim compensation. Funds should not be

channeled into infrastructure-oriented and technology initiatives, as these can be funded through other government budgets.

- iii. *Ensure greater transparency and regular public reporting* - There is no annual report or consolidated public dashboard on Nirbhaya Fund utilization. The only comprehensive updates tend to surface through Parliamentary questions, with the last detailed information presented in 2022. Instituting mandatory annual reports would significantly improve accountability and enable evidence-based planning.



d. PWDVA 2005 - Reflections on two decades: Sanjida Arora highlighted the lack of adequate and effective resource allocation that hinders implementation of the PWDVA. Financial allocations are hardly aligned with the commitments and provisions within the Act, resulting in implementation gaps including mandatory appointment of Protection Officers (PO), establishment and smooth functioning of shelters, provision for counselling and legal aid for survivors. Due to gaps in dedicated funding part time appointments of POs is undertaken without operational budgets, vacant posts, remain service delivery is challenged due to lack of transport and staff and finally delayed case processing.

This is compounded by resource crunch in support services including shelters, legal aid, counselling. Service providers operate without proper provisions and funding. The absence of dedicated budget lines at national and state levels leaves utilization of funds at the discretion of states. The lack of specific guidelines and monitoring systems has led to low expenditure, lack of alignment with survivor-centric service delivery approach and lack of coordination which gravely affects access to justice for survivors and increases their vulnerabilities. She urges that gender budgeting needs to look at violence against women and girls as an economic concern and a public cost, that affects productivity and generational wellbeing. Sanjida recommended:

- i. Dedicated national and state budget lines for PWDVA
- ii. A shift in focus of allocations from infrastructural aspects to women-centric services like shelters, counselling or legal support
- iii. Urgent need for dedicated funding for full time appointment of Protection Officers, and for strengthening counselling, legal aid and shelters.

- iv. Close tracking for accountability and utilization of allocations to ensure effective implementation and transformative outcomes.

In her closing remarks, **Anupriya of JAGORI**, shared a few policy asks, highlighting the broader premise, that proposed solutions need to reflect the complex and multifaceted nature of the problems being addressed. She pointed out that it was imperative to frame and articulate GRB recommendations in non-binary terms, accounting for vulnerabilities across diverse gender identities. From a feminist standpoint, she emphasized that negotiations cannot be premised on settling for less attitude – ‘we can’t let the standards to be set at the bare minimum’. In conclusion, she proposed that effective convergence of different laws, schemes, ministries and departments in terms of budgeting for GBV redress systems is the need of the hour.



WORKING SESSION FOUR: INSTITUTIONALIZING GENDER RESPONSIVE BUDGETING

Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) in India was initiated in 2005-06, as a tool through which the governments can use their fiscal policy to promote equality between men and women by recognising gender gaps, allocating money, setting targets and directing funds to meet them. However, coverage and impact remained limited over the last two decades, with only partial implementation. The lack of accountability and outcome measurement is a challenge, prompting calls for a clear legislative mandate to ensure comprehensive gender budgeting and improved gender equality outcomes. This session anchored by **Nesar Ahmad of BARC** presented the need and scope of such a legal instrument and explored the broad contents and institutional arrangements to make it a success, building on experience and international best practices, towards launching a nationwide campaign to advocate for enactment of such a mandate.

The session outline –

1. *Introduction by moderator* – Raman V R, CBGA
2. *Broad mandates of a potential legal instrument for GRB and essential institutional arrangements* - Ms. Uma Mahadevan, Addl. Chief Secy., Govt of Karnataka
3. *Presenting the case for GRB legislation* - Nesar Ahmad, BARC & Aasha Kapur Mehta, IHD
4. *Making the GRB legislation inclusive and functional* - Beena Pallical, NCDHR
5. *Launching a campaign for realising GRB*- Sanghamitra Dhar, UN Women
6. *Remarks by Chair* -Yamini Mishra, Country Director, MacArthur Foundation



Raman V R opened the session by introducing the chair and speakers and framing the need for strengthening GRB in India. Although GRB has been recognised at national and state levels for nearly twenty years, implementation gaps persist. Only 38 out of 62 Union ministries have functional Gender Budget Cells, and despite 75% of Centrally Sponsored Schemes incorporating gender components, only half are reflected in the Gender Budget Statement (GBS)—indicating weak reporting. He raised the following key areas for discussion:

1. What is the potential and what are the possibilities of introducing a legislative framework to strengthen the GRB process in India?
2. How can gender budgeting be integrated as an organic and core component of the budget-making process?
3. How can GRB allocations move beyond being a mere statement to becoming a binding, accountable commitment?

The first panel speaker was **Ms Uma Mahadevan, Additional Chief Secretary and Development Commissioner, Government of Karnataka** who spoke on *Broad mandates of a potential legal instrument for GRB and essential institutional arrangements*. In her statement, Ms. Mahadevan emphasized the widespread acceptance of Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) by both the Union and State governments, arguing that effective implementation and tangible impact should be prioritized over immediate legislation. She highlighted that modern digital platforms and data systems now enable precise assessment of needs and allocation of resources. Some of the major ways forward, in her opinion, were:

- **Shift from Allocation to Impact:** The primary goal of GRB should be ensuring that allocated funds are fully utilized and yield measurable benefits for women, rather than simply meeting a fixed budgetary quota
- **Granular, Gender-Conscious Design:** To achieve meaningful change, government departments must adopt a detailed approach that designs interventions specific to the target women's needs, moving beyond simply accounting for a share of existing schemes
- **Demonstrated Success in Karnataka:** Specific initiatives in Karnataka, such as targeted campaigns that increased women's participation in MGNREGA from 47% to 55%, the

introduction of childcare services (Koosina Mane), free bus travel, and unconditional cash transfers, serve as strong examples of schemes effectively designed to benefit women [1].

- **Integrated Support Systems:** GRB is most effective when combined with financial inclusion, literacy programs, and sector-specific interventions. An imaginative approach to scheme design can support essential services like childcare, elderly care, and opportunities for women-owned small businesses [1].
- **Collaborative Implementation:** Successfully advancing the GRB process requires consultation with technology experts, designers, and on-the-ground stakeholders, as well as cross-departmental reviews and phased engagement with individual departments [1].

Responding to an audience question about what motivates governments to make such shifts, Ms Mahadevan responded that sustained dialogue, evidence generation, and collaborative reviews have helped Karnataka build momentum. She also pointed to expanding technological platforms—now more inclusive and accessible—as tools to strengthen monitoring and ensure women and persons with disabilities are not left out. Ms Mahadevan’s key recommendations were -

- i. Set realistic but strong gender targets across departments and ensure allocations match intended outcomes; increase transparency and track progress. Shift from allocation-focused Gender Budgeting to outcome-focused monitoring, ensuring that budgets translate into measurable change on the ground.
- ii. Map beneficiaries across sectors (informal sectors) to link women to schemes they are eligible for but currently missing.
- iii. Leverage improved tech platforms to ensure inclusive, accessible services for women and persons with disabilities.
- iv. Expand community childcare infrastructure, using panchayat spaces and schemes like *Palna* to support women’s labour participation.
- v. Invest in nutrition, financial inclusion, and financial literacy as core pillars of Gender Budgeting outcomes.

The second panel presentation on *Presenting the case for GRB Legislation* was done jointly by Aasha Kapur Mehta and Nesar Ahmad. **Aasha Kapur Mehta, IHD**, acknowledged that significant efforts have already been made in the gender budgeting space in India, tracing the two-decade institutional trajectory of GRB in India outlining the policy frameworks, committees and capacity building efforts started since 2003, including efforts to

- ✓ Constitute gender budget cells in all departments,
- ✓ Institute mandatory gender assessments across ministries,
- ✓ Promote gender audits, conduct outcome–output analyses,
- ✓ Integrate a gender lens at the program design stage,
- ✓ Implement capacity-building initiatives through various administrative channels.



Despite these extensive efforts within the executive framework, GRB continues to have major gaps in implementation and reporting. Of the 62 ministries with GB cells, only 38 currently report to the GBS, and the maximum allocation remains around 8%. The limited gender mainstreaming across ministries was also evident by very skewed allocations: Part A of the GBS 2025-2026 shows 72% of allocations from the Ministry of Rural Development alone, and Part B shows 33% from the Department of Food and Public Distribution. She argued that these issues make the case for a GRB Act essential to ensure outcome reporting, gender audits and accountability across all levels of government.

Nesar Ahmad, BARC drew attention to constitutional provisions such as Article 15, which require proactive state action to address inequalities. He also cited the NITI Aayog recommendation for a formalised GRB law and international examples such as Colombia that demonstrate feasibility. He argued that the absence of a legal mandate is a key reason for weak accountability and inconsistent reporting in the current GRB framework.

Nesar suggested that the GRB act should mandate adopting GRB at all levels of government, including local bodies. The Act should address not only allocations but also the way spending occurs in gender equality areas, with measurable and verifiable commitments and indicators. The Act should establish enabling institutional mechanisms to implement all GRB processes including adequate financial provisions for capacity building and mandatory allocation linked to clear, time-bound spending priorities. The mandate should ensure accountability, guaranteeing proper utilisation of allocated funds and social audits. The framework should be inclusive and intersectional, addressing the needs of women and gender-nonconforming individuals from marginalised and minority communities, people with disabilities, and others facing systemic exclusion. The Act should include large corporate and private sector spending.

The next speaker was **Beena Pallical, NCDHR**, who spoke on *Making the GRB legislation inclusive and functional*. Beena began with concrete case example from Haryana's rapidly expanding textile-recycling industry, where heavy international investment contrasts sharply with the extreme precarity of Dalit and OBC women workers, who working long hours for very poor pay in hazardous, dust-filled units



leading to respiratory illnesses. Yet these workers lack any state safety net, can't afford visiting hospitals as out of pocket expenses are high and have no social security. This raises critical questions about what GRB truly means for the most marginalised women. GRB should be inclusive and we should think of including that last Dalit women, or transperson or non-binary person at the end of the line, ensuring that no one is left behind. Beena pointed out that only 1.2% of the total Union budget benefits Dalit women, and a mere 0.6% benefits Adivasi women. She stressed the need for disaggregated beneficiary data to effectively track outcomes and hold the government accountable.

Drawing from her extensive advocacy experience on the Scheduled Caste Sub Plan (SCSP), the Tribal Sub Plan (TSP), and the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, Beena highlighted that successful legislative campaigns require strong community mobilisation and widespread ground-level awareness of policies and their impact. After three to four years of sustained grassroots organizing and engagement with the government, undivided Andhra Pradesh enacted the SC-SP and TSP legislation, followed by Karnataka, Rajasthan, and Uttarakhand. While not all states show effective implementation, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana demonstrate clear improvements in implementation and monitoring of schemes under the SC and ST sub-plans after the legislation came into force. Beena underscored the importance of continuous engagement with state governments and strategic liaison with a spectrum of political actors. Strategically cultivating champions across political parties will be essential to initiate legislative efforts in states that show openness, as an entry point for catalysing a nationwide shift toward intersectional and inclusive GRB.

The final panel speaker **Sanghamitra Dhar** of **UN Women** spoke on *Launching a campaign for realising GRB*. Sanghamitra recommended a planned, multisectoral strategy anchored in both legislative reform and sustained political engagement for advancing GRB. GRB is not merely a technical budgeting reform, it is a democratic, economic, and social investment, and thus requires a legal framework to ensure accountability and continuity at all stages: formulation, approval, execution, and oversight. She emphasised that institutionalising each stage of the GRB cycle across national and state governments is essential for mainstreaming the process. She underscored the importance of gender-disaggregated data, to enable accurate measurement, monitoring, and outcome assessment, explaining the importance of a clear baseline.

Sanghamitra discussed the ecosystem with the government at the primary level, civil society and women's groups at the secondary level, and economists, the private sector, media, and researchers at the third level. She recommended adopting a four-pillar strategy: awareness and narrative building, evidence generation, political engagement and alliance-building, and public mobilisation, including digital strategies, to build broad support for GRB. Quantifiable and scalable research evidence is essential to strengthen the demands, frame recommendations in ways that align with government priorities, and cultivate supportive officials and political personnel to gain entry into policymaking spaces. Ultimately, she

emphasised that sustained collaboration across government, CSOs, experts, and communities is necessary to embed gender equality.



The session came to a close with concluding remarks by the Chair, **Yamini Mishra, MacArthur Foundation**. Yamini critically reflected on what the budget truly means for marginalized communities. She noted that while governments often introduce tax concessions and assume that “money will fix it,” such measures overlook the class dimensions and structural exclusions embedded in public finance. Yamini emphasized that GRB is not merely a tracking exercise—it is fundamentally about ensuring public accountability that must

accompany resource allocation so that budgets reflect where we need to be in terms of gender justice and social inclusion. The premise of GRB was that women’s empowerment requires resources but accountability has always been a central element of the GRB framework.

Addressing the question of legalisation, she highlighted the complexities of enactment and implementation of such an act: changes in government can alter priorities; legislation must move through Parliament; and enforcement remains a persistent challenge. While a legal framework would also place GRB under the oversight of Parliament rather than leaving it solely to the domain of the executive, she cautioned that key concerns remain to be addressed before pursuing legislation for GRB, such as:

- ✓ Who enforces the law and who is accountable?
- ✓ What penalties apply for non-compliance?
- ✓ Will fixed indicators make the system rigid?
- ✓ Should accountability hinge on outcomes rather than allocations?
- ✓ Is a mandated minimum budget share advisable and, if so, what should it be?

Yamini further stressed that budgeting is not only about allocations but also about outcomes, which differ substantially for men and women. Time—an essential gendered resource—is rarely addressed in law or policy. She argued for more nuanced approaches that capture structural inequalities. Moving forward, she called for a budgeting framework that links allocations, enforcement, and outcomes, ensuring that public finance genuinely advances gender equity and responds to the lived realities of marginalized groups.

CLOSING REMARKS

The Working Sessions of the PBC closed with a brief vote of thanks by **Suneeta Dhar, Co Convenor of the FPC**, who spoke online highlighting key themes from the day's discussions on gender transformative financing. She expressed deep appreciation to each presenter and reiterated key points about engaging with substantive policy critiques, demanding accountability and systemic fixes, along with catalysing a long-term political will. Financing for gender equality is an urgent global priority, and the immense funding gap highlights a significant disconnect between political will and tangible investments. The lack of sustained funding has had severe negative impacts on women's movement groups and local community organisations. Gender Responsive Budgeting while being embedded within legal, policy, and intersectional frameworks, must focus on building outcome-based monitoring to ensure fiscal sustainability. The deliberations have shown that a National Care Policy would speak to a full spectrum of care (child, elder, health/disability support), which is critical in the present times. We cannot and should not be waiting for another century to achieve gender equality: *'The time is NOW'*! Suneeta concluded that the affirmation by many participants and speakers of FPC extends its rich mandate to advance the feminist policy agenda, and take forward the emerging recommendations from this Consultation.



Details of the proceedings - Day Two 22nd November Saturday

OPENING SESSION

The second day of the Pre-Budget Consultation opened with **Dr. Sona Mitra, FPC** reflecting on the intensity of Day 1, noting that the sessions enabled the Collective to articulate its work to a broader audience beyond internal circles. She recapped key insights from all the sessions, emphasising Professor Ghosh's critical point that India is perceived as one of the world's biggest social spenders primarily because of state-level expenditure, making state budgets central to social-sector financing. She underscored the urgency of distinguishing the responsibilities of Union ministries versus state governments, especially as states are increasingly asked to execute Union mandates without commensurate financial support, often relying on their own budgets, loans, or donor-backed funds. She highlighted key analytical takeaways from the four thematic panels:



- ✓ **Social protection:** digitalisation and AI-driven delivery systems are excluding vulnerable and gender-marginalised groups, reinforcing inequities.
- ✓ **Care and livelihoods:** care must be understood holistically and linked to employment; resource mobilisation needs clarity on the different components of care.
- ✓ **Structural Violence:** structural and sectoral forms of violence surfaced strongly, with insights from MWCD's work demonstrating the cross-sector nature of gender-based violence.
- ✓ **GRB:** renewed discussions on whether India requires a Gender Responsive Budgeting Act, and whether GRB should remain a standalone tool or be located within broader financing-for-development frameworks.

Sona also flagged a cross-cutting concern - the absence of clear outcome evaluations after 20 years of GRB practice, a question increasingly raised by funders and policy actors. She concluded by outlining the objective for Day 2: to move into working-group discussions aimed at prioritising sharp, actionable recommendations for Budget 2026–27 across Union, state, private-sector, and civil-society domains.

As the host organization, **Sanya Seth, UN Women**, provided a few initial remarks for the second day of the Pre-Budget Consultation. Sanya reiterated the value of the collective commitment driving the collaboration between UN Women and FPC, noting that the partnership has been able to demonstrate UN Women's triple mandate,



particularly its convening and coordination role. She stressed that GRB will continue to expand, but must not operate in isolation; instead, feminist actors must integrate a financing and budgeting lens across sectors to embed gendered nuance in policymaking.

Sanya flagged a growing vacuum in thought leadership and action leadership within government spaces, despite increasing activity in gender-related programmes. She argued that initiatives must be strengthened at both community level and union/global levels, ensuring alignment across scales. Her intervention reinforced the need for analytical clarity, cross-sector collaboration, and concrete pathways to translate gender-related commitments into budgetary and policy decisions.

GROUP DISCUSSIONS TO DEVELOP POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The major activity of the morning of the second day of the consultation was to have intensive discussions on the four thematic areas explored on Day One towards developing actionable recommendations. The group work was outlined by **Renu Khanna, Co-Convenor, FPC** who explained the structure and expectations of the Working Group discussions, emphasising that the recommendations must be sharp, actionable, and time-bound. She stated that inputs should be organised towards the Budget 2026, covering recommendations for the Union Budget, state governments, private sector partnerships, and civil society organisations. She stressed the importance of clearly identifying who needs to do what, how, and by when. Renu also insisted that all recommendations be accompanied by references and supporting evidence, ensuring credibility and traceability in the final Working Group outputs.

The participants then divided up into four groups around the hall, with online participants joining in through Zoom in each group. The groups were moderated by Session Anchors and had intensive deliberations for over an hour, with documentation of the discussions by the

volunteer rapporteurs. Finally, the participants reconvened in plenary for a presentation of the thematic recommendations from each Working Group.

Following the presentations from each group, there was some discussion in plenary on what else could be added for each thematic area.

General questions raised and comments -

- a. How should the Collective strategically position itself, especially when making national recommendations, for example, should the demands be framed in terms of meeting global standards, identifying the key elements required to reach them?
- b. How can the Collective demand a bigger share of the fiscal pie, and what pathways exist to justify and secure this?
- c. Can we identify departments capable of stronger performance with adequate "handholding."
- d. Can we grade states on gender-responsive performance and link this to advocacy strategies?
- e. How should references and evidence be framed to strengthen advocacy?
- f. FPC should consider establishing state-level partner networks to ground recommendations locally.

Theme-specific suggestions:

- g. Can we propose an Urban Employment Guarantee for women, noting that both programme implementers and participants are overwhelmingly women? Kerala has implemented a version similar to NREGA, with identical pay rates and design.
- h. We need to demand that minimum wages for women be ensured through welfare boards.
- i. Domestic workers are increasingly being turned into a platform-based service, underscoring the need for new regulatory and protection frameworks.
- j. Ration cards being issued in women's names can be significant as a structural support.
- k. India's rapidly ageing population makes geriatric care essential within social sector financing. Kerala's palliative care programme is a good practice.





At the end, the Chair of the session, **Sona Mitra FPC** provided her summary comments on the presentation of budget recommendations. Sona reflected on six years of FPC's pre-budget consultations and the need to categorise recommendations into clear cohorts. She suggested:

- i. There should be a clear focus on Budget-specific recommendations
- ii. We need to advocate for systems strengthening to ensure policies are implemented effectively
- iii. We have to address the non-availability of reliable data for policymaking
- iv. We should highlight that states are under immense fiscal pressure to sustain social-sector spending and call for greater unconditional transfers to states.

The complete list of recommendations presented is in **the Executive Summary of this report**

At the close of the working sessions, **Renu Khanna, Co-Convenor, FPC** gave the vote of thanks to all those who had contributed to making the PBC a success.



Policy Dialogue

CATALYSING CHANGE: FINANCING AND PARTNERSHIPS FOR GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE ACTION ON SDGS

Organised by SAHAJ, UN Women and Feminist Policy Collective

The primary objective of this policy dialogue was to examine both global and national progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through a gender lens, drawing upon the latest data from indices such as the SDG Gender Index (2024) of the EM2030, the SDG India Index and the Gender Snapshot Report 2025. The dialogue, anchored by **Dr. Nilangi Sardeshpande, SAHAJ** hoped to delineate actionable partnerships and transformative financing mechanisms, and policy approaches capable of bridging existing gender gaps across various SDG domains, thereby promoting inclusive, equitable, and sustainable development outcomes.

The Keynote Address was given by **Aparna Uppaluri, Antara Advisory**. Aparna highlighted that the local is connected to the global in more ways than we realise, especially in a digital world, and reflected on how conceptual frameworks shape SDG conversations. Drawing from her experience on global boards including Reach Alliance and EM2030, she noted that the SDGs made development universal beyond a “third world” frame and gave feminists a complex grid of standalone and cross-cutting indicators for mobilisation. Referencing Adam Tooze’s framing of “poly crisis” and Yun Yun Ang’s idea of a multipolar world offering opportunities to move *from poly crisis to poly unity*, she proposed, as feminist practice, seeing the SDGs as a bridge from poly crisis to poly unity and reimagining the universal in a multipolar world.

Reflecting on who is building this bridge, she questioned the limits of GDP as an indicator, asked where real entry points lie within capitalist enterprises, noted that only four of 14 gender indices use a feminist lens, and emphasised the need for stronger tools for collective impact, with data and capital as missing elements in unpacking power. Aparna concluded with a call for collectivising through stewardship, coordination and adaptation, and recognising the role of FPC and EM2030 in enabling pathways for poly unity.



PANEL 1: INDIA'S PROGRESS TOWARDS SDGS FROM A GENDER PERSPECTIVE

The first panel of the Policy Dialogue was chaired by **Sarojini Ganju-Thakur, FPC**. The first speaker on the panel was **Renu Khanna, SAHAJ** who spoke on *India's Progress on Gender Equality/Indicators*. Renu provided some key insights from the EM2030 report. She pointed out that ground-level realities of women and disenfranchised groups closely mirror the gaps

highlighted in the EM2030 SDG Gender Index. Globally no country is on track to achieve gender equality by 2030. Countries have progressed unevenly, with a core challenge remaining the lack of open gender data and globally comparable indicators, while the framework also fails to capture barriers faced by gender-diverse groups, with SDG 5 limited to a binary understanding of gender.

India ranks 91 out of 139 countries globally and 18 out of 26 regionally, and at the current pace will take nearly 55 years to reach a full SDG score. India has regressed on SDG 5 and is only halfway to the 2030 target. Strong performance is seen in SDGs 3 and 6, but macro gains often fail to reflect ground realities, while weak performance persists across SDGs 1, 5, 9, 10, 11, 16 and 17, with women's safety poorly captured under SDG 11. Women's bank account ownership has increased, but 32% of accounts remain inactive, and the weakest indicators include women's access to housing (11.1), food security (2.4), and leadership in senior government roles (5.5), pointing to the need for better indicator design to connect education with labour force participation.

Renu further spoke about the SDG India Index by NITI Aayog and highlighted the key insights. India's SDG 5 score has improved from 36 (2018) to 49 (2023–24), but deep gaps persist. The sex ratio at birth remains skewed at 929, spousal violence stands at 29.2%, women's land ownership is only 13.96%, the wage ratio is 0.76, and female labour force participation is 0.48. Regional disparities remain stark, with continued concerns around intersectional data gaps and insufficient financing for gender equality.

The second speaker on the panel was **Nileena Suresh, Data for India** who spoke on *Reading Between the Numbers: Gendered Realities in India's Data Systems*. Nileena began by explaining that Data for India uses public data to understand how people live across health, economy, work and other domains, going beyond the SDGs by highlighting the stories behind the numbers and the limitations of data sources. She then highlighted some significant aspects:

- On education, NITI Aayog indicators show gender parity in enrolment, with girls at par with boys, a success at the indicator level, yet sharp gaps exist in ICT

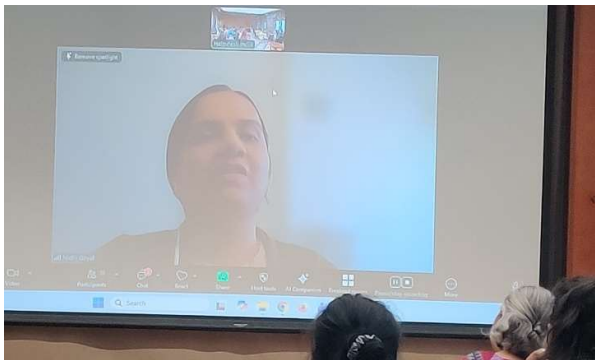


skills such as sending emails, using mobile phones and accessing the internet, showing that education is not translating into digital skills and leaving many women excluded.

- On women's work, female labour force participation is rising mainly due to growth in self-employment and informal work that is low-paid and insecure, while men continue to dominate salaried employment. There is a rise in short-term and subsidiary work where many women work for 30 days or less a year, even as women in part-time paid work continue to shoulder full-time domestic responsibilities.
- In manufacturing sectors such as beedi and tailoring, work remains informal and vulnerable to tariff changes, putting women at risk.

Nileena underscored that understanding the context of data remains critical, as administrative data excludes private facilities and survey data struggles to capture temporary work, underrepresents urban and wealthier groups, is sensitive to question framing, and differences between NSS and NFHS literacy measures show how headline numbers can mask lived realities, underscoring the need for reliable, gender-disaggregated data capturing diverse regional, class and caste realities.

The third speaker on the panel was **Nidhi Goyal, Rising Flame**, who spoke online on *Leaving*



No One Behind – Gender, Disability and the Gaps in Inclusion. Nidhi began by highlighting that under the SDGs, the Leave No One Behind (LNOB) principle is a major gain for Women with Disabilities (WWDs), as the MDGs has disregarded this. Yet inclusion continues to be justified largely through economic loss (7% of GDP) rather than human rights. According to WHO,

every fifth woman lives with a disability, with 80% of WWDs in developing countries; in India, literacy among WWDs is only 45% and unemployment remains high. Disability inclusion is critical in health, with conditions like multiple sclerosis affecting more women, yet disaggregated disability data remains inadequate and financing is not disability-specific.

Nidhi rued the fact that WWDs are often confined to maternal health in policy discourse and excluded from crime prevention, schemes like Mission Shakti, and consistent NFHS tracking. Complex marginalisation is stark, where intersecting identities force trade-offs in scheme access, as seen in lower compensation for WWDs under overlapping entitlements. Reproductive rights remain a major gap due to stigma, inaccessible services and lack of consent, while laws on disability and abortion contain loopholes and access to justice remains weak. Intimate partner violence is underreported, with poor institutional readiness, underscoring the need for disaggregated intersectional data as disability will affect all through ageing and caregiving under the LNOB framework.

The final panel speaker was **Dr. Zoya Ali Rizvi, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare** who spoke on *Strategies to Accelerate SDG Progress with a Focus on Women and Adolescents*. Dr Zoya began by pointing out that data from states is central to Ministry planning, but data quality remains a major challenge. Women's and adolescent health drives human capital and is linked to SDGs 1, 3, 4, 5, 8 and 10, with maternal and reproductive health at the core of SDG 3 and critical to reducing maternal deaths and improving infant outcomes. The intergenerational cycle of malnutrition cannot be broken without addressing women's and adolescents' nutrition, including over-nutrition and NCDs, while adolescent health shapes education, school completion and India's demographic dividend. SDG linkages must be demonstrated through interlinked indicators such as malnutrition, maternal health and adolescent outcomes.

Dr Zoya rued that rural and tribal communities face major access barriers, making disability-friendly Ayushman Arogya Mandirs and full RMNCH+A and adolescent services essential. Programme priorities include strengthening surveillance of maternal and perinatal deaths, district-level corrective action, education till Class 12 to prevent child marriage and early pregnancy, life-cycle approaches to anaemia, health system strengthening for universal health coverage and referrals, multisectoral convergence, and training of data personnel with better financial utilisation for effective SDG monitoring and decision-making.



PANEL 2: STRATEGIES TO ACCELERATE SDG PROGRESS IN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

The second panel of the Policy Dialogue was chaired by Dr. Aasha Kapoor-Mehta. The first speaker was **Dr. Anuradha Rajan, South Asia Women's Fund (India)** who spoke on *Financing the SDG Agenda*. Anuradha began by emphasizing that strategies to advance SDG progress must return to basics, which have been lost in current conversations on financing gender equality and the SDGs. The 2023 Research and Information System for Developing

Countries (RIS) study shows that SDG 2 and SDG 5 face the most challenging gaps, with SDG 5 having the maximum impact on other goals, highlighting strong interconnections and the need to treat the goals as an interlinked basket rather than in silos. Financing strategies must adopt integrated development models that view rights and entitlements as a bouquet, placing women and gender at the centre of social change. People experience deprivation as a cluster, not in sectors, and siloed funding and short-term projects provide only symptomatic relief, while long-term, flexible and unrestricted funding is needed to address root causes.

The SDG financing gap stands at USD 4 trillion globally, including USD 2 trillion for the energy transition, and a UN Global Compact Network report estimates a USD 292 billion gap across five gender-linked SDGs alone. Private financing and domestic capital must be unlocked through a uniform SDG impact measurement framework, stronger alignment of Corporate Social responsibility (CSR) with the SDGs. It is critical to address the “missing middle,” a knowledge gap around implementation partners beyond donor favourites, with women-led organisations, including Dalit and Adivasi groups, often at the fringes and struggling to fundraise. A deep trust deficit persists between CSOs, private actors and government, and rebuilding trust through convening, dialogue and feminist organising is essential to strengthen the financing ecosystem.



The second speaker on the panel was **Aditi Anand (Wada Na Todo Andolan)** who spoke on *Centring Marginalised Populations in Data and Policy*. Aditi started by pointing out that despite uncertainty about achieving the SDGs by 2030, it remains the most comprehensive framework for long-term development, yet understanding of the SDGs among marginalised communities is still limited. The SDGs centre the principles of Leaving No One Behind (LNOB) and Reaching the Furthest Behind First (RFPF), requiring that marginalised communities be prioritised through targeted actions and targeted assessments focused on those facing the greatest exclusion.

India's SDG 5 framework relies heavily on a violence-against-women lens and lacks intersectionality, rendering Dalit and Adivasi women and other vulnerable groups invisible in key indicators. The VNR 2025 claims a whole-of-society approach, yet marginalised voices remain missing amid challenges such as manual scavenging, forced labour, poor childcare access, climate displacement, and 48.4% of women not in education, employment or training.

Headline poverty and inequality figures hide deeper exclusion due to the lack of timely, transparent, disaggregated data; the delayed Census has excluded nearly 13 crore people from food security benefits and undercounted disability. Aditi recommended that data must be public so CSOs can analyse gaps and reveal hidden disparities, and civil society inputs must be meaningfully integrated, with the UN amplifying marginalised voices to ensure the SDGs are achieved substantively, not only on paper.



The third speaker on the panel was **Dr. Jahnvi Andharia, ISST** who spoke on *Voluntary National Review (VNR) by SAHAJ and FPC – Alternative Civil Society Evidence*. Jahnvi explained that the VNR civil society report focused on SDGs 3, 5 and 8, drawing on 55+ participants from national consultations, a bilingual online survey with 58 respondents across 15 states, and a youth consultation with 75 advocates from 22 states. Analysed through an inclusive lens, the framework covered situational analysis, challenges, gaps in implementation, data and monitoring, and recommendations. CSO reports provided granular, evidence-driven insights often missing in the GOI VNR, which largely focuses on initiatives and presents a political narrative.

Jahnvi shared that under SDG 3 (Health & Well-being), key gaps include low public health spending, personnel shortages, poor cervical cancer screening (NFHS-5: 1.9%), and inadequate adolescent SRHR and mental health services. SDG 5 (Gender Equality) remains VAW-centric, lacks intersectionality, and continues to render marginalised women, including Dalit and Adivasi women, largely invisible. Under SDG 8 (Decent Work & Economic Growth), care work and informal sector contributions are overlooked and social protection gaps persist. Key

recommendations include rights- and choice-based policies, strengthened health and social protection, gender-responsive budgeting, recognition of care work, improved data systems, and CSO partnerships.

The panel ended with Concluding Remarks by **Sanya Seth, UN Women**. Sanya highlighted the crucial link between global and national indices and gender equality, emphasising prioritising the last woman first. She noted the interconnected crises of climate change, poverty, conflict, and marginalisation, stressing that joy, unity, and feminist movements are acts of resistance. Quoting Yeats, she reflected on global disintegration and the failures of old, linear Global North models, highlighting the opportunity to build new systems from the margins. She underscored UN Women's role in fostering dialogue and solidarity, emphasised centring the expertise of women's collectives, and stressed localised, feminist-informed solutions.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

This report was based on the comprehensive notes provided by a very dedicated group of volunteer rapporteurs, including Abida C, Areesha, Ayesha Datta, Chandrayee, Kanika Tyagi, Kritika Sharma, Sandhya Gawali, Sharati Roy and Shipra. The Anchors of the FPC Working Groups have reviewed the report of each session and the recommendations, including Suneeta Dhar, Nesar Ahmad, Dipa Sinha, Jahnvi Andharia and Nilangi Sardeshpande. The entire report was edited and put together by Jashodhara Dasgupta, who also did the layout.



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Annexure One: Agenda of the Sixth FPC Pre-Budget Consultation

Day One -	21 Nov. 2025 – Sessions	Key Speakers
9:15- 9:30	Arrival, registrations, settling in	
9:30	Welcome, objectives and introduction to FPC	Jashodhara Dasgupta
9:45 – 10:30	- Keynote Address - Welcome by UN Women	- Jayati Ghosh (on video) - Sanghamitra Dhar (UN Women)
10:30	Tea/coffee	
10:45 – 12:00	Session One: Social Protection: how does digitalization impact access 2. <i>Overview of Digitalization for social sector</i> - Saloni Mishra, IT for Change 3. <i>Case Studies:</i> a. Digitalisation in Health – Jashodhara Dasgupta, FPC b. PDS and digitalisation – Vaani Tiwari, ANANDI c. ASHA workers and digitalisation – Sreerupa, ISST 4. <i>Remarks by the Chair</i> – Rajendran Narayanan, APU Moderator: Dipa Sinha	
12:00 – 13:15	Session Two: Care work and livelihoods 5. <i>Overview of political economy and macro-economic framing</i> – Ritu Dewan 6. <i>Unpaid Care Work and the Care Economy</i> – Mubashira Zaidi, ISST 7. <i>Livelihood: Current context</i> - Gautam Bhan, IIHS 8. <i>Remarks by the Chair</i> – Neetha N, CWDS Moderator: Jahnvi Andharia	
13:15	Lunch	
14:15 – 15:30	Session Three : Structural violence and gender-based violence 4. <i>Overview of structural violence and its impacts on diverse women</i> - Navsharan Singh 5. <i>Case Studies:</i> a. <i>Budgets for Dalit and Adivasi Women: A critical analysis</i> - Grijesh Dinkar, NCDHR (online) b. <i>Structural violence on women in agriculture</i> - Seema Kulkarni (Online) SOPPECOM & MAKAAAM c. <i>A decade of Nirbhaya Fund</i> : Ravi Duggal (online) d. <i>PWDVA 2005⁵: Reflections on two decades</i> - Sanjida Arora, CEHAT (Online) 6. <i>Closing remarks and Policy asks</i> : Anupriya, JAGORI	
15:30	Tea/coffee	
15:45 – 17:00	Session Four: Institutionalizing Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB): towards a legislative mandate 7. <i>Broad mandates of a potential legal instrument for GRB and essential institutional arrangements</i> - Ms. Uma Mahadevan, Addl. Chief Secy., Govt of Karnataka 8. <i>Presenting the case for GRB legislation</i> - Nesar Ahmad, BARC & Aasha Kapur Mehta, IHD	

⁵ Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005

	9. <i>Making the GRB legislation inclusive and functional</i> - Beena Pallical, NCDHR 10. <i>Launching a campaign for realising GRB</i>- Sanghamitra Dhar, UN Women 11. <i>Remarks by Chair</i> -Yamini Mishra, Country Director, MacArthur Foundation Moderator- Raman VR, CBGA
17:00	Closing remarks for the day - Suneeta Dhar (online)
Day Two	22 Nov. 2025 - Sessions
10:00	Welcome and brief recap of Day One - Sona Mitra, FPC
10:15 – 11:30	Reflections on the previous day towards prioritized recommendations for the budget 2026-27 In four thematic groups, review the lists of recommendations emerging from each panel and the Key Note Address towards prioritising the recommendations in the following suggested categories. Each group to identify three recommendations for the following, specifying Who needs to do what, how and by when - i. Union Budget ii. State governments iii. Private sector/partnerships iv. CSOs – Research and other recommendations - Discussion time- One hour Note-taking by Rapporteurs and presentation by Moderator/Working Group Anchors
11:30	Tea/coffee
11:45	Plenary sharing from the groups - Presentations from the Session Moderators - <i>Remarks by Chair</i> - Sona Mitra FPC
13:00	Vote of thanks - Renu Khanna
13:15	Lunch
	Policy Dialogue - 'Catalysing Change: Financing and Partnerships for Gender Transformative Action on SDGs'
14:30	Welcome, context - Dr. Nilangi Sardeshpande, SAHAJ
14:35	Keynote address: ' <i>Distance to targets - Global and National Context</i> ' - Ms Aparna Uppaluri (EM2030 Advisory Committee)
14:55	Panel I: India's Progress Towards SDGs from a Gender Perspective - Ms Renu Khanna, Founder Trustee, SAHAJ - Ms Nileena Suresh, Researcher, Data for India - Ms Nidhi Goyal, Rising Flame (online) - Dr Zoya Rizvi, Deputy Commissioner, National Health Mission, GoI - Chair: Sarojini Ganju Thakur, , Feminist Policy Collective
16:10	Tea /Coffee
16:25	Panel 2 - Strategies to Accelerate SDG Progress in the Next Five Years - Dr Anuradha Rajan, South Asia Women Foundation India - Ms Aditi Anand, Wada Na Todo Abhiyan - Dr Jahnvi Andharia, ISST

	Chair: Dr Aasha Kapur Mehta, Chairperson, Centre for Gender Studies and Visiting Professor, Institute for Human Development New Delhi
17:40	Concluding Remarks - Sanya Seth (UN Women)
17:50	Vote of thanks and close, Ms Archana Shrivastava, Director, SAHAJ
18:00	Close of the day

Annexure Two - FPC PBC List of participants attending in-person & online

Institutional affiliation	Name
I. Addl. Chief Secretary & Development Commissioner, Govt of Karnataka	1. Dr. Uma Mahadevan
II. Deputy Commissioner, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Govt of India	2. Dr Zoya Ali Rizvi
III. Azim Premji University	3. Rajendran Narayan
	4. Revati Teresa Mathai
IV. Shiv Nadar University	5. Sandali Thakur
V. OP Jindal University	6. Gayatri Balu
	7. Sai Pravallika (Online)
VI. Mumbai University	8. Swati Raju (online)
VII. Calcutta University	9. Ishita Mukhopadhyay (online)
VIII. McGill University, Canada	10. Maya Krishnan (online)
IX. King's College London	11. Prabha Kotiswaran (online)
X. IP College for Women	12. Kritika Sharma
XI. MacArthur Foundation	13. Yamini Mishra
XII. Ford Foundation	14. Sulakshana Nandi (online)
XIII. South Asia Women's Fund (India)	15. Anuradha Rajan
XIV. OXFAM International	16. Amita Pitre
XV. UN Women	17. Sanghamitra Dhar
	18. Vaishali Barua
	19. Poulomi Pal
	20. Abhilasha Sood
	21. Kiran Negi
	22. Sanya Seth
	23. Anshul Sharma (online)
XVI. UN Women (Tamil Nadu)	24. D. Dhanikachalam (online)
XVII. UNDP	25. Sneha Pathak (Online)
XVIII. Institute of Human Development	26. Aasha Kapur Mehta
	27. Prof. Alakh N. Sharma

XIX.	Indian Institute for Human Settlements	28. Gautam Bhan
		29. Antara Rai Chowdhury
XX.	Centre for Women's Development Studies	30. Neetha N.
XXI.	Budget Analysis and Research Centre (BARC)	31. Nesar Ahmad
XXII.	International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW)	32. Ravi Verma (ED)
		33. Shiney Chakraborty
		34. Radhika Uppal (online)
		35. Nashwa P A (Online)
XXIII.	Centre for Budget and Policy Studies (CBPS)	36. Urvija Priyadarshini
		37. Niveditha Menon (Online)
		38. Abida C (Online)
		39. Akshitha (Online)
		40. Susmita Chatterjee (Online)
		41. Arvind Thadi (online)
		42. Kumar Chandan (Online)
XXIV.	Institute for Social Studies Trust	43. Jahnvi Andharia
		44. Mubashira Zaidi
		45. Areesha Khan
		46. Sreerupa
		47. Anweshaa Ghosh
		48. Kanika Tyagi
		49. Rekha
		50. Shipra
		51. Sandhya Gawali
		52. Asadullah (online)
XXV.	Initiative on What Works for Women in the Economy (IWWAGE)	53. Sruthi Kutty
		54. Sharati Madhur Roy
		55. Aditi Vyas (online)
XXVI.	Centre for Budgets and Governance Accountability	56. Raman V R
XXVII.		57.
		58.
		59.
		60.
XVIII.	Centre for Advocacy and Research (CFAR)	61. Akhila Sivasdas
XXIX.	Centre for Development Studies (Trivandrum)	62. Dr Mridul Eapen (online)
XXX.	Foundation for Responsive Governance (ResGov)	63. Avani Kapur
XXXI.	Nikore Associates	64. Mozaien Tak
XXXII.	Data for India	65. Nileena Suresh

XXIII. SAHAJ	66. Renu Khanna
	67. Archana
	68. Jushya Kumar
	69. Nilangi Sardeshpande
	70. Tanuja Harad (Online)
XXIV. JAGORI	71. Anupriya Ghosh
	72. Chandrayee Dey
	73. Nidhi Gupta
	74. Amrita,
XXV. National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR)	75. Beena Pallical
	76. Pritika Pariyar
	77. Kalpana Biswakarma
	78. Grijesh Dinker (online)
XXVI. Wada Na Todo Abhiyan	79. Aditi Anand (Day Two)
XXVII. AALI (Lucknow)	80. Neha Tiwari
XXVIII. Transform Rural India (TRIF)	81. Rakesh Ganguli
	82. Seema
	83. Rejani Pavithran (online)
XXIX. CIMMYT	84. Richa Sharma Puri
XL. Olive Sanctuary, New Delhi	85. Srividya Kripakar
	86. Archana Kishor
XLI. AANK Advisory	87. Adil Ali
XLII. Antara Advisory	88. Aparna Uppaluri
	89. Shreya Sharon Mangratee
	90. Payaswini Taylor
XLIII. Equal Measures 2030	91. Aarushi Khanna

Individual participants (not representing organizations)

92. Jashodhara Dasgupta	93. Ravi Duggal (online)
94. Ritu Dewan	95. Nisha Srivastava (online)
96. Dipa Sinha	97. Vanita Nayak Mukherjee (online)
98. Sona Mitra	99. Yamini Atmavilas (online)
100. Sarojini Ganju Thakur	101. Leila Caleb Varkey (online)
102. Suneeta Dhar (online)	103. Sangeeta Rege (online)
104. Vibhuti Patel (online)	105. Chandrika Gupta (online)
106. Jaya Vekankar (online)	107. Ujala Kumari (Online)
108. Julie Thekkudan (online)	109. Ritika Chopra (Online)
110. Navsharan Singh	111. Sudeepa Das (Online)
112. Indrani Mazumdar	113. Bibha Mishra (online)
114. Indu Agnihotri	Harsha, Prava, Shashi Prabha, Sneha and Neha (online)

Annexure Three – Short Bios of Panel Speakers

Jayati Ghosh taught Economics for nearly 35 years at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, and has been Professor of Economics at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, USA since January 2021. In 2021 the United Nations named her to be on the High-level Advisory Board on Economic and Social Affairs. She has authored and/or edited 19 books and nearly 200 scholarly articles. She has received several national and international prizes, including the International Labour Organisation's Decent Work Research Prize for 2010. She has advised governments in India and other countries and is the Executive Secretary of International Development Economics Associates, an international network of heterodox development economists. She has consulted for international organizations including ILO, UNDP, UNCTAD, UN-DESA, UNRISD and UN Women and is member of several international commissions.

Panel 1: Social Protection and Digitalization

Saloni Mishra is Associate - Research and Policy Engagement at IT for Change. Saloni has a background in law and is interested in the intersection of labour, technology, and urban geography. Saloni has a specific interest in the digital economy and explores people-centered alternatives to the corporatisation of online spaces.

Anita Gurumurthy is a founding member and Executive Director of IT for Change where she leads research and advocacy on data and AI governance, platform regulation, and feminist frameworks on digital justice. She is a Visiting Fellow at the UN University International Institute for Global Health and serves as an expert on various bodies – including the T20's digital transformation track and the UN CSTD's Working Group on Data Governance.

Jashodhara Dasgupta is Co-Convenor, Feminist Policy Collective and an independent researcher with over 30 years of experience on gender, public health and rights-based approaches. She led the feminist organization SAHAYOG for 12 years and supported grassroots women's leadership for women's health. She has been part of setting up four feminist organizations in India and nurtured national and international civil society networks on sexual and reproductive rights. She has published her research in a number of books and journals and been part of several academic and government committees including two Lancet Commissions on Global Governance for Health.

Vaani Tiwari is associated with ANANDI a grassroots feminist organization in Panchmahal-Dahod, Gujarat. She works at the intersection of community development and feminist policy. She focuses on strengthening grassroots organisations and inclusive governance processes. Her work combines research, advocacy, and on-ground capacity building.

Dr. Sreerupa is a development economist with over 15 years of academic and policy research experience, specialising in care work, informal labour, ageing, migration, and climate change. Her research has been published in leading journals and edited volumes, and most recently she edited the Ageing and Care section of the Handbook of Ageing, Health, and Public Policy (Springer Nature, Singapore).

Rajendran Narayanan teaches in Azim Premji University, Bangalore and is affiliated with LibTech India. At Azim Premji University, he teaches in the economics programme and anchors the Occupational Track on 'Data, Democracy & Development.' He is part of national campaigns such as those involved in the promotion of constitutional values, human rights, right to work and right to food.

Panel 2- Care and Livelihoods

N. Neetha is currently Professor at the Centre for Women's Development Studies (CWDS), New Delhi. Her academic interest covers women's employment, women workers in the informal sector, domestic workers, unpaid domestic and care work and labour migration. She has undertaken many research studies with the support of national and international agencies and has published extensively as books, chapters in national and international books, papers in peer-reviewed journals and newspaper articles.

Ritu Dewan is a Visiting Professor Institute of Human Development and a Trustee of The India Forum in addition to the 64th Conference President of the Indian Society of Labour Economics. She was the first-ever woman Director of the Department of Economics, University of Mumbai, and founder-member of the first Centre for Gender Economics in Asia. She has over 250 publications, including 56 books and monographs, encompassing a wide range of issues including Development Economics, Gender Studies & Gender Economics, Rural and Urban Development, Infrastructure, Labour Markets, Environmental Displacement and Peace Studies.

Mubashira Zaidi is a gender and development researcher with over 18 years of experience examining women's work, unpaid care, and labour relations in India. She leads the Women Powering World of Work theme at the Institute of Social Studies Trust (ISST). Her work spans unpaid care work, women's economic empowerment, domestic and platform work, and gendered labour dynamics in the garment industry. She has co-led multi-country feminist research initiatives, including SuPWR. Mubashira bridges research in collaboration with women's collectives and grassroots groups, and has published journal articles, policy briefs and book chapters.

Gautam Bhan is an urbanist whose work focuses on urban poverty, inequality, social protection and housing. He is currently Associate Dean, IIHS School of Human Development, as well as Senior Lead, Academics & Research, at IIHS. He anchors IIHS' role as a National Resource Centre with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Government of India. His new work engages with regimes of urban welfare and social security, including work on urban health. He has several publications also writes frequently in public intellectual spaces. He holds a PhD in urban studies and planning from the University of California, Berkeley.

Panel 3 : Gender Based Violence and Structural Violence

Navsharan Singh is a scholar activist. Through her published work she has contributed to the understanding of state impunity for sexual violence and mass violence against caste and religious minorities. She has researched and published widely on Citizenship, Land rights and Reparations for

mass violence. She has managed to combine scholarship with an intense engagement with social justice and women's rights movements. She writes in English and Punjabi.

Grijesh Dinker, an advocate and Dalit Human Rights activist associated with the National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR), who has been working in the development sector since 2010. Her expertise is in the Prevention of Atrocity Act focusing on sexual crimes. She is currently working on including Dalit, Adivasi and marginalized communities in the government programs on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and Climate Change Adaptation (CCA), to ensure resilience building and mitigation of impacts. She also engages with the state and central government on the allocation and utilization of budget as per the SCP and TSP norms.

Dr. Seema Kulkarni is a founder and presently a Senior Fellow of the Society for Promoting Participative Eco-System Management, Pune (SOPPECOM), Pune, and co-ordinating the gender and rural livelihood activities within the organisation. She has published her research in several articles/book chapters around gender, water, sanitation, and rural livelihoods. She is the National Facilitation Team member of Mahila Kisan Adhikar Manch (MAKAAM). She has been associated with Stree Mukti Sangharsh Chalwal, the movement for the rights of Single women in Western Maharashtra. She is actively involved in the Coalition of Women's Groups in Maharashtra, Stree Mukti Andolan Sampark Samiti.

Ravi Duggal is a Sociologist with over 4 decades of experience on various various public health issues, especially on health policy and Financing and budget issues and Social Accountability .

Sanjida Arora has been associated with Centre for Enquiry Into Health and Allied Themes (CEHAT) for the past 11 years. She holds a degree of Master in Public Health from Tata Institute of Social Science. She was also the principal investigator on a research project on assessing the effectiveness of counselling intervention in antenatal departments of public hospitals for women facing domestic violence. She has co- authored a book " Aftermath of rape: Survivor's speak".

Anupriya Ghosh (she/her/hers) is trained sociologist and identifies herself as an intersectional feminist advancing gender rights and justice. She has been associated in the last two decades with diverse organisations including UN agencies, philanthropic institutions and others. Presently, she is the Director of Jagori, a 40 years women-led organisation working on advancing gender equality and spreading feminist consciousness, and proudly represents the powerful team of feminist researchers, gender trainers and programmers, GBV counsellors and case workers.

Panel 4 – Institutionalizing Gender Responsive Budgeting

Ms. Uma Mahadevan is a 1992 batch IAS officer of Karnataka cadre, currently serving as Additional Chief Secretary and Development Commissioner of the State Government of Karnataka. She has authored multiple publications covering gender, development, socio-cultural issues and arts. She has served in the Departments of Women & Child Development, Planning, Agriculture, Education and Health & Family Welfare departments. She has served in the Department of Atomic Energy, Government of India and Tata Institute of Fundamental Research. She was part of preparing the first

Human Development Report for Karnataka and been a member of the ECCE Taskforce, Government of India.

Aasha Kapur Mehta is Chairperson, Centre for Gender Studies and Visiting Professor, Institute for Human Development. She was Professor of Economics at the Indian Institute of Public Administration for several decades. She was a Member of the Planning Commission's Working Group of Feminist Economists, a Core group member of the Cabinet Secretariat's Ad Hoc Task Force for RFDs and has served on committees of MWCD, MoRD, MoSPI and NITI Aayog. Her numerous articles address poverty dynamics, multidimensional deprivation, human and gender development indicators, gender budgeting, female labour force participation, paid and unpaid care work, and policy priorities for achieving SDGs.

Nesar Ahmed is the Director of the Budget Analysis and Research Centre in Jaipur. His work spans gender, mining, economic liberalisation, and municipal finance. He has previously been associated with the Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability and the Indian Social Institute, bringing extensive experience in public finance research and advocacy. His articles are published in various journals and on websites. He has contributed chapters in various books. He is author of *Women, Mining and Displacement* (2002), published by the Indian Social Institute, New Delhi in and *Gender Responsive Budgeting and Marginalised Women* (2014), by BARC-Astha.

Beena J Pallical is a Dalit women's Leader and currently General Secretary, National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR)-DAAA-NDMJ, working on Dalit Economic Rights. Her main focus continues to be on Economic Justice and specifically looking at Gender Equity. She also works around targeted budgets, fiscal accountability and governance. Over the last 5 years she has worked effectively on enabling youth to access their right to education across 10 states, ensuring that the budgets allocated for them is effectively implemented. She also is chair of Asia Dalit Rights Forum that works on empowering Dalit communities in South Asia.

Sangamitra Dhar leads the Gender-Responsive Budgeting process at UN Women and oversees partnerships with over 40 central ministries and 10 state governments to institutionalize GRB across diverse sectors. She works closely with the MoWCD and other national stakeholders, to support the integration of gender perspectives into budgetary processes. Before joining UN Women, Dr. Dhar served as a Social Development Specialist at the Asian Development Bank.

Yamini Mishra is the Country Director, MacArthur Foundation. Earlier she served as the Regional Director for Amnesty International's South Asia Regional Office. She has served on the Advisory Group of the UN Secretary General's High-Level Panel on Financing for Gender Equality and is on the board of Tax Justice Network, Centre of Democracy and Social Action and the Governing Board of Centre for Agrarian Reform and Economic Studies. She has been on the Feminist Economist Committee set up by the Planning Commission of India. Yamini has written and published several articles and reports in mainstream newspapers and reputed academic journals.

Policy Dialogue: Catalysing Change: Financing and Partnerships for Gender Transformative Action on SDGs

Aparna Uppaluri is Founder and Principal Advisor at Antara Advisory, with extensive experience in philanthropy, gender and climate justice, public health, education, and governance. She has formerly

been COO at Tata Trusts and Ford Foundation Global Program Officer. Currently she serves on global advisory boards including EM2030 and Reach Alliance.

Renu Khanna has over 40 years of experience in gender equality and human rights, particularly in sexual and reproductive health. She is a Founder Trustee at SAHAJ, served as Commissioner on the Lancet Commission for Gender and Global Health, and is on WHO's Gender Advisory Panel. Actively engaged in feminist and SRHR movements, she participates in coalitions such as Jan Swasthya Abhiyan, CommonHealth, Feminist Policy Collective, and COPASAH, nationally and globally.

Nileena Suresh is a writer and researcher who uses data to understand and explain the state of health, work and living conditions in India through a gender lens. She has previously worked as a data journalist and focuses on evidence-based writing.

Nidhi Goyal is Founder and Executive Director of Rising Flame and a globally recognised activist, researcher, trainer, and artist, with over 14 years championing disability rights, gender justice, and inclusion across more than 35 countries. She has served on UN Women and ESCAP committees, Civil20 India, AWID, FICCI's diversity task force, the NHRC disability core group, and the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting's accessibility committee, shaping policies and advocacy at national and international levels.

Dr. Zoya Ali Rizvi is a Deputy Commissioner of National Health Mission, Government of India from 2014. She completed her studies from London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, University of London. She has been working for the government for about 3 decades.

Dr. Anuradha Rajan is Executive Director at South Asia Women Foundation India, providing strategic leadership to increase resources for social justice and feminist movements. With a Ph.D. in Women's Studies from TISS and over 25 years of experience, she has designed and led women's empowerment programs addressing gender-based violence, sexual and reproductive health, and political participation, advocating for women's rights and equality for more than two decades.

Aditi Anand works on advancing SDGs through citizen-generated, disaggregated data since 2019. She is currently the National Coordinator of Wada Na Todo Abhiyan and engages with networks such as A4SD, GCAP, and ICSC. She has contributed to the Collaborative on Citizen Data and India's LNOB consultations for VNR 2020 and 2025, focusing on embedding inclusive, community-first approaches into planning, monitoring, and policy to ensure marginalized populations are prioritized.

Dr. Jahnvi Andharia is Director and Research Fellow at the Institute of Social Studies Trust (ISST) with 35 years in development, focusing on rural women's empowerment and grassroots leadership. Co-founder of ANANDI in 1995, she has extensive experience in women's rights, maternal and child health, nutrition, livelihoods, safety, and local governance. She supports women-led organisations in governance and program alignment, and has authored several publicly available research papers.

Sanya Seth is Country Program Manager for Governance, Leadership, and Resilience at UN Women India. With over 15 years in gender equality and women's rights, she focuses on policy analysis and advocacy design. She holds a Master's in Women's Studies from TISS, Mumbai, and has a background in English Literature.