

FACING THE MIRROR

A Framework Enabling Gender Responsive and Equitable Spaces within the Leather Industry of Bantala and West Bengal, India



Acknowledgments

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Table of Contents

Introduction	7
Women’s participation in the leather industry	7
About Solidaridad	7
Why was the <i>Facing the Mirror</i> Gender Framework created?	8
How to use this Framework	8
Process adopted for developing principle-based indicators	8
Identifying the core problems	9
Gender related discussions with Solidaridad Team and factory owners	9
Key findings	10
Issues/Challenges to engage in Bantala leather sector: Women’s voices	10
Individual level	10
Issues/Challenges Emerging for Women from the Eco-system: Voices of Male Colleagues and Superiors	11
Systemic challenges that seemed to evolve from the needs assessment, workshops and dialogues.....	11
Opinions expressed by male colleagues in the tannery and leather goods sector.....	11
Emerging framework from discussions in the gender workshop: Change is possible	12
Extension of Gender stereotypical roles and responsibilities	12
Socio-cultural norms and beliefs related to gender	12
Facing The Mirror: Framework Objectives	12
Facing The Mirror: Framework Principles	13
Gender Equity	14
Inclusion	15
Participation	15
Safety	16
Openness to learn, reflect-review-respond and change.....	17
Collaboration	18
Social wellbeing.....	18
Courage	19
Conclusion	20

Foreword



Monika Khanna
Country Manager
Solidaridad - India

The leather industry plays a vital role in India's economy, and the Bantala leather cluster is a key contributor to this sector. However, ensuring inclusivity and equitable opportunities within this industry is crucial for its long-term sustainability.

Facing the Mirror takes a significant step forward by addressing the critical issue of gender equity in the Bantala leather cluster. It sheds light on the experiences and challenges faced by women working in this industry and proposes strategies to create a more gender-responsive and equitable work environment.

Promoting gender equality is not just a moral imperative; it makes good business sense. When women can fully participate and contribute their skills and talents, the leather industry benefits from a wider talent pool, fostering innovation and productivity.

This publication offers valuable insights and practical recommendations for stakeholders within the Bantala leather cluster. These include tanners, manufacturers, workers' organisations, policymakers, and civil society actors. By working collaboratively, we can create a future where women in the Bantala leather cluster can thrive and contribute their full potential to the success of the industry.

I encourage all stakeholders to actively engage with the content of this publication and work towards creating a more inclusive and equitable leather industry in Bantala.



Pradipta Konar
Sr Programme Manager
SREC – Leather

The leather industry employs a work force of around 4.42 million men and women, and women now make up 25% of the industry as a whole, with 50% in the leather goods subsector. Today, as we aim to put our economy on a high trajectory growth path, it is important that we address gender issues because they have implications for the overall socio-economic development of the industry.

Within the framework of the project funded by the European Union SWITCH-Asia grants programme, *Effective waste management and sustainable development of the MSME tanning companies in Kolkata leather cluster (Bantala)*, a gender sensitisation programme was developed gradually from comprehensive findings about the health and safety of workers. Workshops in the programme aim at developing a deeper understanding of the roles of women and men in society and the workplace as well as increasing the level of awareness on gender related issues that prevail in both the personal and the professional sectors.

We at Solidaridad, with the help of our sensitisation process, are creating a change in perception, recognition, accommodation and action. Through our workshop we try to create an understanding among women and men that they are responsible and equal partners in socio-economic development.

The present Gender Framework will equip the leather industry (both workers and owners) with tools for reflecting on the role of women in the industry, while helping them consider ways to improve and strengthen women's participation as part of the workforce and as part of a holistic approach that will enable men to understand the role of women in their personal and professional work place. It is hoped that this Framework will act as a template for developing a progressive model for the sector as a first step towards mainstreaming gender in India's leather sector.

EU Foreword



H.E. Hervé DELPHIN

Ambassador

European Union Delegation to India and Bhutan

During the 15th EU-India Summit, the leaders of India and of the European Union reiterated the importance they attach to human rights, including gender equality and women empowerment in all spheres of life. India and the EU agree in their Strategic Partnership that gender equality and the empowerment of women are essential for the socio-economic development of any society.

Gender equality is an essential condition for an innovative, competitive and thriving economy. In business, politics and society as a whole, we can reach our full potential only if we mobilise all of the talent and diversity. Respecting and valuing women brings more prosperity and well-being. Reaching this potential needs to happen all the more so as we embrace new ways of working and producing that are respectful of people and the environment.

The EU and India are both major actors within the leather industry. Leather in the EU represents a market of EUR 8 billion annually, and its actors aim to strengthen sustainability and social responsibility through innovation. The leather industry in India accounts for around 13% of the world's leather production, and women are an important part of the workforce in this employment-intensive sector.

This report was drafted by experts from Solidaridad, a civil society organisation, as part of the regional EU-funded SWITCH-Asia Programme, which has been active since 2007 in the Asia-Pacific region. SWITCH-Asia seeks to promote sustainable consumption and production across the region. Through the 2019 Green Deal and the 2021 Global Gateway Strategy, the EU has further committed to supporting the transition of countries to a low-carbon, resource-efficient and circular economy.

Solidaridad has been working with the leather economic clusters in West Bengal and Tamil Nadu to transform, reduce and re-use waste, instilling circular principles in leather production processes. This brochure provides insights into successful experiments of sustainable approaches.

This Facing the Mirror Gender Framework presented by Solidaridad shows how gender transformation can take place in the leather sector, and invites the industry stakeholders – factory owners and workers – to complete the circle and ensure that workplaces in leather clusters better respect and empower women so that companies and communities reach their full potential!

Introduction

Women's participation in the leather industry

According to the World Bank Gender Data portal 2024, the labour force participation rate for females in South Asia was 25% and 74% for males. In India in 2023, the labour force participation rate among females was 32.7% and 76.8%.¹ The 2018 International Labour Organization (ILO) Report stated that women from Asia and the Pacific spent 4.1 times more time in unpaid care work than men. The unequal distribution of unpaid care work between women and men represents an infringement of women's rights (United Nations, 2013) and also a brake on their economic empowerment.

The leather industry is an employment-intensive sector, providing jobs for approximately 4.42 million people. Many of these workers come from less-affluent sections of society.² Women constitute about 30% of the workforce in the leather products sector.

Stress in the workplace and at home can be considered as a factor deterring participation for women in the work force and also limiting their representation in leadership roles or senior management. The burden of repetitive, time-consuming, and often physically demanding domestic tasks that make up a considerable share of women's total unpaid work burden often causes substantial fatigue and stress, which in turn affects their well-being. Causal factors behind the low economic participation of women need to be addressed through multi-pronged and multi-level actions by individual, government, educational and skill-development institutions, the private sector, civil society, the media, and law-enforcement agencies, among others, to bring about a positive shift in gender norms, strengthen career preparedness and access to decent work, ensure gender friendly workspaces and employment policies, and achieve gender diversity and gender parity in the workplace.

About Solidaridad

Solidaridad is a 52-year-old international civil society organisation with its Secretariat in The Netherlands.³ The Asian headquarter is based in New Delhi, India. Solidaridad works primarily to support sustainable supply chains in agricultural (tea, coffee, cocoa, sugarcane, soybean, fruits and vegetables, cotton, dairy etc.) and industrial commodities (minerals, textiles, leather, etc.).

With the 42-month project, 'Effective Waste Management and Sustainable Development of the MSME Tanning Companies in Kolkata Leather Cluster (Bantala)', Solidaridad aims to adopt cleaner and more sustainable production processes.

Kolkata Leather Cluster Waste Management Project



Waste Management



Pollution Load Reduction



Water Consumption Reduction

Solidaridad has been working on multiple projects in many cross-cutting areas such as gender mainstreaming, the occupational health and safety of workers, and enhancing the access to finance and markets for small- and medium-sized (SME) tanneries.

Having established its credibility and impact, Solidaridad in Kolkata is seeking to integrate gender components into its programme, recognising not only the gender needs of the workers but also empowering them to become aware of their gender biases, which is the first step towards strengthening a gender-sensitive work environment.

By empowering frontline women workers, male colleagues and factory owners on gender issues, Solidaridad intends to add value towards building vibrant eco-systems in a sector that is gender-sensitive.

1 <https://genderdata.worldbank.org/en/regions/south-asia>, <https://genderdata.worldbank.org/en/economies/india>

2 <https://leatherindia.org/indian-leather-industry/>

3 <https://www.solidaridadnetwork.org/who-we-are/>

Why was the *Facing the Mirror* Gender Framework created?

Gender equality is a goal in its own right, but it is also vital to the achievement of other development goals such as poverty reduction and environmental sustainability. **Gender mainstreaming** is a crucial goal in the leather industry, aiming to promote **gender equality** and empower women. Gender mainstreaming ensures that both women and men benefit from industrial development. By considering the experiences and interests of both genders, management can create more inclusive and sustainable outcomes; it's not just about adding women to development processes. Gender mainstreaming is a challenge to the existing social norms and structures because it re-imagines reality to place women and men on an even footing by addressing underlying inequalities.

By systematically mainstreaming gender into their interventions, the leather sector and the industry in general can ensure equal opportunities for women and men, thus furthering the global Inclusive and Sustainable Industrial Development (ISID) agenda and contributing to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the post-2015 development framework.

Facing the Mirror: A Framework Enabling Gender Responsive and Equitable Spaces within the Leather Industry of Bantala and West Bengal, India is an attempt to develop a structure that will guide and help the leather sector management to develop and apply gender perspectives in their work and, more specifically, to mainstream gender by reflecting on their policies and work practices. The *Framework* can also be useful for other sectors and private-sector partners to rethink their policies and apply its recommendations.

How to use this Framework

The *Framework* is divided into sections and is meant to be read in its entirety. The first two sections cover the overall background of gender concepts, gender dimensions and the process undertaken to arrive at the framework, while the remaining sections provide a roadmap for gender mainstreaming based on guiding principles. Given the wide scope and diversity of the leather sector, the relevance and application of the *Framework* may vary; thus it must be considered in view of the specificities of each company/unit and applied wherever it is appropriate. The *Framework* is a useful guide for adapting both policies and ongoing and future activities to make them more gender-responsive.

Process adopted for developing principle-based indicators

A gender-sensitive participatory approach was used to ensure the active involvement of both women and men in developing this framework. This approach involved engaging people directly affected by an issue in identifying problems, defining potential solutions, and making decisions. The process included the leather cluster eco-system involving the workers, owners/management, and Solidaridad. It specially included women's voices from among the workers of the leather sector and the Solidaridad team, and paid particular attention to the different experiences, opinions, concerns, needs, and priorities of both women and men.

It also attempted to identify 30 potential leaders/influencers from among the workers within the tannery and goods industry who could play an important role in influencing company policy and ushering change into their factories and workspaces.

Identifying the core problems

1. A Needs Assessment was conducted with 22 women and men

- Ascertain attitudes and learning needs of the potential participants.
- Collect together the lessons learnt from audience analyses.
- Develop a design and purpose for a bespoke gender sensitisation and gender mainstreaming programme for the women, men workers and factory owners engaged with the leather industry.

2. Gender trainings held for 645 workers and owners (men and women) of the tanneries and leather goods sector

- The series of 32 gender trainings with male and female workers and owners of the tanneries were conducted to strengthen their understanding of gender and its importance to the sector by building upon the experience and knowledge in the industry.
- Workshop/Dialogue with influencers and leaders – Discussions with influencers and leaders of the programme are necessary to build common understanding and reaching consensus.



A total of **687** people associated with the leather industry were involved in the process that has led to this framework:



667 working in the tannery and goods section



20 owners and the Solidaridad Team



Only **15.85%** of all those attending were women

Gender related discussions with Solidaridad Team and factory owners

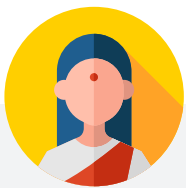
A dialogue with ten factory owners took place to share the learnings and recommendations from this in-depth process. What emerged from the interaction was the acceptance that the leather sector in West Bengal needs to be more pro-active in increasing the participation of women in the workforce. However, the position held by many was that while the companies did not discriminate on the basis of sex when offering positions and trainings, the responsibility of taking advantage of opportunities like training was solely on the women. The owners present during the interaction had been in the sector for decades and did not initially see any additional value for their companies to create further opportunities to make the sector more popular among women.

An interesting observation was shared by some owners on how investment in technology and machinery in the tanneries in Southern India has had a positive outcome on women's participation in the leather sector of those states. Almost all of them agreed that they found the women workers to be more committed, efficient and reliable than their male counterparts. This one-off discussion helped bring the gender inclusion debate out into the open, and frank non-judgemental discussion took place. Many more such interactions are needed, particularly with the younger generation of owners, to foster openness and break gender stereotypes, which will in turn encourage changes in norms and policy.

Key findings

Issues/Challenges to engage in Bantala leather sector: Women's voices

- For the women, the primary motivation to join the industry was financial need, and specifically because the primary earner was either incapacitated or somehow unable to fulfil his financial duties.
- Life in the workplace and home is very difficult, and severely lacking in opportunities and access to basic amenities.
- Women face harassment and taunts in the workspace, and felt that they lacked the freedom to voice their protest.
- Generally, women felt it was their fate to accept their situation and did not think they had a choice in the matter.
- Facing domestic violence and having control exercised over them within the four walls of their home was reported by most women. Their coping mechanism was to accept and normalise this violence. Many men also admitted that they used violence as a tool to discipline their wives and daughters, and that they consider such behaviour as 'a natural expression of their masculinity'. The women carried the stress and trauma of this violence into the workspace, but bore it silently. Sexually coloured verbal abuse by men in the workplace was a 'norm' that women felt they had to accept and ignore.



Individual level

Most of the women would choose to be born as a woman, but they did recognise the difficulties of surviving as a woman, and felt that the following situations need to change in society.

- Women live with a double burden – both at home and at work – but do not receive any recognition or value for their work.
- Income does not automatically increase their value and cannot guarantee an abuse-free life. All the women reported facing some kind of violence and control at home.
- The women have no separate space or room at home.
- There is no true support system at home, especially from the men in the house.



Patriarchal mindset that makes the sector less appealing for jobs



Double burden at home and workplace



Gender-based discrimination and violence



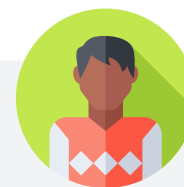
Lack of confidence among women



Absence of amenities (transport, toilet and creche) to support women in the sector

Issues/Challenges Emerging for Women from the Eco-system: Voices of Male Colleagues and Superiors

- The men working in the leather industry like other men are born and brought up in the same patriarchal society that supports gender stereotypes. They were found to be trapped in typical gender roles and responsibilities and harbouring notions of gender stereotypes.
- Although they had women as colleagues in the workspace, they still felt that it was the duty of men to prevent women from having their own earnings as it affected men's prestige.
- While the men looked at their job from the perspective of independence, pride and power, they did not share the same perspective for women who are trying to earn a living.
- The men also were unable to identify issues affecting women working in their factory.
- Although they pointed out the 'lack of safety' for women, they could not link these 'safety' issues to male behaviour and hence had no understanding of the ways to change them.
- They were unable to look at women's lack of skills as stemming from the lack of learning opportunities.
- The thought of being an equal partner having shared responsibilities in the house with women was alien to them but when exposed to the idea in the workshop, they were open for reflection.
- They were not very comfortable discussing their emotions but accepted that they actually got relief when they shared their feeling with their partner or friends occasionally.



Opinions expressed by male colleagues in the tannery and leather goods sector

'There are many kinds of job which requires specific skills and also strength. Women cannot do all kinds of work.'

'Women cannot do overtime as they have home responsibilities.'

'Women have safety issues at night and even at day time.'

'Women are married once they are 18 years old so factories do not want to invest in young girls.'

Systemic challenges that seemed to evolve from the needs assessment, workshops and dialogues

- 'Patriarchal Mindset' that considers women unsuitable for the sector
- 'Gender-Blind System' where services and/or jobs are not designed with women's issues in mind – for instance, there are infrastructural gaps like a lack of changing rooms or separate toilets for women
- Technology not accustomed to including women
- Lack of women in supervisory positions
- Lack of visible women role models among owners

Emerging framework from discussions in the gender workshop: Change is possible

Extension of Gender stereotypical roles and responsibilities

Women working in the leather sector at Bantala were found to be burdened with a triple role combining productive, reproductive and community management responsibilities. The reproductive role of women included childcare and family management, which were time-consuming tasks and mostly done without the support of male partners. Their community management role was an extension of their productive role in the factory set-up and involved tasks such as making tea and/or cleaning the rooms prior to the work day. Women employed in productive sectors were expected to be successful in their work, all the while fulfilling their domestic role of child carers and family managers, and expanding their domestic gender roles in the workspace as well.

Socio-cultural norms and beliefs related to gender

Although there is a widely held belief that the leather industry is not suitable for female employment, the majority of the participants in the process agreed that women are not only able to work in this sector, but can also succeed in male-dominated tasks/jobs if they are given the opportunity, the trust and the required technical support. The respondents also expressed the belief that having women in leadership positions will help increase the productivity of the leather value-chain.

The majority of the respondents thought that companies should consider the diverse roles of women employees as part of their functions, and invest to make their work environment more women-friendly by providing day-care centres, changing rooms, and flexible work arrangements. The participants also felt that men should share in domestic responsibilities at home.

Facing The Mirror: Framework Objectives

- The Gender Framework will equip the leather industry (workers and owners) to reflect the role of women in the industry and help them look at ways to improve and strengthen women's participation as part of the workforce.
- This framework represents how gender transformation can take place in the leather sector. The leather industry is the space for work and employment, but it can also be a space for culture, learning and meaningful engagement. For women, the experience of the industry is often coloured by exclusion, discomfort, fear of violence and unequal social norms along with gender bias.
- The vision of a gender-inclusive leather sector is one where people of all diversities can belong and fulfil their right to employment. Facing The Mirror presents a principle-based framework that can enable the sector to face inwards so as to reflect on the existing systems, processes and culture and thereby transform tanning and leather goods into a women-friendly sector.

Facing The Mirror: Framework Principles

Based on the challenges emerging from the interaction with the core leather eco-system of Bantala, the following principles have evolved to address these challenges.

Equity in the Workplace: Historically, women have experienced social disadvantages that have prevented them from working on a level playing field with men, even in the same jobs. Thus, strategies and measures need to be put into place to compensate for these disadvantages and differences in order to achieve equity.

And from equity comes gender equality. Gender equality in the workplace does not mean that men and women become the same; rather, the access to opportunities, promotion, salary, and benefits does not depend on, or is constrained by, the individual's sex or sexual orientation.

Inclusion in the Workplace: The principle of inclusion in the workplace is essential for creating a positive and thriving organisational culture. An inclusive workplace is one where all employees feel valued, respected, and involved. It acknowledges and celebrates differences in backgrounds, gender and social identities, along with life experiences. An inclusive policy significantly impact employee engagement, turnover intentions, and burnout. Organisations that prioritise inclusion can differentiate themselves in attracting and retaining talent.⁴

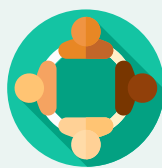
Encouraging Participation of Employees in the Workplace: Fostering a collaborative and respectful environment benefits both employees and the overall success of the leather industry. Encouraging employees to actively engage in and contribute to policy intervention and usher in changes, builds trust and camaraderie among colleagues while creating open and transparent communication channels between employees and management.

Promoting Safety in the Workplace: Promoting safety in the leather sector from a gender perspective is crucial for creating an inclusive and secure work environment. Women working in the leather industry face several challenges, including low wages, occupational health and safety risks, involuntary overtime, gender-based violence, double burden, sexual harassment in the workspace, a lack of freedom of association, and an absence of grievance redressal mechanisms.

Social wellbeing: Gender equality positively impacts not only the workplace but also individual well-being and overall organisational success.



Gender Equity



Inclusion



Participation



Safety



Openness to learn,
reflect-review-
response and change



Collaboration



Social Wellbeing



Courage

⁴ <https://www.ccl.org/articles/leading-effectively-articles/what-is-inclusion-in-the-workplace-a-guide-for-leaders/>



GENDER EQUITY

Historically, women have experienced social disadvantages that have prevented them from working on a level playing field with men, even in the same jobs. Thus, strategies and measures need to be put in place to compensate for these disadvantages and differences in equity. And from equity comes gender equality. Gender equality in the workplace does not mean that men and women become the same; rather, the access to opportunities, promotion, salary, and benefits does not depend on, or is constrained by, their sex or sexual orientation.

INITIATIVES

Gender equality in the workplace brings forth a multitude of benefits that contribute to a more inclusive and thriving organisational environment. Let's explore some of these advantages:

A better economy

- When more women actively participate in paid work and receive equal pay, it significantly boosts the economy.⁵
- Productivity and overall economic output improve when everyone's talents are fully utilised.

Improved productivity

- Gender-equal workforces tend to work better in various ways.
- Diverse teams bring different perspectives, leading to innovative solutions and more effective problem-solving.

Increased growth and innovation

- Inclusive workplaces foster a culture of creativity and out-of-the-box thinking.
- Diverse teams drive innovation, leading to better products and services.

Diversity of views

- Gender diversity ensures a variety of viewpoints.
- This diversity enriches discussions, decision-making, and overall organisational strategy.

A more stable workforce

- When both men and women have equal opportunities, it leads to a more committed and stable workforce.
- Reduced turnover benefits organisations in the long run.

Happier employees

- Inclusive workplaces create a sense of belonging and respect.
- Happier employees are more engaged, productive and loyal.

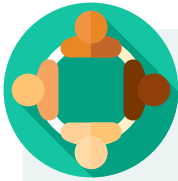
Improved customer targeting

- Diverse teams understand a broader range of customer needs.
- Gender equality ensures better alignment with diverse customer bases.

INDICATORS

- Create policies and systems that promote equal opportunities for career advancement and pay parity. This involves reviewing and addressing any existing gender biases in recruitment, promotion, and compensation.
- Understand cultural gender roles, norms, relations, stereotypes, prejudices affecting women and men.
- Identify the presence and justification for sex/gender-based job segregation.
- Regularly review and adjust compensation and benefits to ensure gender equity.
- Conduct pay equity analyses to identify and address any gender-based pay gaps.
- Create a transparent promotion process that is free from gender bias.
- Create separate toilets and changing rooms for women.
- Install sanitary napkin vending machines for women.
- Separate sleeping arrangements for women working in night shifts who are unable to return home late at night.

⁵ <https://business.tutsplus.com/articles/gender-equality-international-womens-day-cms-34678>



INCLUSION

To ensure fair access to employment opportunities, the leather sector will need to design services and infrastructure differently to ensure the experiences of women (who often carry the burden of care work) be placed at the centre. Thus, an equity perspective on equal workspaces will factor into the centrality of child care. Similarly, an equity perspective on transport will include special measures and infrastructure for people with disabilities to ensure that they can use transportation with dignity.

INITIATIVES

Implement policies and practices that actively encourage diversity and inclusivity. These will include recruitment strategies that target and attract women candidates, ensuring their representation at all levels of the organisation.

INDICATORS

- Develop and communicate a clear 'Diversity and inclusion policy' for the organisation that emphasises the importance of gender diversity among the workforce in the factory at all levels – from tannery through to finished goods.
- Implement unbiased hiring and promotion to ensure equal opportunities for both women and men.
- Take special steps to break the stereotypical notions surrounding gender roles and work in the leather sector, and encourage and attract both women and men to seek employment.
- Provide diversity and inclusion training for employees at all levels to raise awareness and foster understanding.
- Establish a 'Diversity and Inclusion Committee' at the management level to oversee initiatives and track progress.



PARTICIPATION

Throughout the world, women make a vital contribution to industrial output. Their work not only sustains their families, but also makes a major contribution to socio-economic progress. The creativity and talents of all women are an invaluable resource, which can and should be developed both for their own self realisation and for the benefit of society as a whole. The key to enhancing women's opportunities, and hence their position in industry and the economy, is to provide them with access to know-how, technologies and credit.

INITIATIVES

Empowerment Programmes: Develop programmes that empower women within the industry. This could involve mentorship programmes, leadership training, and networking opportunities to enhance their skills and confidence.

INDICATORS

- Encourage women's participation in decision-making processes by ensuring representation at all levels from floor to management.
- Establish mentorship and sponsorship programmes to support the professional development of women within the industry.
- Implement flexible work policies that accommodate various work styles and family responsibilities.



SAFETY

Women working in the leather industry face several challenges, including low wages, occupational health and safety risks, involuntary overtime, gender-based violence, double burden, sexual harassment at the workspace, lack of freedom of association, and the absence of grievance redressal mechanisms.

INITIATIVES	INDICATORS	
<p>Safe Work Environments: Ensure workplaces are safe and conducive for women. Address concerns related to safety, harassment, and any barriers that hinder women from actively participating or feeling secure within the workplace.</p> <p>Gender-specific hazards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognise that men and women may face different workplace hazards • For instance, women working in tanneries or leather processing units may encounter risks related to chemical exposure, heavy lifting, and repetitive tasks. 	<p>Address these gender-specific hazards through targeted safety measures.</p> <p>Training and awareness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide gender-sensitive training on safety protocols. • Ensure that both men and women understand safety procedures, emergency exits, and protective gear usage. • Raise awareness about potential risks and preventive measures.⁶ <p>Workplace design and ergonomics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design workspaces taking into consideration the physical differences between men and women. • Adjust workstations, tools, and machinery to accommodate varying body sizes and strengths. • Prioritise ergonomics to prevent strain and injuries. <p>Personal protective equipment (PPE)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that PPE is gender-appropriate. • Women should have access to well-fitting safety gear, including gloves, goggles, and aprons. • Regularly check and replace damaged or worn-out PPE. <p>Reporting mechanisms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a confidential system for reporting safety concerns. • Encourage both men and women to report incidents, near misses, or unsafe conditions. • Address any gender-related barriers to reporting, such as fear of retaliation. 	<p>Safe transportation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider the safety of women during their commute to and from work. • Address issues related to transportation security, especially for night shifts. • Collaborate with local authorities to improve safety in commuting routes. <p>Health and hygiene facilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide separate and clean restrooms and changing rooms for men and women. • Ensure access to clean water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities. • Address menstrual hygiene needs for female workers. <p>Anti-harassment policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a zero-tolerance policy against sexual harassment and discrimination, and ensure that there are clear reporting mechanisms in place. • Establish POSH Committees. • Train supervisors and colleagues to recognise and prevent harassment. • Create a supportive environment where everyone feels respected and safe. • Conduct regular safety audits to identify and address any gender-specific safety concerns. • Provide training for employees and management on creating a safe and respectful workplace.

⁶ https://leatherpanel.org/sites/default/files/publications-attachments/find_out_about_the_gender_analysis_report_on_the_leather_industry_in_ethiopia_1.pdf



OPENNESS TO LEARN, REFLECT-REVIEW-RESPOND AND CHANGE

The principle of fostering openness, reflection, and a commitment to learning can lead to continuous improvement, informed policy decisions and adaptive governance. It enables policymakers to respond effectively to complex challenges such as the issue of mainstreaming gender and improve policy outcomes. A learning environment is promoted by appreciation of differences, openness to new ideas, and time for reflection.

INITIATIVES	INDICATORS
<p>Fostering openness requires a holistic approach that combines strategy, culture, and individual growth.</p> <p>Change Management Approaches</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on the How: Leaders often emphasise the ‘what’ of change (such as new strategies or models) but neglect the ‘how.’ It’s crucial to consider the specific approach to change that aligns with your intent.⁷ • System Transformation: A focus on systems change needs the leaders to build a culture of listening deeply. <p>Learning Analytics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness and Reflection: Learning from research and interactions improves awareness and reflection processes. By leveraging data, organisations can enhance learning performance and design better learning environments.⁸ <p>Organisational Change Implementation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Navigate Change Skilfully: Organisational change involves altering components like culture, infrastructure, and processes. Proficiency in managing change is essential for success. 	<p>Create Outcome Indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define specific outcomes related to policy changes, increased awareness, or behaviour shifts. • Develop indicators to track progress toward these outcomes. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Policy Change</i>: Number and nature of policies introduced or amended. • <i>Awareness</i>: Reach (e.g., social media impressions, event attendance). • <i>Behaviour Shift</i>: Surveys or interviews to assess changes in behaviour. <p>Policy Audit Data</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect data before and after policy/change is introduced. Compare the two to measure changes. • For instance, survey people’s knowledge or attitudes before and after your awareness-raising efforts. <p>Case Studies and Stories</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualitative data can provide rich insights. Document success stories, personal experiences, and testimonials. • These narratives help illustrate impact beyond numbers. <p>Cost-Benefit Analysis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the costs of your policy intervention efforts (time, resources) against the benefits (outcomes achieved). • This helps justify investments and prioritise activities.

7 <https://hbr.org/2023/04/the-most-successful-approaches-to-leading-organizational-change>

8 <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11423-020-09909-8>

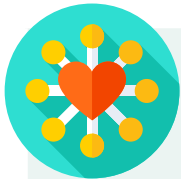


COLLABORATION

Foster an environment that encourages collaboration and teamwork among all employees, employee union irrespective of gender. Encourage cross-company collaborations to develop and share best practices. Establish collaboration between different private players and NGOs to mainstream gender in the sector.

INDICATORS

- Foster a collaborative and inclusive work environment by promoting open communication and teamwork.
- Implement cross-functional teams that include diverse perspectives and skills.
- Encourage the sharing of ideas and best practices to promote a culture of continuous improvement.
- Implement programmes providing basic education and vocational training for girls and women.
- Partner with NGOs to facilitate this training.
- Organise seminars and dialogue forums with sector leaders and influencers to embed gender in the sector.
- Capture and highlight stories of best practices to amplify and celebrate change.



SOCIAL WELLBEING

Productivity at work depends on how much the employees are in control of managing their self and well-being at work. World Health Organisation (WHO) comes up with an elaborate understanding of well-being. Well-being is a positive state experienced by individuals and societies. Similar to health, it is a resource for daily life and is determined by socio-cultural, economic, and environmental conditions. Well-being encompasses quality of life and the ability of people and societies to contribute to the world with a sense of meaning and purpose. Focusing on well-being supports the tracking of the equitable distribution of resources, overall thriving and sustainability. A society's well-being can be determined by the extent to which it is resilient, builds capacity for action, and is prepared to transcend challenges.⁹

INITIATIVES

Work-Life Balance: Offering flexible work arrangements that support the diverse needs of employees, including parental leave, flexible hours, or remote work options. Additionally, providing support for mental health and wellness programmes.

INDICATORS

- Offering wellness programmes that address both physical and mental health, considering the unique needs of women.
- Providing family-friendly policies, such as parental leave and childcare support, to promote work-life balance.
- Creating a supportive network within the organisation to address social and professional challenges faced by women and men.

9 <https://www.who.int/activities/promoting-well-being>



COURAGE

Implementing these principles requires commitment and buy-in from leadership. Engaging owners and decision-makers in understanding the business benefits of gender diversity and its positive impact on innovation, productivity, and overall company performance is crucial.

INDICATORS

- Additionally, involve leadership in championing and modelling these principles to create a culture that values and promotes gender diversity
- And finally, establishing metrics and regularly evaluating progress toward these principles can help in identifying areas for improvement and showcasing the benefits of a more diverse and inclusive workforce. Regular training and education on unconscious bias and inclusivity can also help change mindsets and create a more welcoming workplace for everyone.

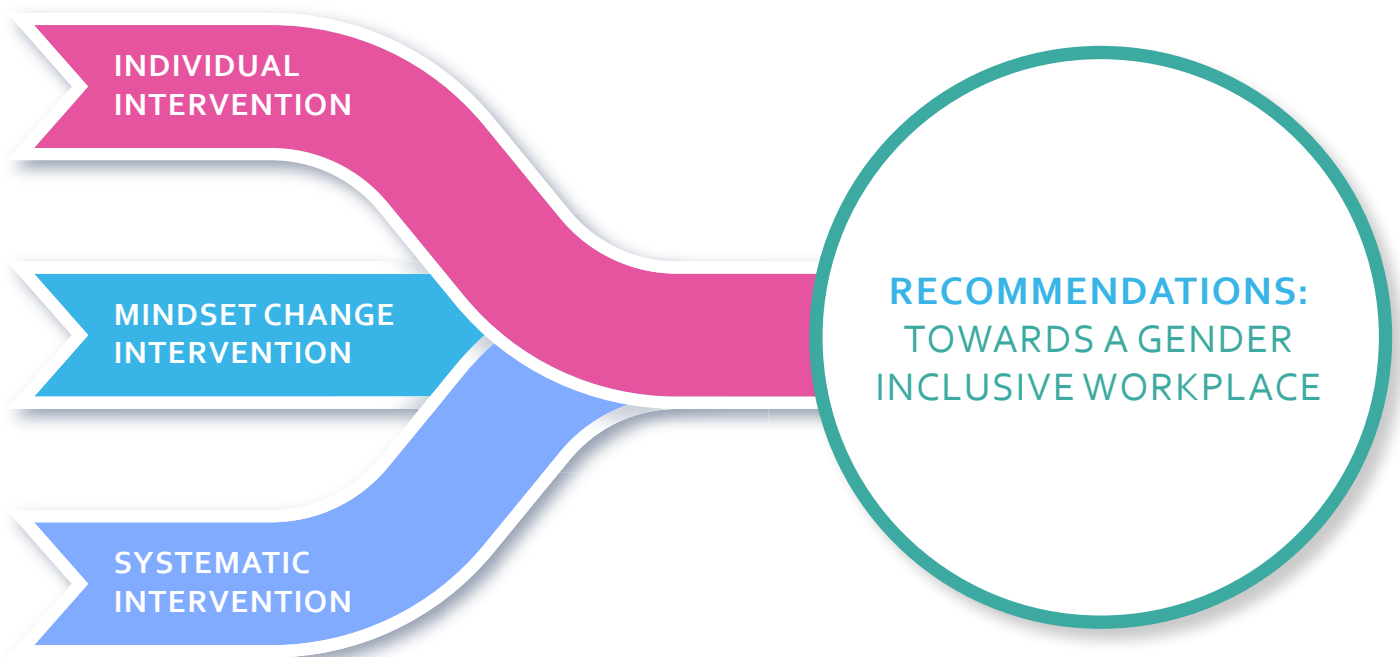
Conclusion

Promoting gender inclusiveness benefits not only women as individual workers, it also contributes to the overall productivity and well-being of the leather industry. It is obvious that change will occur when interventions are targeted at both the individual level in terms of skills and behavioural change, and at a systemic level. Change is sustainable only when the system becomes responsive to the changes.

Mindset is a set of beliefs that shape how one makes sense of the world and self, influencing how we think, feel and behave in any given situation. Changing one's mindset to shift the unequal power imbalance between women and men can be a challenging but rewarding process. Reflection, new information, ways to process information and the emotions within a supportive environment can lead to a mindset change towards gender equality. Challenging the current perspective, or *status quo*, and expanding the world view of the direct stakeholders involved in the leather eco-system in Bantala industry would be one way to begin pushing for change.

Implementing the strategies compiled by this *Facing the Mirror Framework* will require dedication, resources, and concerted efforts from a variety of stakeholders. Only a comprehensive approach addressing systemic issues while empowering individuals can gradually create a more inclusive and equitable environment within the industry.

By advocating for policies ensuring equal pay, anti-discrimination measures, and flexible work arrangements to accommodate diverse needs and particularly the requirements of women in the workplace, the sector will become encouraging by providing opportunities for women to take on leadership roles within the industry as well as promoting their visibility and influence. By facilitating women's access to resources such as childcare services, healthcare facilities, and transportation to support women's participation in the industry, the sector will be creating networks to help women navigate career challenges and enter a diverse and efficient workforce.



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