Beyond Glass Ceilings

and

Brick Walls

Gender at the Workplace

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C H A P T E R   O N E

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Gender and Labour Regulatory Frameworks

There are a number of gender-related labour regulatory frameworks that apply to Sri Lankan women workers employed in the private sector. These provisions are identified as sources and frameworks with the power to initiate institutional change (see Introduction) through broad consensus-building and pressurizing. The country ratified the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women **(CEDAW)** in 1981. The principles of this document which ensures equality in access to employment were translated into the **Sri Lanka Women's Charter**, adopted in 1993 as State policy. However, the Women's Charter has yet to be integrated into national policy and legislative frameworks through appropriate legislative amendments. Currently however, the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Development is in the process of formulating a bill on a **National Commision on Women**, in an attempt to legalize the rights of women *vis a vis* the Women's Charter and other international standards. It is envisioned that one of the structures to be established to safeguard the rights of women will possess sufficient powers to make representations to the private sector on behalf of women workers.

In 1996, the State formulated a **National Plan of Action** based on the commitment given at the UN Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. Here, the economic activities of women were identified as a key area requiring special attention. However, it has not been adequately taken into account in the formulation of national development policies.

Sri Lanka does not possess Equal Opportunity or Sex Discrimination legislation, but has ratified ILO Conventions No.100 on Equal Remuneration (1951) and Convention No 111 on Non-Discrimination with respect to Employment and Occupation, (1958). Sri Lanka has also ratified Convention No.103 on Maternity Protection, which is seen by many to be a condition of equal / equitable treatment for female workers. The **Constitution** of Sri Lanka guarantees the principles of equality in Article 12 (2) which decrees that "no citizen shall be discriminated against on the grounds of race, religion, language, caste, sex, political opinion, place of birth or any one of such grounds…" Regrettably however, it does not apply to private sector employment. Furthermore, the Constitution does not provide for non-discrimination on other vital grounds such as gender, marital status, maternity, disability, age, parental status, sexual orientation, transgender status or being HIV positive.

The **Wages Board Ordinance** No. 27 of 1941 (amended on seven or more instances) regulates the terms and conditions of employment, including the minimum wages of workers in trade, industry and agriculture. Other statutory and administrative reforms have resulted in the equalizing of wages in many areas of the formal sector of legally regulated employment. **However, in the plantation sector where daily wages are the same for men and women, women tea pluckers still have to work longer hours than their male counterparts engaged in other plantation work**. Though there are efforts to introduce the concept of equal wages for the same *type* of work done by both men and women, it has yet to be adopted with regard to all types of manual labour.

In the informal sector, which is not covered by the Wages Board Ordinance, there are major disparities in payment between men and women. **Furthermore, some categories of informal work are solely dominated by women (domestic workers/home-based industries/'piece' subcontractors). Due to the lack of wage regulation, many women in these areas are exposed to exploitative remunerative practices as well as to irregular conditions of work.**

The **Maternity Benefits Ordinance No 32 of 1939** has been amended on more than eight occasions, thus widening the scope of the legislation. Maternity benefits for women working in the public sector differ from those for women in the private sector. The current provisions for the private sector are governed by the Maternity Benefits Ordinance No 32 of 1939 and the Shop and Office Employees (Regulation of Employment and Remuneration) Act No. 19 Of 1954, which allow an entitlement of 84 working days fully paid leave for the first two live births of all pregnant workers working in all sectors, irrespective of length of service and marital status. For children born thereafter, women are entitled to only 42 days paid leave-clearly discouraging further pregnancies.

Moreover, it still does not address the importance of bringing men into the scene as carers and parents; nor does it include parental leave or provide for day care (Goonesekere, 1995). The maternity benefits for the public sector workers are governed by the Establishment Code. Currently, in the public sector, women are granted no-pay maternity leave for a further one year (first three months full pay, the next three months at half pay and there is an option of no pay maternity leave during the remaining six months). This provision does not apply to the private sector. While the provision of extended maternity benefits is to be lauded, there is a danger here that women could be exposed to further discrimination in the workplace as a result of this amendment, which would effectively place women away from the workplace for another twelve months. It is preferable that maternity benefits are complemented with paternity leave, so as to promote healthy, well-balanced families. While the Public Circular No. 03/2006 (dated 2006.03.02) allows three days special paternity leave for government workers, this provision does not apply to the private sector. Thus, there are

fundamental differences in the maternity provisions for the private sector and the public sector, particularly in terms of the leave period, the number of children, and paternity leave.

The Maternity Benefits Ordinance provides expectant women with legal protection from dismissal for any illness connected with pregnancy and confinement, and from engaging in work that is deemed injurious to the health of the pregnant or nursing worker, or the unborn child.

> While the law recognizes maternity benefits as being the right of a pregnant woman, **"micro studies show that some employers flout labour laws with impunity. A study of 400 women workers in 50 manufacturing establishments in and around Colombo city noted that only 62% of the establishments provided maternity benefits in accordance with the regulations. There was clearly a lacuna in enforcement of labour legislation. With a few exceptions, casual and contract workers received no benefits at all. Trade Unions did not appear to be effective in ensuring enforcement, as maternity benefits were assured only in 72.8% of establishments in which unions functioned and in 59.6% of the establishments in which there were no trade unions"** (ILO – ACTEMP/CENWOR, 1993).

Furthermore, the controversial provision that enables husbands to collect the maternity allowances due to women workers, (engaged in manual work), remains in the statute books and is still used in some plantations.

The entitlements of the Maternity Benefits Ordinance also accounts for support services for nursing women, such as nursing intervals (of 2½ hours per day if a convenient place is available, or 1 hour otherwise) and the provision of crèches for children less than five years.

Concessions available in the **Public Administration Circular** No 22/1989 (amended by Circular No. 13/1995), are that of 30 minutes late arrival and 30 minutes early departure from office (without pay reduction) during pregnancy (as a relief measure due to transport delays) does not apply to the private sector.

With the amendment to the **Penal Code** No. 22 of 1995, sexual harassment was included in **Section 345** in place of the antiquated concept of **'***outraging the modesty of a woman'*** thereby, finally providing a new definition and legitimacy to a crime that women experience virtually every day. Accordingly, the definition of sexual harassment is as follows: *"**Whoever, by assault or use of criminal force, sexually harasses another person by the use of words or actions, causes sexual annoyance or harassment to such other persons, commits the offence of sexual harassment..."** The pertinent Amendment further states that 'unwelcome sexual advances by words or actions used by a person in authority in a working place, or any other place, shall constitute the offence of sexual harassment."*

An assault may include any act that does not amount to rape under Section 363 of the Penal Code. To establish a case of sexual harassment, the prosecution would have to conform to the criminal standard of proof beyond a reasonable doubt. On conviction, the perpetrator is liable to be punished with a fine and/or imprisonment; in addition to which, the victim may be awarded compensation of an amount determined by the court. Consequently, there is provision today to gain legal relief for this offence even though it has not been adequately exploited.

It can be speculated that this could be due to reasons, including misplaced feelings of shame and fear, the delays in the legal system, lack of social/structural supports in reporting the crime, fear of reprisals and continuing harassment, and the social perception of sexual harassment as an act to be tolerated.

In addition to the Penal Code, it is possible for women in the public sector to file action under the Bribery Act for types of harassment such as the demand for sexual favours in return for transfers, promotions and other benefits of employment (Gomez and Gomez: 1999). This relief is not available to working women in the private sector, as they and other women in certain statutory bodies may only approach a Labour Tribunal for redress in cases of resignation arising from harassment.

Another legislative enactment pertinent to women in the workplace is the **Employment of Women, Young Persons and Children's Act** (No. 47 of 1956, amended by No. 8 of 2003). There have been a number of changes to this Act to strengthen its coverage with regard to compensation, work times (overtime/shifts), working conditions, etc, and the prohibition on employing children under 14 years (while children under 18 are classified as those who need protection). As seen by the title of this piece of legislation, there is an unfortunate tendency in the Sri Lankan legal system to group women along with children. This linking of women with children has several implications, including gender stereotyping of all women as mothers, reinforcing the idea that only women should be responsible for children, and linguistically negating the adult status of women.

There have so far been no reforms to the law on occupational health. The amendments to the 19th-century **Workmen's Compensation Ordinance No. 19 Of 1934** (amended by 15 of 1990) have not ensured that the needs of women workers are met (Goonesekere, 1995). Welfare provisions in the **Factories Ordinance No. 45 of 1942 and** Shop and Office Employees' (Regulation of Employment and Remuneration) Act No. 19 Of 1954 (as amended in 1984 and 2002) permitting night work for women are not being monitored to ensure that employers provide the necessary facilities for night workers even today. The amendment to increase the overtime ceiling from 100 hours per year to 60 hours per month for women workers and 50 hours for young persons employed in factories need to be scrutinized for effective implementation.

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Other documents such as election manifestos of political parties, who have pledged various benefits to working women and their families during successive elections, still remain aspirational documents. This conveys that while there is common acknowledgement of women's and family needs, the realization of those needs have not been a priority in the Sri Lankan context.

It is also worthwhile noting that the **Guidelines for a Sexual Harassment Policy** developed and promoted by the Employers' Federation of Ceylon (EFC) and the International Labour Organization (ILO), is a useful instrument for private sector companies to adopt/adapt according to their own needs. The **Guidelines for a Company Policy on Gender Equity/Equality** (2005) and the **Manual on Gender Equity/Equality in the Workplace** (forthcoming) formulated by the same two organizations can direct organizations to provide for gender justice and the well-being of both men and women at work.

A National Picture
Gender Configurations in the Labour Force

The extensive Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) of the country's economy undertaken by Sri Lanka from l977 onwards have both enhanced and reduced women's economic participation. State control of the economy eased; and private investment and free markets came to play central roles. This heralded vast changes for women-far more extensive than those experienced by men. On the one hand, large numbers of women were displaced due to the collapse of the handloom and other cottage industries during the early years as a result of the SAP's bias towards large-scale industry (Jayaweera, 1989). On the other hand, large numbers of women employees, in particular, were integrated into the hospitality/migrant/export/and informal sectors of the economy. However, this was a process of integration on unequal terms-as women were compelled to work in subordinate capacities in the bottom rungs; where the standards of employment are low.

In 2004, it was estimated that Sri Lanka's labour force was 8,061,354 strong. Of this, 5,372,897 were men, and 2,688,457 were women (Department of Census and Statistics 2005). **For women, the labour force participation rate reaches a peak from the age of 20-24 years, whereas the corresponding peak for men is from 30-39 years**. Although in the 1980's, the women's workforce recorded a faster annual growth than the men's workforce, in the 1990s, the overall labour force participation rates of both women and men remained at the same level, possibly due to the stabilization of labour migration.

The 2004 statistics (excluding the Northern Province) show that **women's labour force participation rate was a low 31.5 % in comparison to the male labour force participation rate of 66.7. %** (Department of Census and Statistics 2005). The bulk of the workforce is categorized under the Western Province, due to the large-scale industrial promotion projects and the high number of migrant workers in the area.

The most recent gender disaggregated statistics illustrating the distribution of men and women in paid employment in the public and private sectors is of the 2nd quarter in 2004.

Table 1: Distribution of Paid Employees by Public/Private Sector* and Sex 2004 - 2nd Quarter (in millions)

Sector		Total	Male	Female
Total		4.35	2.93	1.42
Public		0.91	0.57	0.34
Private		3.44	2.36	1.08

(Department of Census and Statistics)
 * Excluding employers, own account workers and unpaid family workers

The above table shows that the total number of paid employees constituted in 2004 4.35 million workers. Of these, 2.93 million (67%) were men, while 1.42 million (33%) were women. **Private sector paid employees constituted 2.36 million men or 68% and 1.08 million women or 32% of the total of 3.44 million in the second quarter of the year 2004. This makes up a ratio of approximately two men to one woman in the private sector.** However, it is important to point out that these numbers did not include employers, own account workers, and unpaid family workers-technically within the private sector.

Overall, men and women's occupational distributions were similar (even for senior officials) and this may reflect the availability of jobs (or growth) in Sri Lanka as well as gender differentials. Interestingly, men were represented more in the service sectors, though statistics **conveyed a higher number of women professionals than men in the labour force. The situation was similar in the three-year period under review and may indicate a probable trend over a longer period. Unfortunately, we do not have evidence as to the composition of the category of "professional" in regard to men and women. On the Otherhand, the number of women occupying the highest strata of employment (senior officials and managers) was strikingly lower than that of men,** conveying the existence of a 'glass ceiling' as far as women were concerned. Furthermore, when it comes to technical and associate professionals as well as Plant and Machine Operators and Assemblers, there were more men, **indicating the dearth of women in technical fields.**

Table 2:   Employed Persons by Sex and Major Occupational Groups   [in thousands]

| | 1999 | | | | 2000 | | | | 2001 | | | | 2002 | | 2003 | |
	M	%	F	%	M	%	F	%	M	%	F	%	M/F	%	M/F	%
Total Employed	4107		1975		4242		2069		4249		1987		6519		7013	
Senior Officials and Managers	58	1.4	16	3.5	59	1.4	15	0.7	70	1.6	19	1.0	86	1.3	88	1.3
Professionals	142	3.5	191	9.7	138	3.3	201	9.7	158	3.7	199	10.0	352	5.4	368	5.2
Technical and Associate	225	5.5	81	4.1	222	5.2	82	4.0	241	5.7	101	5.1	317	4.9	342	4.9
Professionals																
Clerks	129	3.1	124	6.3	149	3.5	110	5.3	176	4.1	121	6.1	284	4.4	304	4.3
Proprietors and Managers	N.A.		N.A.		N.A.		N.A.		N.A.		N.A.		407	6.2	329	4.7
Sales and Service Workers	574	14.0	187	9.5	552	13.0	213	10.3	566	13.3	216	10.9	510	7.8	629	9.0
Skilled Agriculture and Fishery Workers	865	21.1	481	24.4	1047	24.7	573	27.7	938	22.1	482	24.3	1579	24.2	1634	23.3
Craft and Related Workers	585	14.23	131	5.8	633	14.9	380	18.4	640	15.1	352	17.7	935	14.3	1084	15.5
Plant and Machine Operators and Assemblers	324	7.9	42	2.1	313	7.4	31	1.5	374	8.8	39	2.0	374	5.7	420	6.0
Elementary Occupations	1006	24.5	494	25.0	1008	23.8	450	21.7	972	22.9	446	22.4	1608	24.7	1735	24.7
Unidentified	199	4.8	46	2.3	120	2.8	14	0.7	113	2.7	11	0.6	67	1.0	80	1.1

N.A. : Not Available

Note: Up to 2002, data excluded both Northern and Eastern provinces. The 2003 statistics included the Eastern Province, but excludes the Northern Province. (Department of Census and Statistics 2004).

Table 2 indicates the major occupational categories women and men occupy in both the public and private sectors.

Although there was a two to one ratio of men to women in the overall workforce, there were fewer numbers of women in the sales and service sector. However, there were more women clerks, skilled agricultural workers, fishery workers, and craftsperson than was expected. An important point to note is that these numbers did not include the large numbers of unskilled women workers in agriculture. On the whole, Table 2 illustrates that **large numbers of the female and male workforce were concentrated in lower level occupations.**

Table 3 provides the overall labour force participation rate (excluding the Northern and Eastern Provinces) for the year 2002, while Table 4 gives an indication of the percentage of employee distribution according to economic activity in the Colombo District in the year 2001.

Table 3: Percentage of Employees distributed according to Economic Activity (Colombo District)

Labour Force Participation Rate (2002)	Working Age	
	Men	Women
Colombo District	65.8	28.7

Adaptation (Department of Census and Statistics)

Table 4: Percentage of Employee Distribution by Economic Activity (Colombo District)

Employment by Economic Activity (2001)	Colombo District (Percentage)	
	Male	Female
Agriculture/Forestry/Fishing	2.3%	1.5%
Industry	25.7%	34.7%
Services	72.0%	63.8%

Adaptation (Department of Census and Statistics)

The overall women's labour force participation rate as a percentage of the female working age group in the Colombo District was a surprising 28.7% in the year 2002. This seems to indicate that **a considerable number of women were not employed.** It is possible that this reflects the class and ethnic configuration of this urbanized sector, where there are large banks of middle/upper middle and affluent classes and ethnic groups. Related social, cultural and gender norms may also restrict female employment. Furthermore, it is possible that the data has not captured the majority of females working in the informal economy. In cases where 'women chose not to work', it could also be that women in the Colombo district are better educated than their national counterparts and in such cases, it is possible that women opt not to work if the job prospects are such that their return for education is low (not enough jobs at the right level/too much competition for existing good jobs). Further research is needed to explain the low female labour force participation rate for Colombo.

The male labour force participation rate was 65.8% of the overall male working age group. In 2001, the high level of male workers in the Service sector (72%) reflected the high concentration of male dominant trades in the district such as wholesale and retail trade, repair of motor vehicles, motorcycles and personal and household goods, hotels and restaurants, transport storage and communication, financial intermediation and real estate, renting, and business activities, public administration and defence.

In comparison, women in the Colombo district also scored the highest percentage (63.8%) of women employed in the Service sector from all districts. The Service sector has traditionally been the forte of Sri Lankan women, with large numbers of women going into the public sector (largely centralized in Colombo), educational service, and lower-levels of employment. In the industrial sector, women accounted for 34.7% of the female workforce - a significant number of them concentrated in the factories of Ratmalana. Of the male workforce in the Colombo District, 34.7% were in industry.

However, there was an overall lack of engagement in the agricultural, forestry and fisheries sectors in the Colombo District. This was reflected in the minimal percentages of men and women categorized under these sectors.

An Institutional Picture
Speaking with 100 Companies in the Private Sector

As noted in the introduction, the data in this book is gathered from 100 random companies of varying sectors/categories/sizes, from the private sector registered with the Employers' Federation of Ceylon. **However, it must be noted that the selected sample included several representatives from the plantation sector and export industries where there are large concentrations of women.** Here too, the most visible feature of labour configuration is that of gender segregation- both vertical and horizontal.

Table 5: Private Sector Employment by Sex and Levels of Employment

Levels of Employment	Male	Female	Total	Female % of Total Female Employees	Female % of Total Employees	Female% of Levels of Employment
Apex Decision Making Body	99	5	104	0.02%	0.007%	4.8%
Chief Executive Officers	66	3	69	0.01%	0.004%	4.3%
Senior Management	613	84	679	0.27%	0.1%	12.3%
Middle Management	933	222	1,155	0.71%	0.3%	19.2%
Junior Management	754	174	928	0.55%	0.1%	18.7%
Consultants /Specialists	123	25	148	0.08%	0.03%	16.8%
Executives	1,712	753	2,465	2.39%	1.09%	30.5%
Superintendents / Supervisors	1,757	520	2,277	1.65%	0.75%	22.8%
Workers (Skilled/Unskilled)	30,924	29,689	60,613	94.29%	43.3%	48.9%
Others	22	13	35	0.04%	0.01%	37.1%
Total Employees	37,003	31,488	68,491	100%	45.9%	

Source: Survey data

The survey found:

- There was one company, with no female employees; yet, the reverse was not observed.

- There are 9 companies that had 3 or less female employees in workforces that varied from 10 employees upwards.

- The least number of male employees in an organization is 7 (this particular organization also employs 3 women making up a total of 10 employees).

- All other workplaces under survey have at least 11 male employees in workforces that ranged from 10 employees upwards.

- Of the total figure of 68,491 employees, 37,003 are men and 31,488 are women.

- Women employees constitute 45.9% of the total employed in these organizations. However, it must be noted that this includes companies representing the plantation sector and export industries, where there are large concentrations of women employees.

- Almost 95% of women are crowded into the "workers category, skilled and unskilled". Jobs at this levels require little decision-making and are not very demanding- conveying their lack of positional and agenda setting power within the organization as well as little chance for skills up-gradation that is needed to move beyond glass ceilings and brick walls.

- The majority of women in the "workers" category also indicates horizontal (occupational) as well as vertical segregation in general (reflecting their lower levels of skills and organizationed openings).

- Of the total (104) representatives of apex decision-making bodies, only 5 are women, thereby illustrating the paucity of women in decision-making positions (4.8%), which tends to reflect the overall country statistics (Table 3.) of the dearth of women at the top.

- There are only 3 women CEOs from the total figure of 69 CEOs heading the organizations (they constitute 4.3% of the total number of CEOs, and 0.009% of the total number of female employees). This confirms previous observations that women very rarely reach positions of executive control.

- Of the female CEOs, one CEO works in an insurance company of a conglomerate spanning various sectors of industry/service. The second CEO is heading a 30-year-old, family-owned, property development company, while the third CEO is in charge of a 160-year-old organization in export/import trading.

- Even though women are part of management, their numbers are limited (10% - 20% of management). They are distributed as 12.3% of senior management, 19.2% of middle management and 18.7% of junior management.)

- Between 20% - 30% of executives at senior/junior levels and superintendents/ supervisors are women.

Concurrently, the survey came across divisions and departments within organizations that are occupied entirely by men or women. **In many instances, the transport/maintenance divisions of organizations were staffed completely by men**. This, of course, is linked to the social perception of certain job spheres as masculine or feminine; and which, therefore, preclude access to the opposite sex.

Aside from the survey of 100 companies, 66 working women were interviewed with the assistance of structured questionnaires. These workers were able to point to the relatively diminutive numbers of women workers who have managed to triumph over occupational segregation; who have had the opportunity to break the traditional moulds they occupy, and enter new areas of work.

- Of the 66 workers interviewed, only 3 were given training in non-traditional areas. For instance, one woman learned to operate a packing machine in a factory.

- Only 6% of these women were able to refer to other women workers in non-traditional jobs within their institutions.

Taken as a whole, the statistical landscapes within these work organizations raise a number of issues. Firstly, it conveys the lower (48%) overall participation of women workers (in spite of the sample consisting of a number of female-dominant work organizations). Secondly, it tabulates gender segregation (vertical/horizontal/divisional), delineating the exact locations of men and women in terms of how they are walled up into particular occupations and divisions. While definitive evidence is not available, it is also possible that this may imply 'a glass ceiling syndrome' that restricts women's upward mobility for numerous reasons. It is possible that arising from these phenomena in the workplace, are issues such as the circumscription of choice and the denial of the right to choose one's work sector (despite equal qualifications or training) and the denial of upward or lateral mobility.

A Personal Picture:
Introducing Women Workers and Women Managers

Women Workers

The book builds on the questionnaire responses of 66 women workers and thus attempts a qualitative analysis based on the perceptions of those interviewed: their working conditions, access to equal opportunities and treatment, experiences of workplace micropolitics, etc. The workers are from the manufacturing industry, trade, and services (including hotels, banks, transport, telecommunications). They range from machine operators, administrative staff, and sales personnel to clerical workers and office helpers.

Given the characteristics of Sri Lanka's potential labour force - an unemployment rate of 23.8% for men and 34.3% for women (in the age group 16-24 years) in the year 2002 (Department of Census and Statistics);clear indications of graduate under employment and unemployment; and the unequal work situation of the female workforce - a section of the questionnaire was interested in tabulating the locations of women workers and their perceptions with regard to their jobs in relation to their qualifications.

Table 6: Configuration of women workers according to their place of work and qualifications

Place of Work	Qualified	Under qualified	Overqualified	Total
Bank	2	1	2	5
Hotel	1	2	1	4
Shop	6		2	8
Factory	21	6	5	32
Other sectors	9	5	3	17
Total	39	14	13	66

Source: Survey data

Table 6 portrays women workers according to their place of work, and qualifications. Nearly half of the women workers interviewed were employed in factories. Of the 66 working women, 39 felt that they were adequately qualified for the job; 14 felt under qualified; while 13 felt overqualified.

Further, the case studies of 10 women workers help to illustrate qualitatively a number of implicit assumptions in the workplace with regard to women, men, and employment-for instance, with regard to the reasons *why* women work. The dominant perception (especially on the part of policymakers) with regard to work is founded on the gendered division of labour, which places

men in the public sphere working outside the home and women in the private domestic sphere (Rao et al 1999: Pilcher 2004). Consequently, households are generally seen as nuclear (consisting of husband, wife and children), while the man is persistently seen as the head of the household, responsible for his family. On this revolves further assumptions: that men's jobs are more important than women's; that men's main reasons for working are more imperative than women's; and that men's career prospects are higher than women's. Conversely, it is assumed that women's work is secondary; and that women's reasons for working are not legitimate; and that, they are not interested in long-term careers. This is evident in the general situation of women workers in the labour market, and the treatment that they receive at the workplace, as well as within intra-family relations.

> Contrary to these often implicit socio-cultural beliefs, women interviewees state that their reasons for working are as follows: *'to earn money to live (to support self and family)'; 'cannot afford not to'; 'like to work and gain knowledge/experience'; 'to make use of qualifications'; 'to do something worthwhile with life'; 'to do something challenging'; 'and to meet people'*.

> Women spend the money they earn on a) household/family expenditure, b) daily work-related expenses, c) loans d) savings e) charity (depending on their civil status).

A majority if these women convey that working is a vital/indispensable activity in their lives. This explodes the social myth that working is a frivolous activity for women; that they are just marking time before getting married; and that they are merely making a secondary contribution to the household. (It is worth noting that the research sample of ten case studies includes a single woman living alone and a woman-headed family. These women rely solely on their own incomes.)

The respondents, who were satisfied with their current employment, aspired to scale company ladders. Others were thinking of moving on to better prospects. Their general plans for the next five to ten years include buying a car, getting married, building a house, travelling, and so on. One respondent was thinking of retiring after thirty years of work. Another was exploring the prospect of setting up her own software company. Only one interviewee contemplated leaving the job after marriage; yet even she felt that she might not be able to afford it, and therefore, she too thought more in terms of a change in profession. The aspirations of these women clearly show that their commitment to working is serious, and that they are in it for long-term gains.

The questionnaire addressed another area of interest, that of the unofficial support networks that provide job opportunities and promote upward mobility

in the workplace. This is one avenue through which power-in this instance, consensus-building power or the power for conflict-can be exercised within an organization. The lack of which also limits the power for dialogue within an organization. Unlike men, who may have access to 'old boys' networks' or receive unofficial mentoring, and thereby gain access to more opportunities at the workplace, women workers were not part of such school networks and were not offered such informal support systems. None of the women interviewed could refer to a mentor or a woman achiever who has inspired/ supported them, or who posed as a role model. ***However, the case study of Tharuni-a salesperson- indicates that she looks to the personnel manager at her workplace as someone who has motivated her.*** Thus, it would seem that these employees are reliant entirely on themselves (and sometimes their families) for strength and inspiration, and support to work. The patriarchal or androcentric organizational culture and the micropolitics within work institutions serve to continually disadvantage women workers/managers in relation to men. In this instance, women lack access to powers of organizational consensus-building, pressuring and networking as well as a forum for dialogue. Not only does this affect women at a personal level, but it also does not provide for organizational change through common understanding. There is then, a need for organizations to consciously adopt institutional mentoring schemes and workplace networks for women that can provide both individual and institutional support.

Women Managers

A number of issues emerged in the study when we examined the context in which women managers worked. The numbers of women in senior management positions, the career mobility experienced by them, the work environment and support systems, and the social and institutional rewards are some important issues examined. Women in senior management positions are far less than their male counterparts. This is a contradiction when compared to the proportion of women following different tertiary and professional educational/training programs. At recruitment stages as well as in subsequent career mobility tracks, women tend to fall behind. This is indicative of what is referred to as the 'glass ceiling'- a complex of factors that prevents women rising up the career ladder.

Management both as an applied science and a body of knowledge has grown; and is applied to improve organizationed effectiveness and efficiency. While the initial emphasis was on identifying the factors associated with greater productivity, focus has now shifted to a more holistic approach of examining organizations in order to find out how they function. A combination of quantitative as well as qualitative approaches are adopted. The main aspects examined are organizational efficiency, strategic management and human relations in organizations. These broad theoretical aspects are examined in order to identify the main constraints that women managers face in their work settings.

With increasing numbers of women joining the workforce and obtaining access

to higher education (including those related to management skills), there is greater concern about the lack of parity in the overall positions held by women as well as senior management positions. It is clear that there are numerous constraints faced by women in accessing management positions and also when moving up the management hierarchy to senior executive positions. These are mostly socially-created and some are specific to organizational cultures. Consequently, institutional approaches are needed to rectify these anomalies and imbalances at workplaces.

Social expectations and stereotypes are a major bottleneck that women have to deal with when working in management positions. Society still has different expectations from men and women when it comes to deciding on occupations, positions and power. Organizations have traditionally been managed by men and a complex and intricate system of practices, values and culture has evolved over time that mostly favour men. This masculanization of the formal sector was inevitable given the traditional gendered division of labour, where women were associated with responsibilities of the family and home and men with business, agriculture and governance. Today, organizational structures and processes developed by men reflect their values and behaviour. Thus, most formal organizations are masculine in nature. When women access these organizations they face enormous difficulties. Many try to adapt to a masculine culture and expectations. Others try to change the organizations.

Management sciences have found that the approaches to development and management of organizations are different between men and women. There are lessons to be drawn and complementarities tapped by using the two approaches for better advantage of organizations and their management. While the constraints faced by women in management must be addressed in the broader interest of women and organizations, reengineering of organizations to fuse the advantages of the two approaches - masculine and feminine-is necessary. The study also draws insights from in-depth interviews in ten companies. These were helpful in identifying the main constraints faced by women managers and methods of addressing them.

The need for a greater sharing of available knowledge and understanding of women's strengths as well as feminine approaches to decision-making, robust gender policy within companies, reengineering company culture to make optimum work environments for both women and men, breaking stereotypes and creating possibilities for change within organizations were the main inferences drawn from the detailed case studies of the ten companies.

Chapters two and three provide more details drawing from the information gathered from the perspectives of workers and management respectively.

Demolishing Brick Walls

Gender Dimensions of Organizational Structures, Cultures and Micropolitics

Maithree Wickramasinghe

Gendered Work Structures and Practices

We have already argued that because work organizations are essentially male dominated and because powers within these organizations are vested in men, there is structural and cultural gender inequity/inequality in the work place. In other words, work structures tend to be patriarchal in nature, while work practices are androcentric - contributing primarily to the propagation of values, needs and interests valorized by men as male, to the exclusion and detriment of women. This can be attributed to the historical roots of patriarchy, or women's subordination or gender inequity in societies. There are, of course, many mono-causal theories explaining the phenomena, such as those founded on biology or reproductive roles; or men's innate violence against women; or the gender division of labour. However, these explanations tend to essentialize the complexities of the differential and inequitable situation of men and women in socio-political, cultural, familial and personal relations. And it is not the objective of this book to theorize on the reasons for gender inequity/ inequality.

Suffice to say, that this chapter, through the use of qualitative examples, demonstrates the precise ways in which these patriarchal organizational structures and practices of work institutions have differential implications for men and women. In doing so, it is possible to see the resultant organizational culture as constituting of a clearly discernible superstructure and a less overt substructure. The superstructure consists of highly visible organizational arrangements such as work/management tiers, promotional ladders, labour/financial exchanges, corporate practices, institutional mechanisms etc.

On the other hand, the substructure (Rao et al 1999) may be less tangible. It consists of accepted gender relations, conventions of behaviour, family/work splits, language practices and moral codes etc. The workings of the superstructure and substructure give rise to the gender micropolitics within organizations. Organizational micropolitics are tantamount to the conflicts, resentments, competing interests and power imbalances, networks and coalitions, political and personal strategies to effect or resist change at workplaces (Morley 1999).

The inequalities and inequities cemented into the superstructure of organizations may be easily apprehended and dismantled brick by brick through policy and implementational actions. Yet, the more insidious workings of the institutional substructures may need to be demolished at the conceptual levels; with institutional transformation requiring not only policy and executive interventions but also changes at a personal and individual level.

In the first section of this chapter, qualitative analysis will portray exactly how institutional arrangements either directly discriminate against women, or indirectly place women at a disadvantage and has gender inequitable assumptions of management, or the overall insensitivity to the implications of gender issues, or gender micropolitics at the workplace contribute to this state of affairs. This section will categorize the organizational superstructure under employer/ employee contract, employee mobility, working environment and women's voices and representation.

The second section will consider the workings of organizational substructure and gender micropolitics. Selected examples will show gender-based assumptions and the micropolitics of language and morality within these institutional structures and cultures. They will also show how these serves to demand and inculcate double standards in men and women, create adverse work environments, and influence the productivity of women workers in particular.

The Employer / Employee Contract

Recruitment

Recruitment processes in the private sector can allow for indirect forms of gender discrimination. One of the critical instances of gender bias that restrict equal opportunities for women can be seen in the advertising of job opportunities. Our research shows how work organizations may deliberately or unthinkingly subscribe to gender inequality from the moment they advertise a job position. Recruitment advertisements may be written in ways that are discriminatory. Apart from instances of outright bias where organizations specifically call for either male or female applicants, there are those job categories that employers contend are 'female' or 'male' due to high concentrations of either sex. Advertisements based on such assumptions clearly tend to promote further gender segregation in job categories. Moreover, postings of job categories such as secretaries state the required sex and age of the employee, instead of merely stating the vacancy and the necessary years of experience that would suit the job grade.

> Then there are instances where employers are less obvious in their discriminatory practices. ***Champika, (a lawyer) speaks of how she applied to a private bank and was not called for an interview. Later, she had made unofficial inquiries and come to know that the bank concerned was only interested in a male lawyer for the slot.***

On the other hand, there are isolated instances where individual employees have surmounted gender segregation by venturing into job categories where there are heavy concentrations of either men or women.

> ***One respondent speaks of a male secretary in an insurance company. Unfortunately, due to a combination of his personality and his job category, he had been the target of many office jokes. Another respondent worked for five years as a Tea Taster-breaking into a sector which has hitherto been dominated by men and where recruitment is based on criteria such as 'sportsmanship' and 'old boys' networks'.*** However, there are other job categories in the plantation sector-like management positions-where women in particular, are still not seen. ***This is evinced by the experience of the respondent (Tea Taster) whose first choice was to become a Planter. Yet, two plantation companies were unwilling to recruit her as a Planter because she was a woman, despite her having approached them through personal contacts.*** Recently however, there have been efforts to change the male dominated estate management structures-especially at lower levels in the estate workforce by appointing female supervisors to overlook tea-pluckers.

Fieldwork conveys that job interviews are mostly conducted by men-usually the potential boss, sometimes accompanied by the human resources manager or an administrator. At interviews, apart from questions about the interviewees' qualifications and previous work experiences, all the women respondents in the study were asked about their family background and about their personal lives-in particular, their civil status (frequently in compliance with interview forms). Furthermore, single women were specifically asked about their plans regarding marriage, and about love relationships (if any).

Management is often seen to express concerns about whether a female employee will resign after marriage; some required reassurance that they would not do so. Most seem to assume that female employees (as opposed to males) would require leave for purposes of marriage/honeymoon/and subsequent maternity confinements. While it was not investigated as to whether male workers were seen as needing these same leave requirements of marriage and honeymoon (if not maternity leave), it is highly doubtful that they were posed the same questions at interviews.

Unfortunately, these entitlements are not seen as a woman's right, but rather, as an inconvenience or irritant that is construed as a disadvantage when employing women. Thus it must be emphasized that these are indirect forms of discrimination. Three issues become evident here. Firstly, that the above employers assume that women's lives are patterned according to these fixed perceptions, and that they pre-empt certain situations for women.

Secondly, that there is negative recognition of the reproductive role of women and what are considered to be 'customary' life stages in a family. Conversely, it is possible that employers do not perceive men workers as contributing to their reproductive/family lives at all. They are, therefore, exempt from the 'blame' factor that is directed solely at women.

Thirdly, as far as organizations are concerned, these gender issues do not find their way into the organizational agenda; nor are they seen as requiring solutions.

This highlights the necessity of accessing 'hidden power' within organizations- in terms of deciding what constitutes an issue or problem, as well as of 'agenda-setting' power to address the issue.

Remuneration

Equal remuneration for men and women is a battle that has been fought over many decades- both in the private and public sectors. As noted earlier, in the informal sector, there are striking gender disparities in wage payments.

It is the usual practice in the private sector to calculate the wages of employees in certain job categories on an individual basis, on the basis of the job category, employee's qualifications, work experience, performance etc. This is founded on the the principle of equal pay for work of equal value. This means that rates and types of remuneration are based not on an employee's sex but on an objective evaluation of the work performed. Currently, there is a lack of transparency in the composition of wages. Most employees do not have information with regard to each other's salaries and are at a disadvantage-in terms of their knowledge of wage differentials and their capacity to rectify them.

This institutional practice benefits those who possess the capacity to approach management and negotiate their earnings, but those who are unable, unwilling or unskilled in negotiation can be disadvantaged.

For instance, a legal officer in a large corporation was not paid for the work she did for the subsidiary companies of her organization. Nor has she raised the issue with the management.

None of the interviewees had ever negotiated their pay with their work organizations.

Consequently, it needs to be investigated whether male workers are in the practice of negotiating their pay, and if women workers are generally more reticent about entering into discussions about remuneration. While such data is not available, it is, however, possible to contend that existing remuneration practices can, in practice, disadvantage women. Furthermore, going by this example, employers need to be conscious that even seemingly gender-neutral work practices could, in operation, be discriminatory.

Allowances and Benefits

Depending on the type and size of organization, employees have access to numerous benefits and allowances.

> 94% of questionnaire respondents were eligible for some form of company benefit, of which 95% were for an allowance. These and other benefits included distress/housing loans, reimbursement of medical bills, medical insurance, transport, travel allowances, uniforms, food, New Year/ Christmas bonus, leave allowances (including maternity), maternity benefits, EPF/ETF contributions, etc.

> 95% of women workers were satisfied with the facilities provided for healthcare at the workplaces. However, problems with regard to the environment in which they work were not always rectified by some work institutions (See Occupational Hazards).

Some companies also provide recreational facilities for both male and female staff. These mainly involve sports, pleasure trips, 'get-togethers', etc.

Generally, knowledge of company benefits is imparted at job interviews. However, the lower down in the scale the employee, the lesser the benefits; and the less knowledge she seems to have of them. Thus, the worker's access to whatever available resources is also limited.

> *For instance, the salesperson from a departmental store interviewed for this book was not even knowledgeable about the maternity benefits that she is entitled to by law.*

> *There is one recorded instance where the benefits and conditions that were promised to the employee-a lawyer-did not materialize; and three years later, she is still in the process of demanding her dues (while this could simply be a case of bad management, the lawyer is also a target of other forms of gender discrimination and harassment as a woman).*

One interviewee stated how the marketing department of the chemicals import company was given more benefits/perks, ostensibly in association with their job duties, than other departments. These involved benefits such as transport and cellular phones. Granted, these perks are related to the job-category and division, but it must be mentioned that, in many instances, male employees dominate marketing divisions. And work organizations have yet to take steps to break down this type of divisional segregation. *In another instance, a private bank decided to prioritize its client-allied divisions as part of organizational restructuring, and channelled various benefits to them for motivational purposes.* No firm conclusions can be drawn from these illustrations, and further research is necessary to ascertain exactly who and which departments are generally affected by organizational reform and incentives.

Certain benefits/allowances can be organizational instruments that are not in fact advantageous to the employee. In the case of Kumari, a nurse, the nursing agency deducted money from her salary to pay for her nurse's uniform. In another instance, a housing loan trapped an employee, preventing her from exploring better prospects, and keeping her tied down to the job even in the face of workplace harassment.

Since the law recognizes maternity benefits, it is laudable that many work institutions (75%) provide facilities and make allowances for pregnant women. Nevertheless, it becomes blatantly clear from the women interviewed, that some work organizations may begrudge women this right. As will be discussed later, pregnancy can and does affect the woman worker's chances/ rapidity of upward mobility.

The law also entitles nursing-women the right of one-hour nursing time (in two half-hour breaks) during work hours. In fact, there were 14 companies of the 66 questionnaires that provided time off for nursing employees to breastfeed their babies. Companies also gave pregnant women a lighter workload; consent to wear maternity dresses; and freedom to leave the workplace an hour earlier. Yet, despite these laws, only 62% of companies conformed to these legal rights of nursing women. Moreover, the 10 case studies indicated instances when women were actively discouraged by the management from accessing these rights, and at times even verbally penalized when they tried to avail themselves of this entitlement. Temporary workers often fear to take maternity leave as they feel that employers may take this as a chance to discharge their services.

Furthermore, only one of the companies under examination possessed a crèche, and none had nursing/feeding rooms, even though allowances for such facilities are stipulated in labour laws.

The workplaces of the respondents did not always exhibit sensitivity towards pregnant women. In fact, in one company, the women's toilet was in the basement, deeply inconveniencing pregnant members of staff who along with other employees had to descend and ascend a steep staircase without railings. Here, the women in the office had to monitor the safety of the pregnant women each time they went to the toilet.

> *"We were worried in case they were sick, or they could very well fall down the staircase, in their condition. After all, there was no place that they could even rest for half an hour when they feel sick. I used to pull out a chair or two so that they could rest their legs."*

> *The nursing agency made provision for pregnant women by reducing their shift to 8 hours instead of the regular 12. However, the agency also slashed the wages of the employee accordingly. Another worker in a bank was put under pressure as the temporary worker hired to do her work had exams; resulting in the pregnant worker being made to stay on until the temporary worker was free.*

On the whole, the denial of this aspect of maternal/parental benefits conveys a disturbing picture. This is not only from the angles of employee rights and welfare, health, nutrition, and policy perspectives, but also from the standpoints of long-term institutional efficiency and productivity. It shows that even where women workers have been structurally empowered through legislation and policy, there is a disquieting lack of institutional will in adhering to some of these regulatory standards.

> **A Centre for Women's Research (CENWOR) study records maternity benefits provided by other workplaces. These involve cash grants of Rs. 1000/= for the child, permission to go to natal clinics during working hours, rest if feeling ill, medical insurance in the case of birth complications, the release of workers from working on computers/field work/night shifts during pregnancy, reimbursement of hospital bills, provision of transport to nurse the child at home during work hours, and making available milk powder at subsided rates through worker welfare societies.**

> Interestingly, 53% of workplaces allowed their employees parental leave - leave taken for family needs and emergencies.

Employee Mobility

Training

Respondents interviewed for this book had participated in the following training programs/workshops provided by their employers:

- Leadership training
- Human Resources
- Skills development training (legal/banking/marketing/secretarial/product-related training/ operational, etc.)
- Subsidiary skills development training (computers/language)

However, although training has resulted in horizontal movement in certain cases, it cannot be seen as clearly linked to the upward mobility of employees.

> 86% of women employees have not had any training in non-traditional skills. A number as small as 7% were sent for non-traditional skills training (for instance, training in operating a packing machine which had hitherto been the domain of male workers).

All the workers interviewed felt that women should also be trained in non-traditional vocations. Yet, in many instances, training was not carried out during office hours (training sessions usually involve time after work as well as weekends), thus making it difficult for women burdened with multiple gender responsibilities to attend.

In the case of training abroad, interviewees in two companies (both in the financial field) feel that more men were sent out for training. Clearly, no inferences are feasible without further study of work organizations, and specifically, as to whether there is discrimination against women in the selection of employees for training abroad. Yet it is possible that stereotypical assumptions about gender roles and responsibilities, characteristics and demeanour, as well as gender segregation at the workplace can prevent organizations from cultivating a multi-tasked, dynamic workforce.

Recognition

Without a doubt, recognition of an employee's contributions as well as his/her future potential is an important factor - both for upward mobility and job satisfaction. Positive methods of employee recognition involve verbal praise for day-to-day operations and tasks, affirmation of client appreciation, bonuses as performance rewards, prizes and awards (employee of the month/best cost-conscious team), and promotions.

The women interviewed gave testimony to the fact that frequently the whole division of a company (such as accounts or legal) was being given credit for

achievements, rather than the individual employee. While acknowledgement of teamwork is a key component in good management, it needs to be balanced with credit where it is due, if employees are not to be disheartened. Often, women's performance can be obscured to higher management through work practices such as these.

> *One respondent disclosed how she executed the bulk of the work in the software-testing department of her company; yet, credit was given to her male boss and the department as a whole.*

> There has often been a disturbing trend in many societies to devalue employee characteristics that are attributed to "females" such as being "cooperative, quiet, nurturing…" Fortunately, this is currently being reversed alternative and new management styles and techniques advocated by the latest management gurus. Nonetheless, "male" characteristics such as being "assertive, authoritarian, loud…" are still given more recognition and value. In fact, our data shows that it is possible that there is a general tendency to prefer the hiring of women at the lower/non-skilled levels precisely for those "female" characteristics.

The companies alluded to by the respondents were seen to carry out various types of annual appraisals in regard to their employees. Several appraisals seem comprehensive in that they assessed a range of employee capabilities. They reviewed daily job tasks, long-term assignments, organizational skills, personality, leadership, overall presentation, attitudes, interaction with colleagues/clients, overall confidence and conduct, general performance, work-times, and on-the-job problems.

Some appraisals were internal individual evaluations executed by the immediate bosses without room for management/employee dialogue, while others were more participatory in nature with the advantage of inputs from the employee herself. Yet others were performed according to standardized evaluation forms. Here, it is worthwhile noting that research on appraisal schemes has shown that those that are not wide-ranging and detailed can not only do a disservice to the employee in general, but that they can also have gender specific implications (Rao et al 1999). This is because the simple consideration of limited tasks/skills/personalities might serve to privilege a particular gender. Consequently, characteristics such as teamwork, organizational skills, intuitive skills, ability to deal with ambiguity, social and interpersonal skills, participatory management and flexibility qualities that are more associated with women, can be discounted or devalued in standered appraisals.

On the whole, evaluations had a direct impact on the annual increments of the employee, although they did not always influence the employee's path of upward mobility-being limited to the exercise itself. Furthermore, it was

doubtful that management was aware of the discriminatory potential of this organizational practice-which was seen as gender neutral.

Upward Mobility

Currently, there are many factors that, taken collectively, have bearing upon an employee's upward mobility within a company. In principle, these include performance, experience, qualifications, systems of promotion, and the evaluation of employee potential. Yet in practice, it is possible that other matters such as social standing and influence, personal relationships with the management, and outright favouritism can affect the selection and rapidity of promotions.

The study notes that there is a general view that English-speaking, 'presentable', 'westernized', and confident workers (both men and women) find it easier to climb corporate ladders as opposed to mainly Sinhala- and Tamil-speaking members of the workforce. At the same time, workers (mainly male) who are popular with the management (or who network extensively) are able to rise in position faster than members who are solely hardworking and competent. The study detects several instances where men who are less competent have been promoted, and provided with company benefits and travel opportunities due to their apparently forceful manner, as opposed to women workers who are less self-assured though more experienced, qualified and proficient. This reveals the critical value placed on certain personalities at the workplace, as well as the deficiencies in the overall promotion structures.

> *In one instance, a factory worker who responded to the questionnaire rejected the offer of a promotion to a supervisor, because she feared her colleagues would spread stories that she received the promotion due to favouritism/sexual favour. Interestingly, this woman also goes on to state that there was no sexual harassment at her workplace - conveying conflicting feelings about sexual harassment on the whole. This conveys that another factor preventing the upward mobility of women seems to be their own internalized patriarchal values and norms.*

Gender studies have long documented the damaging impact of pregnancy on the career-tracks of women. Field research also tends to confirm the view that more than one pregnancy (especially during a short time period) results in the delay of a woman worker's upward mobility, or even in the stagnation of the worker in a particular job slot. This seems also true of workers who refuse to participate in company fellowship and other activities, on the grounds of family responsibilities.

On the whole none of the employees interviewed spoke of any knowledge of women working their way to the apex of their institutions.

> *On the other hand, the fact that a worker is perceived as being "extremely good" at her job (as in the case of a Guest Relations Officer in a hotel) might be a factor in precluding promotions. In this instance, the management felt that this particular woman worker was excellent at public relations and was therefore reluctant to promote her.*

This can be seen as a form of micropolitics in operation. This case of 'positive discrimination' does not benefit the corporate career of this employee, nor the company in the long run. Further, it is questionable whether a man who is excellent at his job would be encouraged to stagnate in the same position.

At the same time, it is worth considering the fact that certain job categories do not have inbuilt job ladders. Noticeable examples are such female-dominated job categories as secretaries/nurses/attendants/janitorial cleaners/plantation workers for whom there are no clearly defined (if not limited) avenues of upward mobility - resulting in their stagnation at a particular rank throughout their entire working careers.

As evinced through both the case studies and the questionnaires, there are critical gender imbalances accessing positional power and in representation within the upper echelons of work organizations; and employers are seen to lose out by not identifying the potential of women employees. This is not simply a question of gender equity/equality or justice, but it also has important implications for the varied means by which women workers can contribute to their work organizations at higher levels. Furthermore, for women workers, it may be assumed that this leads to a string of other workplace barriers, including access to setting workplace agendas, deciding what is legitimate as issues, and pressing for institutional change through dialogue, consensus-building and pressure tactics.

> **36% of those who responded to questionnaires did not see a clear career path or promotional scheme as being available to them.**

Working Environment

Rules and Regulations

Workplace regulations can be gender discriminatory. Gender micropolitics are clearly discernible when it comes to love affairs at the workplace. These relationships are generally not tolerated, although there are exceptions. Usually, one of the parties is asked to leave or transferred to another department/associated company. Sometimes, the couple has to decide as to who will move. In a majority of cases, it is the woman who is moved around as a result of the discovery of a relationship at work.

There were facile explanations in relation to each case ("...the woman is only a secretary and can move around, while he is a marketing executive"; "...when the affair was discovered, she opted to leave to another hotel"; "...he has a better future with the company than her so she was asked to resign"; "...after they got married they decided between themselves that she would be the one to find another job"; "...he was a married man with two children while she was single, so, she was transferred, but before that she resigned"; etc.)

Reasons such as the above naturalize or normalize men's status at the workplace. It becomes evident that more women than men are moved around as a consequence of a love relationship/marriage at the workplace. This is founded perhaps on the implicit premise that men's work is more valuable than women's; and that men's jobs are more important than women's because they are presumed to support a family.

On the other hand, there may be a number of reasons for moving women workers. Women's need to work may be perceived as being not as important, and dispensable, perhaps due to discriminatory ideas that women's place is with the family, or assumptions that women would be less liable to protest against transfers, or even other perceptions of women as providing temptation, etc.

At the same time, many of the women workers employed in the lower rungs of the workplace did not possess knowledge of the rules and regulations or the allowances and benefits due to them from the company. The above examples provide a clear picture of the discriminatory assumptions and practices that women employees are confronted with at the workplace (see Gender Micropolitics of Work Culture). Gender equity/equality in the work institutions would require that such practices are eliminated and that employers adopt gender equitable procedures that do not prioritize men over women.

Working Conditions

Many women workers in the sample were situated in male-dominated work environments-only 34% had more female colleagues than men, while 69% worked under male supervision.

Our field data notes that certain organizational, occupational, trade, or position-related practices affect men and women in different ways and can often result in the denial of employee rights.

Three employees of the ten case studies berated the lack of proper work conditions and facilities:

> The legal officer who had been promoted recently had to share the cubicle of her boss (female,) which deprived them both of privacy, adequate space, and appropriate furniture and other equipment; whereas the male managers (in the company) were well provided for.

> A nurse described how the head office did not provide nurses who were engaged by the agency (virtually all female) any space in the office to linger or spend non-working time.

> In an insurance company, thirty female workers had access to only one toilet.

While this type of general workplace problems might affect all employees at some time or another in their working lives, what needs to be explored here is whether there is a gender dimension to the working conditions affecting women employees. The crucial question that needs to be asked is whether these deficiencies/inconveniences arise due to employer assumptions regarding women's 'natural characteristics' of acquiescence, amiability, and tolerance etc.

> In this context, the worst affected are the women workers in the Free Trade Zones. Employers (within and outside the zones) violate the law on night work for women. Management does not obtain consent from the workers. "They force workers to sign letters consenting to night work and then each time they are required to work nights, management adds a date to a photocopied letter, that was signed - these are then submitted to the Commissioner of Labour, stating that consent has been obtained. Often workers are required to work at night immediately following a day shift, women workers then usually sleep for a few hours at the factory, under their machines, if they have time. This is due to the pressure of work, the requirement to continue to work the following day and lack of safe transport home. Night work is mostly considered as overtime, not as a salary, this means that EPF & ETF payments are affected." (http://www.somo.nl/monitoring/reports/sri_lanka.htm).

In many instances, workers have been made to resign when they get married and not join a trade union without prior written approval from the management. Many of these workers sleep, live, and work under appalling conditions, but do not seek redress from Labour Tribunals due to ignorance and fear of losing their jobs (cited in de Alwis 2000).

Some examples of conditions for workers inside the zones include:

- Being forced to work long hours of overtime to reach unrealistically high production targets;

- Denial of legal entitlements, with leave being extremely difficult to take;

- Excessive fines and penalties, ranging from being late; sick; not reaching production targets and refusing compulsory overtime. Bonuses, fines and penalties are complex and workers frequently cannot calculate how much they will earn each month;

- Repression of the right to form a union or bargain collectively;

- Poor or non existent Occupational Health and Safety practices;

- Frequent sexual harassment and imposition of inhumane restrictions such as a time limit per week for going to the toilet;

- Lack of transportation, especially after late night shifts;

- Misrepresentation by the Board Of Investment (BOI) of labour laws and frequent attempts to circumvent the law or to make it more "flexible" for employers.

(http://www.somo.nl/monitoring/reports/sri_lanka.htm).

Another sector which remains unregulated due to legal deficiencies is subcontract work. Here too, there is a large concentration of women doing piecework or outwork (the manufacture of foodstuff to beedies, artificial flowers, parts of footwear, garments and embroidery etc.). Subcontract work is essentially linked to production targets and consequently, these workers are not beneficiaries of competitive wages, sick leave, or other labour allowances etc. (SL Shadow Report 1999).

Plantation workers are yet another category of women who live and work under demanding conditions. Kurian writing in 1985 is able to give a powerful insight into the life of a tea plucker, which is valid even today: *"The daily life of a tea plucker starts well before sunrise on the days she has work (which is not always now) ... by women fetching whatever water the family needs (and in most instances this has to be fetched from a very long distance)... Then they set about the task of preparing meals (sometimes preparing the midday meal as well)... as in most cases, the distance (of work) involved are far too great for women to return and eat at home ... They then get their children ready for school ... prepare milk for smaller children... they tidy their line-rooms and send the children to school... One the way they trudge to the crèche to leave the smaller children... All of this has to be completed before the women report for*

muster at 7.a.m... When she reports for muster, she is told which field she will be working in ... if she is late reporting to work, she might be chased away by the overseer in charge ... and thereby denied a full day's wage ... Allowances might be made if the woman is pregnant by allowing her to make up for lost time by working late ... But this places pressure on the worker 'to get things done'. Following muster, the woman collects her basket and walks sometimes several miles to the field of work ...   They pluck leaves continuously until 12 noon under the gaze of the overseer ... During the one hour she is free before she returns back to work, the worker tries to do numerous domestic tasks (if possible) ... At 1 p.m. the monotonous and always repetitive work of plucking tea buds/leaves continues - regardless of wind or rain ... The overseer reprimands/penalizes women if they pluck mature leaves instead of the buds ... and the work goes on till around 5.30 p.m. on days where there is an abundance to be plucked ... 4.30 on other days ... After the plucker carries the leaves to a central spot or weighing shed to be weighed, she returns home at around 6 p.m. But her work for the day is not over ..." **(Kurian: 1985)**

The situation described gives an insight into the powerlessness experienced by this group of workers, and how they are weighed down not only with long and arduous hours of physical work, but also with family obligations and domestic work. These multiple gender-based expectations from women can cause tensions between a woman's responsibilities at home and at her workplace.

This is especially true of work practices that necessitate employees (both women and men) to work late, or attend meetings after work, or insist on their presence at evening/night functions, or company fellowship activities that exclude family members. These requirements can impose a tremendous strain on family relationships not only of women, but also of men.

59% of these women employees had to work late: a majority until 8.00 p.m., though some workers had to stay on until after 9.00 p.m. Of this, 24% of the workers were asked to stay for meetings. However, only 16% were provided transport by the workplace.

Whether employees were requested to attend meetings after-hours seems to depend on the size of the company/the type of trade and the category of work. In the case of most questionnaire respondents, meetings took place during working hours - possibly due to the fact that the respondents were not associated with management.

Given the deficiencies in the local transport systems and the additional personal risk associated with getting about in the night for women, certain companies have adopted positive policies in regard to employees working late. These, though, are confined to crucial administrative job categories

such as secretaries, who may be provided with taxi fare/transport when they work late.

The requirement of employee interaction in company activities outside working hours impinges on workers' family life/time. Non-participation on such occasions can result in women employees being discriminated at work.

> *Malini relates how a senior travel executive was not granted her due promotion, because, she contends, the executive did not participate in the extracurricular activities of the company due to her responsibilities towards her three small children.*

As far as job tasks are concerned, possibly due to strict notions of job positions and staff tasks as well as a strong code of respect in certain instances, women workers were hardly asked to do tasks that are extraneous to their jobs. *Except for one instance, where a salesperson was required to do some heavy unloading.*

However, women workers were sometimes asked to perform tasks that are founded on gender-based expectations of women's roles and responsibilities; these include activities such as decorating and preparing food for functions. In one instance, *a Guest Relations Officer in a hotel (along with other female staff) was solicited to help out with Vesak Day decorations.*

Usually, both male and female employees participated in fellowship activities such as sports. However, the study did come across one company where only males were involved in sports activities while females were merely spectators-reinforcing gender role stereotypes of male participation and female spectatorship.

Furthermore, "Informal networks/networking" such as socializing with superiors after work hours, in restaurants and/or bars or other settings, do not always include women due to their care responsibilities and/or social norms and other concerns. The inability of women workers to engage in such informal networking limits their scope of being "recognized" by seniors at the workplace. Given this state of affairs, work enterprises need to put in place measures to promote networking during office hours.

None of the case studies communicated the existence of gender friendly work practices-especially ones that take into account the domestic responsibilities of employees. For instance, the study does not record any instances of employees enjoying flexi-time for the benefit of workers (of course, there were instances of flexi-time for the convenience of employers); none worked part-time, or was involved in job-sharing or in working from home with the aid of modern technology.

On the other hand, employees at senior management levels were seen to enjoy more flexibility in working hours. It is ironic that management who

normally possess the finances/capacity to make alternative domestic arrangements is provided with this advantage, although it is usually the blue-collar worker who is more in need of flexible time arrangements.

The above examples of gender inequitable work practices and conditions are more disadvantageous for women due to their more pressing familial obligations and expectations. At the same time, strict gender segregation into categories of work ensures that women do not have access to better paying work sectors under better conditions of work. It also serves to illustrate how gender-based expectations from men and women may be reproduced in the workplace, and illustrates, paradoxically, how women in particular, may be penalized for engaging in those very same roles and responsibilities outside the workplace.

Occupational Hazards

A majority of smaller work institutions referred to in the study do not adhere to appropriate health and safety measures. Those that do conform to international labour standards are mainly large-scale industrial plants that usually have principals/contacts abroad. They are seen to implement health/safety precautions quite strictly; with such measures as gloves, masks, fire doors and extinguishers etc. in use; and medical centres/sick rooms on the premises. Smaller factories are not seen to provide such facilities.

At the same time, not many work institutions are always mindful about the occupational health of their employees. Responses to questionnaires by workers convey that only 50% were not affected by health and safety problems at the workplace. The following table illustrates the type of problems affecting women workers.

Table 6: Health and Safety Problems in the Work Environment

Problems relating to:		Percentage of women affected
Space and ventilation		11%
Sound		5%
Chemical use		3%
Heavy weights		3%
Night duty		1%
Other		27%
Total		50%

Source: Survey data

There are, of course, many other work-related complaints, some of which can be associated with the particular work sector. **For instance, in the plantation sector, tea pluckers working in cold and wet areas suffer from coughs, colds, chest pains, shivering and difficulties in breathing. In hot climates, they complain of pain and swelling in the neck, dizziness and unconsciousness due to daily exposure to the sun. Vaginal discharges are common, and backaches are prevalent among rubber tappers (Kurian: 1985). Similarly, eye strain headaches/neck pain/backache/ frozen shoulder and elbows/wrist and finger discomfort are maladies associated with the computer industry.**

Some companies are committed to providing appropriate computer-allied furniture and equipment for their staff.

Yet, it is crucial to observe here that none of the 10 workers interviewed for the case studies ever reported their complaints to the management; rather, they chose to seek redress to the problems on their own-perhaps indicating the lack of institutional space to recognize and give validity to such concerns.

Workers in certain job categories in the hospitality and entertainment industry as well as shop staff were not allowed to sit during their shift, which resulted in such aliments as swollen feet/ backaches corns etc. This is notwithstanding labour laws that entail that there should be at least one seat per two women salespersons. **Women working in garment factories who frequently work under pressure to satisfy urgent export orders were also forced to work long hours in standing positions. Further, most workers in pressurized conditions were usually powerless to stick to regular meal times, resulting in cases of gastritis/low blood sugar pre-menstrual stress (PMS), etc.**

Psychological stress is a phenomenon that affects many workers in trades (such as the travel industry) particularly during the season or when working for deadlines. However, none of the companies scrutinized offered any relief in the way of stress alleviation remedies. Stress that occurs as a result of sexual harassment or other forms of bullying is also not recognized by employers (Refer section on Sexual Harassment).

Our study communicates a gap in the recognition of chronic work-related illnesses, and the assumption of responsibility for providing appropriate ergonomically-designed, stress-free environments, as well as medical redress.

Sexual Harassment

While sexual harrasment is considered a form of gender micropolitics, at this point we see it as an occupationed hazard. Interviewees have narrated various degrees of sexual harassment at the workplace, thereby indicating the import of this phenomenon at the workplace. This is because the differential social attitudes towards men and women manifest themselves most powerfully in the practices of sexual harassment. While sexual harassment of men by women has been found to be the exception, sexual harassment of women by men is the norm.

Like all other forms of violence against women by men, sexual harassment, its incidence and behavioral facets, were shrouded in a veil of privacy and social inhibition until the emergence of violence against women as an important human rights issue in the 1990s international forums.

> **Sexual harassment is any unwanted sexual attention a woman experiences. It can include leering, pinching, patting, repeated comments, jokes and insults, lewd gestures, the exhibition of male organs, rubbing, suggestions of a sexual nature (even on the telephone), the display of pornographic material, pressure for sexual favours and bribes. It can take the form of attempted and actual rape. It can occur particularly in instances when men have power over women-doctors with patients, teachers and students, policeman and women drivers, employers and employees and so on. It can take place at home, in schools and at the workplace; in public transport and public places. In fact, it can take place in any situation, and all women experience one of more instances of sexual harassment throughout their lives as young girls, as adults and as old women.[1]**

In the Sri Lankan workplace, sexual harassment can be identified as occurring in three forms - firstly, as *"quid pro quo"* harassment; secondly, in the context of a specific power relationship resulting in a "hostile working environment"; and thirdly, in the "public sphere between strangers". The first form of harassment is straightforward, as it involves a direct threat or sexual bargaining. Essentially, *"quid pro quo"* harassment involves making conditions of employment (hiring, promotion, retention, etc.) contingent on the victim providing sexual favors. On the other hand, a "hostile working environment" can refer to any unwelcome speech and/or conduct of a sexually discriminatory nature, from superiors/co-workers/subordinates that could result in an abusive working environment. The third form of sexual harassment involves the public sphere such as workplace surroundings, work transport, public spaces etc, where harassment emanates from strangers.

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[1] This definition is based on the book *The New Our Bodies Ourselves- A Book by and for Women*, by the Boston Women's Health Book Collective, Simon and Schuster, New York (1992)

Women who undergo sexual harassment often experience feelings of guilt, fear, confusion, anger, inadequacy, powerlessness, shame, betrayal, and denial. When harasser/s are situated in a position of power, it especially intensifies the feelings of helplessness experienced by women. Yet, when women try to seek redress from this form of abuse, they encounter a number of problems. Women's assertions of sexual harassment are sometimes disbelieved by those in positions of authority, or dismissed as trivial by society.

Often, victims are accused of desiring men's attention and even blamed for *exposing themselves* to sexual harassment by *"wearing a short dress or going out to work"*. These kind of insidious patriarchal perceptions do not hold men accountable for their actions, nor do they denounce the harassers; rather, they confer the onus of evading harassment on women.

What is of particular note here is the fact that despite increasing consciousness on the part of women about this form of sex discrimination, there is still a lack of wide-scale women's action or public understanding about these issues of gender, power, sexism and harassment. Furthermore, there is a lack of understanding or misunderstanding as to what exactly constitutes sexual harassment, leading to its exclusion from institutional agendas. One reason for the wide prevalence for sexual harassment is the fact that most patriarchal cultures sanction the viewing of women primarily as sexual objects.

However, sexual harassment is not only about sex or the sexual differences between men and women, nor is it merely about sexuality. Rather, it is about the power differentials between the sexes. It can also be seen as a form of institutional micropolitics. Most often than not, sexual harassment is a method of exerting power over women and controlling their sexuality, their psyche, their behavior, their mobility, and their rights. The phenomenon of stalking women then, becomes the most extreme form of controlling the lives of women.

A study done on gender-based violence in the plantations sector depicts how tea pluckers are abused at work by people in authority (the Kangani or field officer). They are targets of obscene language, sexually suggestive orders, voyeurism, etc. The women in the study contend that they are easy targets of sexual harassment because they work outdoors; and also because they are perceived as being vulnerable and powerless to control their situations. (Wijayatilake 2003)

The following anecdotes illustrate the types of harassment undergone by women employees' interviewed for this book. It also demonstrates workplace attitudes towards these incidents.

A secretary relates her feelings of anger, distress, inadequacy, and embarrassment when, as a junior secretary, she was continually harassed by a hot tempered and demanding boss who threw tantrums regularly, and made threats such as "I will shove my thumb in your arse-hole, if you can't work any faster!" The boss in question usually apologized to the woman later on, after he calmed down; yet, this did not deter the employee from asking for/and getting a transfer to another department, despite the boss being the Chairman of the company. Fortunately, the Personnel Manager (a woman) had been very supportive of the secretary in this instance.

It must be emphasized that sexual harassers are not only people in authority, but also colleagues and subordinates. Case studies convey that when sexual harassment takes place in the workplace, involving two employees, management can be very lax in taking action.

Women were also exposed to sexual harassment around the workplace by habitual 'perverts' who stalked areas where women were known to congregate, such as in the Free Trade Zones[1]. Women workers also state that if the workplace was located in a lonely stretch of land or if the surrounding approach was poorly lit, there were often men who lurk around to harass them.

External studies as well as the fieldwork convey that there is a tendency on the part of work institutions to disbelieve the victim or make light of the incident.

Case studies demonstrate how the management often sides with the male perpetrator, resulting in the further penalization of the victim. For this reason, many victims do not report instances of sexual harassment.

Malini (a travel executive/a single woman of 30 years) related her experience of how the manager (a married man) of a division in a large company, in which she worked, had asked her to work late; and started offering her lifts home. The only time that she did accept a ride home (after a company function) he made a pass at her during the drive. When Malini rejected his advances; he had thereafter made it extremely difficult for her to work in that division by continually harassing her verbally, as well as via nuisance calls and anonymous letters.

Finally, Malini had complained to the Managing Director of the company but she was not believed. In the meanwhile, the harasser had related a completely different version to the MD, in which he had made himself

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[2] Free Trade Zones or industrial estates.

out to be the victim. (He had also solicited the assistance of his wife to strengthen his story.) The victim had at this point requested a transfer to another division. Despite this, the company in question had overlooked her request and offered her the option of resigning or being transferred by force. However, no action whatsoever was taken against the MD.

Malini took the transfer to another division, and continued working for the company despite being repeatedly harasse by the perpetrator spreading stories about her and tarnishing her name even amongst the people in her new department. Malini says that she stuck to this job for another 1 1/2 years despite being marginalized and demoralized, merely to show that she would not be chased off. But, she did eventually leave the workplace, and she quotes this experience as being one contributing factor.

This example (as well as other studies on sexual harassment in the workplace) shows clearly that sexual harassment is not widely acknowledged to be a workplace problem, despite a large majority of women experiencing varying degrees and forms of harassment at work. In fact, data collected for the book reinforces the fact that women are not clear as to what constitutes sexual harassment. For instance, a woman worker did not consider continuous nuisance calls or dirty jokes to be a form of sexual harassment. As a whole, women workers do not talk freely about sexual harassment at the workplace even with colleagues unless the workplace environment is a supportive one. This is reflected in women workers who responded to questionnaires.

Of the 66 respondents, 6% disclosed that they were sexually harassed at the workplace. However, it is critical to note that of the women who answered 'no', many went on to relate examples of gender interactions at the workplace that actually constituted sexual harassment according to the law.

This is why it is extremely pertinent to note that all respondents who were asked the question as to whether there should be official forms of redress to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace answered with a categorical 'yes'. Suggestions made by women workers include creating awareness about sexual harassment in the workplace, putting in place a code of conduct, providing opportunities for women to speak out, counselling, and establishing a company mechanism to investigate incidents, and so on.

What is of serious concern however is that many women workers do not seem to have any conceptualization of their right to an environment free from sexual harassment. Indeed, as noted earlier, many women did not seem to know the exact conduct that constitutes sexual harassment apart from the most obvious physical violations, nor of their rights, or of any available course of action to combat the menace, apart from taking evasive action.

> *"These include leaving the room /lunchroom when a conversation becomes risqué, not associating too frequently with male colleagues, and in many instances, resorting to this type of self-censorship and denial on the basis that men will be men, and that a woman must know how not to expose herself to these kinds of situations."*

Though research on sexual harassment conveys that all women are at risk of sexual harassment, it is pertinent to note that the case studies referred to earlier relate to single women. Both cases under study (as well as other research) convey that women are seen as being more transferable/dispensable when it comes to redressing conflict arising from sexual harassment. This is evidence of the gender biases that operate in the workplace where women victims are doubly disadvantaged.

More often than not, sexual harassment is seen as an isolated/individual problem rather than the common social practice that it is. As such, work organizations in Sri Lanka very rarely formulate mechanisms to create consciousness about the problem, or to initiate grievance procedures, or provide redress for the victims, or impose penalties against the harasser (For instance, even where the companies under study had invested in Employee Handbooks, there was no acknowledgement of sexual harassment as a phenomenon that takes place in the workplace/or instructions as to the possible course of action for redress). Of late, however, it is heartening to note that several large business organizations are in the process of drafting sexual harassment policies for their institutions.

> On the plus side, workplaces do appear to address sexual harassment and protect their employees when harassment emanates from outside sources. *For instance, when a customer services person in an Internet Services company was stalked via the telephone, the management and colleagues of the worker in question were very supportive, and monitored incoming calls while transferring the client to a male worker.*

Women's Voices and Representation

Dissatisfaction and Redress

It is important to view employee dissatisfaction and redress from the perspective of overall company productivity and increasing performance. Interviewees refer to two workplaces, where women employees, in particular, were not satisfied with their jobs, resulting in a high degree of disillusionment and absenteeism amongst minor staff.

> *One respondent, Vinitha attributed this to the fact that hers was an extremely male dominated department where women, in particular, are not given space to voice anything, resulting in a considerable degree of*

worker dissatisfaction. This in turn gave rise to a lot of disheartenment and disinterest in the job/company. She also describes a situation where some of the staff officers and clerical staff had taken loans from the company and were unable to leave due to their debts. Consequently, they were trapped in a job that they felt absolutely no commitment towards, resulting in a high degree of absenteeism.

Judging by this case, it is important to note that employee absence does not arise merely from problems outside the workplace as is assumed by employers (particularly with regard to women); but that they could also be related to internal problems at the workplace itself.

The 10 case studies also records two instances when organizational restructuring resulted in the marginalization of departments/employees with regard to benefits and avenues of promotion. In both instances, the departments were female dominated; one was a legal department/the other a finance department. ***Due to restructuring, which involved prioritizing certain departments over others in a bank, and creating new senior management positions in an insurance company, the interviewees' benefits/chances of upward mobility were compromised***. However, there was no avenue to express grievances.

While 87.9% of respondents said that the grievance redress procedures in their respective workplaces involves reporting to the immediate superior; for over 60% of workers this was the case even if the grievance was sexual harassment-posing a question about the employee's predicament when the harasser is the immediate superior.

Overall, however, there were no established/official/publicized mechanisms to redress grievances available to the 10 women workers interviewed as cases studies. Usually, employees sought the assistance of their immediate superior/human resources manager, or in certain work situations, a counsellor, to rectify problems in the workplace. However, the interviewees recorded many instances of failure in obtaining redress. At times, complaints have been listened to, but not followed up, to remedy the grievance.

Kumari, a nurse working with a nursing agency, complained of her inability to lift heavy patients. However, no redress was offered.

In another instance, the expression of a grievance resulted in the employee being penalized.

Vinitha relates how a Secretary was asked to function as a Telephone Operator. When the worker concerned refused on the basis that it did not encompass her job duties, she was summarily transferred to the company factory at Kelaniya as a punishment transfer. Here, she had to suffer

severe problems and inconveniences as the factory was located in an isolated area, away from a bus route; she has to make arrangements for someone to accompany her when she works late; and she has to work in a completely male-dominated atmosphere. Unfortunately, she was bound by a loan she has taken from the company and was unable to resign.

As noted earlier, in the case of sexual harassment, it is interesting to note that several of the respondents stated that they would not necessarily complain to the management in the event of being sexually abused by another employee at the workplace. Rather, they tried to deal with it themselves.

In fact, Sumi, a Guest Relations Officer at a hotel, went on to state that there was no room for complaints of that nature within her establishment- particularly if it involved another employee. However, with regard to clients, she asserts that she always took precautions to ensure that she did not even unwittingly provide the opportunity for sexual harassment-for example, by not visiting guests in their rooms unaccompanied.

It becomes evident here that this employee does not recognize the fact that the work institution has a duty to secure a work environment devoid of sexual harassment. Rather, she holds herself responsible for avoiding harassment, by curtailing or amending her activities.

On the positive side, there are such measures as Joint Consultative Committees, comprising management and workers that provide a forum where, in principle, employee grievances can be aired. This is particular to situations where trade unions are not allowed, such as in the Free Trade Zones. At the same time, some industrial plants hold exit interviews to ascertain why an employee is leaving the company. This can be seen as a forum where employees could air their complaints, and a mechanism by which the company concerned can learn from, and instigate, future reforms. However, it does not allow redress for the employees concerned.

The lack of recognition and legitimacy attributed to employee grievances of all types poses a serious threat to the well-being and performance of the workers, company productivity and the long-term stability and efficacy of workplaces-considering the number of work hours lost due to distractions, stress, illness, and absenteeism. If work organizations are to maximize their productivity, this is one area that needs urgent organizational policy inputs and mechanisms. These would need to account for gender-specific grievances as the work experiences of men and women are different and, as argued earlier, result in different needs. Redress mechanisms for dissatisfaction should be a priority for making better use of human resources and increasing the overall productivity of staff.

None of the 10 women interviewed as case studies or the 66 questionnaires were members of trade unions. Previous research (Wijayatilake and Zakeriya 2000: Kandasamy 2002) of the estate sector conveys high male domination in trade unions, with exceedingly little scope for women's leadership. Women's committees in trade unions (where established) only provides limited space for women to make representations with regard to women's problems.

> *In the plantation sector, trade unions have occasionally been seen to play a facilitating role (and even resorted to strikes) on issues involving sexual harassment (Wijayatilake* and *Zakeriya 2000).*

However, the extent to which trade unions have fought for women's rights or prioritized women's issues is unclear.

Certain companies featured in the book such as the nursing agency seem to deliberately discourage employees fraternizing with one another. As the service is a home-based one, the nurses were hardly given the opportunity to meet one another. At the same time, the head office was seen to discourage employees from remaining in the premises beyond strict office hours. The interviewee felt that this was because *"the company did not want the employees to organize themselves and demand their rights or to solve their problems"*.

As noted earlier, a majority of enterprises in the Free Trade Zones too do not allow unionization. Recently, however, the Free Trade Zones Workers Union covering all three FTZs was formed and has received some recognition, though individual union branches are yet to be accepted. The FTZWU has a majority of women workers on the Executive Committee and as members (http://www.cleanclothes.org/urgent/01-09-23.htm).

Gender and Micropolitics of Work Cultures

The previous section dealt with the 'superstructures' at the workplace; in the form of the perceptible work structures, mechanisms and practices that form the wider contract between employers and the workers. This section concentrates on the intangible workings of organizational 'subculture' at the workplace, which propagate a general atmosphere of discrimination, insensitivity and injustice. In other words, it converges on the indistinct 'substructure' and gender micropolitics of work organizations that are created by gender-biased assumptions, patriarchal ideologies and androcentric work ethics.

Specific references are made to the consequences of gendered perceptions, language, morality etc., within work organizations, which have insidiously become part of the overall organizational culture. These can be seen to impact negatively on women's and men's working (and personal) lives while perpetuating further gender inequity/equality.

Perceptions of Gender at Work

1) The Work / Family Split

Both men and women have gender-based duties and responsibilities within the family, largely based on the primary division of labour. In many societies, including ours, there is still a general perception that women are solely situated within the domestic sphere. Despite large numbers of women entering the workforce in recent times, societies, families (and women themselves) still hold women largely accountable for the stability, comfort and maintenance of the family and the domestic sphere. This results in what is commonly seen as 'the double burden of women'- women's workloads at home and at work. If one is to add on women's other activities in terms of maintaining kinship relationships, involvement in cultural practices and religious ceremonies as well as other community interactions, it is possible to talk in terms of the multiple gender roles and responsibilities of women. While men too are seen as possessing multiple roles and tasks - within the family, in economic activity, and the political and societal spheres of life; they are chiefly associated with the public sphere. Furthermore, their actual manual labour inputs into the family are minimal, though this may be currently changing in new family units.

Conflict between family and domestic responsibilities and workplace responsibilities occurs frequently. Yet, in many instances, the family/work split or conflict is perceived in association with women workers, especially as employers (and women themselves) expect women to be responsible for family or domestic issues and emergencies. For instance, women are expected to miss work and take sick children to the doctor. Women are expected to accompany children to school when the school van fails to arrive. This is not to say that such expectations and demands are not also made of men. In fact, men are increasingly seen to take the initiative in many of these family responsibilities. However, employers (despite having families of their own) tend to perceive "women as being a problem; they see women as requiring short leave; women as not reporting to work; and so on".

Then again, certain trades such as the travel trade can be structurally predisposed towards employees who are unmarried. The stressful pace of work, the long hours, and extra-business activities within the trade can impact greatly on the family lives of workers. Consequently, these conditions of work can pressurize workers who are responsible for domestic matters.

The need for flexibility and space for domestic duties of men and women are progressively recognized as a legitimate issue affecting both male and female workers. Especially because these are basic structural problems pertaining to employees' private lives which cannot be divorced from their public lives. Consequently, work organizations are increasingly under pressure to acknowledge and account for them, instead of blaming women. In order to promote a work

and family balance, the needs of workers with family responsibilities need to be taken into account through planning and promoting community services such as childcare, family services, leisure programmes. Flexibility in working conditions and social security of families need to be looked into.

2) Reproduction of Gender Roles/Responsibilities

There are other gender-based assumptions at the workplace as well. These relate to particular job categories, trades, positions, and even individual companies, which continue to consider women in an unequal light.

> **For instance, there was a general impression that field sales should be carried out by men due to the potential situations that women could face on circuit. It was assumed that female personnel would find it difficult/would not want to travel long distances/in rural areas/spend nights out/associate with male distributors etc.**

These gender-based assumptions are directly connected to the stereotypical expectations of gendered roles, responsibilities, characteristics and behavioural patterns that society imposes on men and women. But, it is heartening to note that in certain instances, women have shattered these barriers, and today, one finds a number of women working in marketing/sales/distribution.

> **At the same time, the gender roles and in relations between men and women played out within family units are seen to be reproduced at the workplace when it comes to informal activities such as organizing and preparing company welfare activities. Women were involved in food preparation and serving, gift wrapping and decorations, while men took charge of giving overall leadership, organizing transport, etc.**

In this context, it is vital that work organizations realize that the workplace can be a site that reproduces the power play of gender relations in society; constricting men and women to narrow frames of activity, restricting their potential. In particular, gender has to be factored into the work relationships. Ongoing working practices have to be scrutinized in the context of (i) changing gender roles in the family and community, (ii) increased recognition of joint responsibilities within the family, (iii) heightened awareness of rights of women, (iv) work-family balance and iv) good governance/corporate social responsibilities. This involves concepts and practices such as flexi time, working from home, work share, crèches and domestic labour allowances, to be considered as practices that can contribute to the productivity of women as well as men.

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3) Gender Characteristics and Stereotypes

Our research also provides instances of what employers consider to be 'positive' discrimination arising from stereotyping women according to preconceived characteristics. For instance, with international labour market female labour is preferred by entrepreneurs as they perceive women to be low-cost, secondary, dispensable and pliable labour. Or women are seen to possess 'nimble fingers' or 'they have a caring nature'. This kind of stereotyping is not limited solely to sectors such as the garment industry or estate sector, but can also be the preference of an individual company.

> *A case in point is a software company that prefered to employ women in their programming/ analyzing departments because they saw women as being "less trouble" and because "they can be controlled".*

Consequently, unlike many other software companies that are dominated by men, this institution has a majority of women.

> *Another institution, a nursing agency, preferred female nurses to male, and consequently registered over 200 women employees and only one male nurse on the basis that "men were troublemakers and they fought for their rights". According to the respondent, when women workers made demands they were asked to leave.*

> **Other gender-based assumptions and stereotyping include such assertions as "women are honest, patient, organized"; "they do not fight"; "women can say 'no' better than men"; "because they work well" or "clients might not get aggressive with women".**

Unfortunately, these so-called 'positive' impressions with regard to women workers can mean that employers think that women employees are willing to settle for less than men; and that they will not make any demands.

> **At the same time, it becomes clear that women themselves imbued these same notions of stereotyping-as stated in the questionnaires: "we have to learn to not expose ourselves to sexual harassment"; "men are like that, we need to be careful and avoid them" etc.**

This offers one patent example of how women expect and accept certain stereotyped gender-based characteristics and behaviours from men, and assume that it is their responsibility to evade such overtures and violations.

Gendered characteristics and stereotypes not only relate to men and women but also to inanimate objects and institutions. Sometimes the projected image or reputation of a company may have gender dimensions. This may be

linked to the type of product or service offered, the target consumer, the PR efforts of the institution, as well as its policies, workforce and work practices.

> **81% of women workers agreed that their company had an image, 3% said no, while 6% were not sure.**

Workers pointed to the following company images: those that they considered macho, woman-friendly, male or female dominated, caring of employees, profit or family oriented.

While some work institutions at a global level have already utilized their company image as a possible space for gender sensitive interventions, the data collected for this study does not refer to any institution that is actively and consistently promoting gender equity/equality through their advertisements, PR campaigns etc., though this is one way in which institutions can be proactive in promoting gender equity/equality. Consequently, it is important that work organizations not only mainstream gender issues into the institutional agendas, but also, do so publicly and visibly so as to create organizational consciousness and consensus on the issue.

4) Gendered Demeanour and Double Standards

Clearly, a person's demeanour is of immense significance in the workplace. How he or she is perceived and treated in the workplace by her/his superiors, colleagues and subordinates is dependent on the person's general deportment/ personality/language/attitudes/speech/self-presentation.

There are different expectations of how men should behave in the workplace and how women should conduct themselves. Men are regarded more broadly and openly, as being able to 'run and jump around and get things done'. Current work ethics may value workplace 'heroes' who toil day and night against tremendous odds to solve crises, whereas workers who manage their work smoothly, efficiently, quietly (avoiding emergencies) may be undervalued (Rao et al 1999). Women, for instance, are perceived according to strict and narrow stereotypical images (of being soft-spoken, subservient, respectful, etc.) that result in women losing out when it comes to equal treatment. Some women may prefer not to express their views in open forums, but choose to communicate them privately. Unfortunately, this lack of public visibility and voice may serve to perpetuate further gender stereotypes.

Paradoxically, those who deviate from the expected norm of passivity can also be treated negatively; through the denial of company benefits, promotions, and job increments - sometimes in a continuing practice of harassment.

> *Consider the case of gender micropolitics experienced by a company lawyer:*
> *"Unlike other women in the office, I do not call my boss 'sir', I call him Mr……, I don't say 'yes, yes, sir' breathlessly. I'll give him my opinion. I don't get up when he walks by, unlike the entire department who jump up like jack-in-the-boxes when he walks through; I don't sit on the edge of my seat when I am at meetings with him, I sit like this - straight - with my spine against the seat-back, with my arms on the arm rests…"*
>
> *This lawyer contended that one of the reasons that she was continuously harassed via denials and delays in promotions and increments as well as denied company benefits such as a car (even the car that was finally assigned to her was a dilapidated vehicle in need of constant repairs) by senior management, was for not adopting an obsequious demeanour. Currently, her next promotion is being delayed, while others who are junior to her from other departments have been promoted to management positions.*

At the same time, women in certain job categories (such as plantation workers and factory workers) can be regulated to such extents where they are not allowed to speak to one another as they work.

5) Gendered Dress Codes

Of late, business organizations (particularly some of the newer and smaller companies) are in the process of adopting more lenient dress codes for their employees.

Of course, workers in factories, sales personnel, and service personnel etc, may be required to wear a uniform. In departments and jobs that do not involve marketing, public relations, and other forms of client/company interaction, the formality of a tie can give way to plain trousers and shirt for men, and the traditional sari or dress suits to more convenient trouser suits for women. However, unlike for men, more women employees are required to dress formally in sari, possibly to project the company image. This echoes socio-cultural tendencies of many societies and families that expect women, rather than men, to visually represent social class, ethnicity, modernity, etc. through their dress.

Work areas like Show rooms and Receptions where there is company/client mixing tend to place more emphasis on appearance-especially the dress and appearance of women.

> **One woman-employee says that she was expected to wear high heels; she worked in a Bank and moved with customers, despite developing a backache because of it. To a great extent, women workers were seen to 'perform' these gender dress codes as a given, as they were often perceived as linked to the post itself.**

Women's dress is also taken to signify their moral attitudes (Wickramasinghe 2002). More fashionable/revealing clothes such as those worn by women in public relations/marketing are deemed to reflect an overall laxity in morals-even by women colleagues. At the same time, men who indulge in sexual harassment often focus on a woman's appearance for inappropriate comment/action. In this sense, it is possible to see dress codes as a site through which women are controlled at the workplace. The issue here is not one of imposing or discarding dress codes; but rather, of requiring the same degree of flexibility, or safety standards, or formality in the dress codes of both men and women.

What are perceived as the stereotyped gender identities of men and women (constructed in terms of their gender roles, responsibilities, characteristics, demeanour, dress codes) are seen to have a critical function in defining what is acceptable from men and women at the workplace. Not only are these stereotypes ingrained in work practices and cultures; they are also part of organizational micropolitics and are unfortunately promoted by female as well as male workers.

Gender Micropolitics at Work

Notions of Competency

As noted in the introduction, gender micropolitics consist of the more insidious powerplays between men and women at the workplace. These take various forms:

One manifestation of workplace gender politics revealed through the study was the constant necessity for women employees (even occupying responsible positions) to habitually prove themselves with regard to their work. Employers seem to lack confidence in women when it come to certain job responsibilities. *A company lawyer speaks of an experience where her bosses would validate her legal opinion through an outside lawyer, despite her considerable experience and recognition in the field.* Interviewees holding more responsible tasks in the fields of computers/law/banking reiterated, over and over, their impression that employers doubted that as women they could accomplish the assigned job tasks and were 'pleasantly surprised' when they did so.

Another experience, this time of a secretary, reinforces the contention that women were more likely to be blamed at work for the indiscretions, faults, and mistakes of their male colleagues and superiors. While there is no conclusive evidence available from data collected for this book, there are indications that, because of the stereotypical gender characteristics attributed to women, they are easy targets as scapegoats.

The case of Varuni illustrates two issues-of harassment and inefficiency. The woman worker in question was not sure whether her boss was preparing to make a sexual overture to her by constantly asking her to work late, although it was not necessary to do so. Subsequently, the boss used her to cover up his own inadequacies vis a vis his work by claming that Varuni was incompetent, and that her work required his constant attention. As the company consisted of three workers and as the principals were based abroad, the boss was ultimately able to dismiss Varuni despite her having performed extremely well throughout her tenure with the company, and having received her annual bonus/letters of commendation on a regular basis. It was ironic that the boss's bonus was withheld one year due to his poor performance. Varuni obtained legal counselling; the case was settled out of court and she was granted compensation. The boss, however, retained his position despite having been noted for his incompetence.

Politics of Language

Another fundamental means of observing how the micropolitics of gender operate within an organization is with regard to language usage. This involves "rumour, gossip, sarcasm, humour, denial, 'throwaway remarks', etc." (Morley 1999). The language utilized by employers and workers in the workplace can be insensitive or laden with gender-based assumptions. For instance, language utilized in advertisements (used for staff recruitment and to market products) can portray sexist ideologies - sometimes quite subtly, and at other times quite overtly. **In any event, the utilization of the pronoun 'he' in reference to staff vacancies in an advertisement conveys a gender bias; even though this is an accepted practice and the linguistic norm, there is the implication here that the required person should be a male.**

In another instance, a male subordinate refused to give his female superior due respect at work. It is noted that often, without resorting to direct insubordination, men used various nuances of voice and language to undermine women's authority; for example, by calling seniors by their first name; and by refusing to use titles and terms of respect.

This is another aspect of intra-workplace relations that more women, than men, have to deal with. Women superiors use various strategies in dealing with these challenges such as ignoring the insults, addressing the issues directly, and reprimanding the culprits.

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[3] Yakkinna: She-devil

> *Language is also utilized in understated ways to degrade women in the workplace. For instance, women can be treated as 'small girls' as in the case of the salesperson Tharuni, whose male colleagues chose to call her 'nangi' and treated her with condescension, although she was older than them. Conversely, women employees who are assertive at work were treated disparagingly. Rani, a staff officer, was referred to as a 'Yakinna[1]' by her colleagues because she 'refused to take anything lying down'.*

> *A software analyst says that she pretended 'not to understand' the sexist remarks/jokes/innuendo/ slang that were indulged in by her male colleagues in a previous place of employment-an Internet /Email service provider. As in most cases of subtle sexual harassment, the interviewee did not see it as a situation that she did not have to submit to, but rather, has adopted strategies to avoid being humiliated.*

The above examples convey that language is a powerful tool of gender micropolitics that is employed both consciously and unconsciously-to undermine women, control women, and force them into normative frameworks at the workplace.

Morality at Work

Morality, or rather, the way in which moral double standards operate in the workplace, constitutes another manifestation of gender micropolitics. Within the job market, certain companies, certain trades, certain departments and even certain tasks and activities associated with some jobs are sometimes regarded from a moral perspective.

> *For example, there are negative perceptions with regard to the travel/ entertainment trades, or the job of a stewardess or a marketing department of a corporation as being 'sophisticated' or 'morally fast' or as providing opportunities for staff to indulge in permissive behaviour*. These have particular significance when it comes to the women working in these sectors. *For instance, women employees working in the Free Trade Zones are looked down on by society and are often morally censured much more than the men who work in the same sector* (de Alwis 2000)*.*

It is argued that this is due to social perceptions of these women workers as being single, independent, salaried, and living alone, which are taken to imply moral laxity. At the same time, women employees can be pressurized by family and relatives to avoid entering these categories of jobs, trade or work sectors.

Another instance of workplace micropolitics manifested itself in the way in which colleagues/superiors took it upon themselves to 'protect the character/chastity' of an employee.

The experience of a Guest Relations Officer of a hotel provides an insight on this issue. As a woman (particularly as a single woman), she says that her colleagues/superiors constantly monitored her conduct with foreign male guests. Unlike male hotel employees, she was not encouraged to fraternize overly with male clients despite job duties that involve engagement with guests.

Here we see an example of the extent to which society and in this instance, the workplace, places moral/cultural constraints on the manner in which a woman executes her job duties. Differential gender standards/expectations are imposed on women, and often these attain a certain moral colouring designed to regulate women through notions of shame and fear, norms and frames. These are based on sexist ideologies that seek to oppress women into dependent and submissive positions. Often, these notions are propagated by women workers as well as men workers due to ignorance, upholding of traditional values, and the fear of being labeled as socially different and objectionable. Such gender-based ideologies are the seeds of sexual harassment that women face at the workplace and elsewhere.

Lessons to be learned

Chapter one gives testimony to some of the existing work structures, practices, conditions and culture from the perspectives of women workers from within the Sri Lankan private sector. It was founded on the surveys and case studies undertaken for this book, as well as on research from secondary sources that deal with women workers in various sectors of the Sri Lankan economy. Based on the perceptions and experiences of women workers the following barriers to gender equity and equality in the workplace were identified:

1) There is gender stereotyping with regard to what constitutes men's work and women's work at the workplace-resulting in vertical, horizontal, and divisional segregation of men and women. In particular, women workers may face a "glass ceiling" that prevents them from accessing management and leadership positions beyond a point. Furthermore, structural limitations of certain job categories do not provide clearly-defined work ladders for promotion or opportunities for career development. **These are particular areas of concern for employers to focus on if workplaces are to be de-segregated in the interests of gender equity/equality. It would require multiple strategies to address the three-dimensional aspects of gender segregation: institutional action to encourage deserving women workers into management tiers and the creation of new job ladders for dead end jobs to ensure that upward mobility can take place. Moreover, policy decisions need to be taken to overcome horizontal and divisional segregation. This involves training women and men in non-traditional skills and absorbing them into non-traditional jobs, as well as the recruitment of suitable women and men into work divisions that are gender segregated.**

2) There is organizational prejudice towards employees' dual commitments of work and family, resulting in the perception of women (in particular) as more committed towards family responsibilities than men, and therefore, negligent with regard to their work responsibilities. Working conditions and arrangements that are inflexible compound the issue. Furthermore, dominant institutional value systems and work cultures tend to valorize work styles that impose a choice of career over family life, instead of aiming for compromise and balance between these vital aspects of a worker's life. **It is increasingly evident that employers cannot continue to compartmentalize employees, and treat them only in relation to the workplace and their inputs, without acknowledging the other facets of employees' lives. At the same time, there is need to change not only the overall working conditions and practices but also the organizational culture of workplaces so as to balance and complement other aspects of employees' lives as well. Thus it is critical that this issue is mainstreamed into the organizational agenda as a legitimate concern.**

3) There is gender stereotyping with regard to the expected characteristics, demeanor, dress, and capabilities of men and women in the workplace, leading to attitudinal obstacles. Both positive as well as negative stereotyping/attitudes of men and women in terms of what each sex/ gender is 'supposed to be/do' result in double standards which contribute to gender inequities and inequalities at work. For instance, women at the workplace are seen as both biologically determined (in terms of requiring maternity leave and other benefits), and socially constructed (Grosz 1994) to represent the work organization (through dress). These kind of perceptions are propagated by both men and women **This gendered subculture that constrains men and women into normative frameworks within organizations needs to be dealt with through consciousness-raising and dialogue aimed at attitudinal changes in combination with policy decisions for institutional action.**

4) There is continuing space for the exploitation of women workers through the denial of their accepted rights - especially with regard to women's biological and gender needs due to the failure in the implementation of legislation. The non-enforcement of legislation as well as gender insensitivity contribute towards the denial of workers' rights such as the political right to unionize in certain sectors or the practical needs of satisfactory working conditions. Gender segregation as well as stereotypical perceptions of 'women as not being troublemakers' may be contributory factors for the exploitation of women workers. Lack of women's organizational powers in terms of conflict/consensus-building limits redress. **An overall attitudinal change towards human resource management is necessary if women workers are to receive their legitimate dues and rights at the workplace.**

5) There is poor understanding on the part of senior management of the prejudices and challenges that women, in particular, face at the workplace

that can contribute towards a negative work environment. Male dominance, usage of language, a veil of moral rectitude vis-a-vis female sexuality, in particular, as well as the practice of sexual harassment are intangible aspects of workplace micropolitics that serve to demean, demoralize and discriminate against women. This has had a direct impact on worker productivity and outputs. The exercising of hidden powers within organizations ensures that these issues are not seen as valid; therefore, they are not mainstreamed into the organizational consciousness. **Consequently, creating awareness with a view towards collective and individual attitudinal changes is vital. Furthermore, workplace codes of conduct (with regard to language usage/ behavioural practices) become necessary to transform the inherent atmosphere of abuse.**

6) The lack of women-friendly work cultures and role models and advisors for women precludes the fulfilment of women's specific needs and interests. Moreover, organizations do not value the special assets women can bring to the workplace. Dominant institutional structures, organizational practices, workplace attitudes/cultures and management styles may masquerade as being gender neutral, but have been principally designed by male stakeholders for themselves. In practice, they contribute towards continuing gender inequality/inequity by not accounting for gender differences. **In order to address these obstacles, it is crucial that employers consider organizational restructuring from a gender perspective so as to mainstream gender concerns through consciousness-raising and consensus-building, policy development and dialogue, changes to organizational structure, and practices aimed at the transformation of workplace cultures.**

7) There is inadequate understanding/action on the part of management and organizational hierarchies of the above factors; the ideologies, structures, cultures and micropolitics within the workplace which contribute towards gender inequity and inequality. The continued training and socialization of decision-makers into uncritically accepting the existing social processes and structures perpetuates the *status quo*. **Awarness of gender concerns at the workplace needs to be formally intergrated into educational, management training courses and programmes at all levels. Concerted actions in the form of gender sensitization and gender mainstreaming needs to be undertaken for holistic and integrated organizational reformation; with the objective of instituting work structures and practices, work ideologies, ethics and cultures that are gender equal/equitable.**

PART II

Dismantling Glass Ceilings

Management Issues in Promoting Women's Participation and Gender Justice

Wijaya Jayatilaka

I Introduction

Gender equity and ensuring equal access to resources and opportunities have become social goals common to all nations. Gender justice is conceived as an integral part of human rights that is universally espoused. All national governments in the global community of nations have made these commitments are working towards realising this goal. Various national and international organizations assist and monitor the progress towards a just society. However, gender equity can be realized only when all social and economic institutions adopt mechanisms to ensure gender equity. This includes all sectors, i.e. the government, non-government as well as the private. The role of the private sector and business will grow in importance with the emphasis placed on this sector for economic growth and employment generation. Hence, the relevance to examine more closely, opportunities and threats to gender justice in women's employment as managers, and their career mobility in the private sector.

The need to examine the role of women in management, especially in the private sector in Sri Lanka, arises due to several factors. Although Sri Lanka takes pride in a high literacy rate, - equal access to education and employment opportunities and a fairly egalitarian policy in the distribution of educational and training facilities, the numbers of women in senior management positions, who are directly responsible for decision-making, remains low. This is in spite of the fact that in most university programmes including management, law and liberal arts, the numbers of women outnumber men. The management and accounts training programmes offered by private educational organizations and institutes are also attended by a large proportion of women.

This chapter addresses the issue of "women in management". It does so under three sections. First, we will examine in brief a few major concerns in management which provides the basic framework. Second, we will assess certain important "gender in management" issues relevant for the assurance of greater gender equity and justice. The third section is a set of case studies

undertaken for the purpose of pinpoint the present status of women in management so as to identify the opportunities and constraints faced by women. Based on the review of issues done in the first two sections and the case studies, recommendations are made to adopt changes in the organizational structure and functions to bring about greater gender equity in order to ensure more effective management.

Gender roles are socially defined and perpetuated by the various social institutions that socialize people into gender role stereotypes. Gender roles are explained using gender identity (Kohlberg, 1966) and also by social learning theory (Mischel, 1970). Women are not a homogeneous group; gender roles vary with social class, social values and practices; they are not static and can be changed. The low representation of women in management positions is due to many social and economic reasons (ILO 2001). The situation may be rectified by studying the situation in Sri Lanka more closely, and examining how the low participation of women in senior management positions affects organizations and society at large.

II Managing Organizations Effectively

The future of organizational management has to take cognizance of both current trends and real changes taking place in the labour market. Organizations that adapt and adjust to these trends will be more successful in a competitive economic environment. Further it requires, a shift in philosophy if organizations are to survive and maintains a competitive edge. *Strategic management* is being introduced as the tool for efficiency in organizational management. In both the trends as well as the new approaches to management, there are important implications for gender relations and policy which need to be examined closely.

Managing organizations, businesses or companies requires the application of modern know-how. It calls for knowledge, technology and effective leadership to guide decision-making so that the organization retains a competitive edge and reaches its goals.

John Naisbitt in his book Megatrends identified ten major changes that were underway over two decades ago, that had a major bearing in the manner in which organizations should manage themselves to be effective (Naisbitt and Aburdene, 1985). These major trends have changed the world significantly and organizations have had to take cognizance of them to remain in business. These trends are relevant to companies and organizations in the developing world too. They are:

i. The shift in strategic resources from an individual to an information society. In an industrial society the strategic resource is capital, whereas in an information society the key resource has shifted to *information*,

knowledge and *creativity*. The only place where an organization will find this resource is within its employees.

ii. The coming sellers market and the new competition for the best employees.

iii. The gradual diminishing of middle management. The computer will make fewer people do many tasks and middle management will be made redundant.

iv. The continuing entrepreneurial revolution.

v. The emergence of the new variegated workforce. The workforce is becoming younger, better educated, and increasingly female.

vi. The demographic revolution of working women. Changes taking place in society will mean that all women will work except for a few months or years where they will take time off for child bearing and caring. Women are reinventing career patterns and motherhood and lifestyles.

vii. The growing use of intuition and vision. The use of intuition in management is now being recognized as a powerful management tool. Leaders are drawing on their vision to guide the creation of new structures.

viii. The mismatch between the education system and the needs of the new information society. The need for differently skilled young graduates is creating new alliances between business and education.

ix. The rising importance of corporate health issues.

x. The value of the baby boomers, those born between 1946 and 1964, who are now populating the ranks of management. The values of this generation of managers will influence the way in which organizations are managed. They are more educated, socially liberal, and health conscious than other generations. These values will have a bearing on the corporate sector. (Naisbitt and Aburdene 1985)

Efficiency in organizations, especially in the private sector, has been decided in the form of short term profits, specialization of functions for greater effectiveness, and recognition of capital as the most important factors in determining their success. But today these are looked at in a different manner. Strategic management emerges as a holistic and rational approach that considers all the factors required for effective organizational management and the different time frames associated with achieving different organizational goals.

III Strategic Management

In today's competitive world, organizations are adopting strategic management in order to be more effective and efficient. Strategic management is an integrated approach incorporating all aspects of differentiated functions in an organization to work more closely together. It is aimed at achieving organizational goals and encompasses a broad range of stakeholders. The approach takes into consideration multiple time frames in its planning activities and is concerned with both effectiveness and efficiency.

> **Effective organizations are guided by decisive leadership towards a well defined vision. In order to work towards the realization of a vision, strategic management identifies specific and clear goals, policies that are explicitly stated or implicitly understood, and plans the means by which these goals are to be achieved. Thus strategic management is a process that has three related activities, namely, strategy analysis, strategy formulation and strategy implementation (Dess and Miller, 1993).**

Strategic analysis is considered the foundation of strategic management. First, the organization's strategic goals are examined in the light of external opportunities and threats. Being aware of the external environment is extremely crucial. If required, these goals can be revised accordingly.

The strategic goals are defined in congruence with the vision and mission of the organization. Thus it is ensured that they are rational and also externally valid. The goals are also examined in the light of internal strengths and weaknesses. This ensures that they are also internally valid and that the organization has the potential capability of achieving its goals. The process ensures that the organization does not set itself unrealistic goals. To formulate sound strategy, a manager must know the capabilities and limits affecting the organization.

The second dimension, strategy formulation, requires working at four levels-functional, business, corporate, and international. Thus the basis of working and planning in an organization becomes broader, requiring the skills and abilities to address these issues effectively. Those organizations that are unable to address these issues may find themselves becoming unsuccessful and losing out to those who develop their capabilities and competitive advantages.

> The third dimension of strategy implementation is the process of transformation of intentions to realities. This process consists of four components:
>
> i. **Integration -** The various sections of an organization that must work

in sync with each other. The workers of all divisions interact and work towards a common goal.

ii. **Organizational structures -** Strategy implementation requires effective and smooth communication among all personnel. Structures of the organization should be conducive to free communication, exchange of information and informed decision making.

iii. **Strategic controls -** Controls ensure that the efforts are "on track" and necessary feedback obtained to ensure that all activities and functions are focused on achieving organizational goals.

iv. **Strategic leadership -** Leadership influences all other aspects of strategy implementation. Leaders design structures for organizations and the required controls and are the driving force behind organizations.

The nature of strategic management is changing in such a way that all managers, regardless of the organizational level and functional speciality, are becoming involved in helping to formulate and implement strategies.

When examining economic and social trends that are affecting all organizations as well as the strategic management approaches, it is clear that an effective holistic approach is required. Within a holistic approach, human resources of any organization take a central position of importance. The manner in which the employees and their inter-relationships are managed determines the success of organizations.

IV Human Relations in Organizations

Discussing the role of human relations and organizational behaviour, Dwivedi (1997), lists five reasons why organizations should adopt innovative approaches towards design and management. Dwivedi draws on literature of the USA, Europe and India to draw his inferences on the importance of human relations in successful organizations. They are:

i. Growing recognition of the social dimension of organizations and the necessity for improving the work environment.

ii. Lagging rates of growth in productivity.

iii. Globalization and increasing presence of foreign competitors.

iv. Tremendous rates of technological advancements in micro-electronics.

v. Labour market changes as affected by education, values and expectations.

The concept of "quality of work life (QWL)", referring to "the quality of the relationship between employees and the total working environment", is being used to evaluate the effectiveness of organizations and employers. QWL seeks to create those conditions in an organization which (a) promotes individual learning and development; (b) provides individuals with influence and control over what they do and how they do it; and (c) makes available to the individuals interesting and meaningful work as a source of personal satisfaction and a means to valued personal rewards. It is also perceived as a process of labour management collaboration where equal responsibility is held by employer and employee in the development of a conducive work environment to optimize worker satisfaction and productivity.

The above three themes in management (a) Trends affecting Management (b) Strategic Management and (c) Human Relations in Organizations, have provided a framework for discussing gender in management.

The following can be listed as pertinent issues in relation to examining gender equity and justice in management:

- Today, all organizations work in an information age and most are affected by IT. Tremendous growth in IT-based opportunities as well as the use of IT for management and worker productivity is the order of the day.

- The employees are being recognized as the most important resource. Because their ideas will help maintain a competitive edge over other companies. Employees are the source of ideas; and should be recognized and treated as a major asset.

- Women will continue to play an increasingly important role in the labour force. They will enter into all strata of management bringing with them modern skills.

- Women and men will need to adapt and adjust to the multiple challenges of work and family. They will adopt new ways to succeed in the world of work as well as within the family. Thus organizations may have to accept them on their terms and not be biased.

- Progressive managers with positive attitudes will take cognizance of global trends and provide the required environment and flexibility to make better use of their female colleagues. Those who provide the necessary incentives and opportunities will stand to gain from the expertise and skills of women managers.

- Holistic approaches to management are being adopted. Strategic management adopted by successful organizations requires leadership and an organizational culture that is rational, objective and liberal. These organizational cultures will provide an empowering environment

to its employees. They will provide resources and opportunities for effective communication to all its employees, so that they can work as equal and responsible partners. Such work relationships and environments will be gender sensitive and supportive of women and other socially disempowered persons.

- Organizations are being recognized for their social responsibility of being good employers that take care of the well-being of their workers. This is in the long-term interest of the organization.

- Innovative methods of enabling women and men to take care of their family responsibilities while serving the company are enabling organizations to have better workers who are dedicated and committed. Such strategies reduce costs of recruitment and personnel development. Modern technology such as computers and cellular phones are enabling work to be carried out effectively at home, thus relieving people to take care of family while still being effectively linked to the work station.

- Companies are realizing that it is in their interest to be socially more responsible and be able to provide time off for child care for their female and male employees. Strong well-developed families and individuals create the required social environment for companies and organizations to be effective in pursuing their goals.

- The more successful companies in the world are also those that have liberal and open policies to take care of their employees - such as gender sensitive policies and strategies.

- All companies work in a very competitive environment where markets are opening up for international opportunities. In order to retain a competitive edge over others, companies will have to treat all their employers as equally important assets irrespective of gender differences.

- A flattening if the organization hierarchy will be observed as more organizations become rationalized, where people will be more multi-skilled and have less strata to report to. Responsibilities will be shared equally. Thus, irrespective of their gender, people will be required to work across the divide.

- Ensuring a work environment that is satisfying, enjoyable and productive is a collective responsibility of the employers and the employees. However, since power and resource control lie in the hands of the employers, they should be more accountable, and take a greater interest and initiative in instituting appropriate mechanisms and structures for an enabling envoirnment.

- Successful organizations will require leaders who will be able to draw out the best from all the employees. They would be those that are liberal, broad-minded and able to assess situations and personnel for their long-term value, and be less prone to be influenced by traditional values in taking decisions for the organization, formulating policy, developing strategies and implementing operational plans.

Several on-going changes affect the way women adapt to the world around them. There is a global trend where more women are entering national politics in larger numbers. Even though this may not be apparent in Sri Lanka, it is visible in other parts of Asia.

The activism and interest of various grassroots level women's organizations may be an indication of things to come in the future. Increasing numbers of women are becoming CEOs in other parts of the world. Local business women's organizations and women's chambers of commerce have been established. Globally, more women are starting their own businesses and companies; and the entrepreneurial abilities of women are increasingly evident. Further, more women are entering traditional male bastions of occupations such as the police, armed forces, combat units etc. These trends have been observed more clearly in the industrialized West (Aburdene and Naisbitt, 1994). Managers and leaders as well as policy-makers need to be aware of these trends as they have important implications for the lives of women as well as for the success of organizations.

The differences in the management styles and abilities of men and women are being studied and reported in various forums. Although these studies may not be conclusive and clear, they question an important issue: the validity of traditionally-held beliefs that were preventing women reaching senior positions of management. As reported by Aburdene and Naisbitt (1994), Judy B. Rosener, Professor of the Graduate School of Management, University of California, studying CEOs- women and men of similar age with similar education and jobs found major differences between the two groups. Men see job performance as a series of transactions whereas women transform self-interest in to organizational goals. Further, the study reveals that women leaders tend to encourage participation, share power and information, enhance other people's self worth and motivate others to get excited about their work. In another study quoted by the same authors, by studying four successful women executives, it was possible to identify "feminine" characteristics. The characteristics are: supporting, encouraging and teaching; open communication; soliciting inputs in general; and creating a positive collegial work environment. These charasticies were adopted by these women executives to make their organizations very successful.

Furthermore, the studies found that traditionally-held beliefs of management defined in masculine terms were not valid. So-called feminine traits that were once felt to be unsuitable for senior executive managers, are being found to be effective and useful. Often the expectation of women managers is to be "tough", "decisive" and "masculine". However, women managers with "feminine" traits of leadership are proving to be effective. Thus, it is not necessary for women to adopt 'masculine' traits of leadership. Provided other factors such as the organizational culture is conducive, feminine leadership styles can also be effective in enabling the organization to function better and reach its goals. The studies question traditionally held views of the unsuitability of women for senior management position - for instance, by stereotyping women in management. Thus it is increasingly recognized that the suitability of individuals for management positions should be based on merit.

Yet, gender stereotyping of management is inevitable given the patriarchal value systems held by most societies. However, with the generation of objective knowledge and an understanding of social dynamics and organizational behaviour as well as social activism, opportunities arise to question and dispense with many false beliefs and myths that perpetuate social injustices and irrational behaviour. Work relationships and family are being redefined with the help of technology to incorporate win-win situations for both women and employers. Taking time off for child bearing and caring was traditionally perceived as a major problem for employers. Women were discouraged from becoming mothers in many sectors. Provision was not made for women to take time off for home-making or family concerns. But increasingly, women work from home using technology such as the personal computer, internet and the cellular phone. Their skills and talents are effectively utilized by the organization while they work from home taking care of their family, particularly children. Management has found several advantages with women who have family responsibilities working from home as reported in regard to several US companies (Aburdene and Naisbitt, 1994).

Women are also making major adjustments along with their male counterparts by opting to work and have a family. In the West, the emergence of the 'multiple-option family' is spoken about. The traditional family with the husband as breadwinner, home maker and children make up only a smaller proportion of families in USA and UK. This proportion is less than 15 percent.

In Sri Lanka too the traditional nuclear family model is changing. More than 18 percent of families are headed by females. More women work, fewer have the luxury of a support system of an extended family; the proportion of single parent families are on the increase; more young people opt for careers and postpone marriage; decide to have a fewer number of children or none at all. The number of couples that dissolve their marriages

is rising. People today see more options and actively seek to improve their life situations. They are guided by this rationale and less by social taboos and traditions. Thus the family as the basic social unit is undergoing major transformations. This has a major bearing on organizations, women employees, and those who aspire to become managers, as well as those who are at present in leadership and decision-making positions.

The family, however, will remain the basic social unit. Strengthening the new forms of family structures and supporting them in order to create a healthy and enabling environment for young people, will be crucial if a nation is to build a responsible society.

It is from the base of society that all organizations recruit members for the different roles that need to be performed to fulfil organizational goals. It is within a social context that all organizations function, develop and grow to fulfil their vision. Thus the quality of the society is of direct relevance to all organizations in the public and private sectors. Contributing directly to the improvement of society will be of direct benefit to organizations.

Taking time off for family - is in. Corporations big and small are giving time off for their employees to be with family. In the long term this was found to be healthy for the organization. Further, women who have been taken care of during their maternity period with leave etc. were found to be more loyal and did not leave their organizations.

It is in the best interest of society to strengthen the family. Thus socially responsible organizations are creating more options for their employees to be with their families at crucial times. The Family Friendly Index (FFI) was developed by studying the sustained commitment to the subject of work and family life among 188 US companies. Four companies were identified as the most "family friendly". Interestingly, these were also the largest and most successful, namely-IBM, Johnson & Johnson, Aetna Life & Casualty Company, and Corning (Aburdene and Naisbitt, 1994).

Improvement of the status of women in the formal sector requires two important conditions. First is access to resources or the ensuring of a flow of required resources for women. Second is providing protection to women from discriminatory and abusive practices by those who have power over them. What is required are these two, and not pre-planned packages of benefits or improvements in the form of women's programmes (Elson and Pearson, 1986). The latter creates dependency and reinforces power differentials. In other words what is required for effective participation of women in management and decision-making is the empowerment of women, in particular, and all employees in general. Empowerment of one group does not mean the disempowerment of another. If so, it would simply create another form of deprivation and injustice. Empowerment is feared by those

with decision-making and controlling authority because of this misunderstanding. The empowerment process should be structured and designed as an enabling process towards an ultimate win-win situation according to the organization's vision, mission and goals.

Thus within organizations too what would be required is the redefinition of power relationships and the restructuring of decision-making. With greater empowerment, people would take more responsibility and initiatives, and act with the interest of the organization in mind. "If empowerment is the first attribute of women's leadership, creating the organizational structure to foster it is the second." p71. Aburdene and Naisbitt (1994). The manner in which gender is played in interpersonal relationships and its subtle nature is analyzed in detail by Morley (1999). The comments made by sexist persons can have loaded sexual connotations. These have negative effects on women. They are also subtle threats to ensure women's subordination. The micro-politics of an organization needs closer study in order to understand its dynamics and effects.

A major challenge to management is to be aware of the growing wealth of information and knowledge in designing its organizational structures and processes. The body of knowledge that has been developed in the recent past on understanding human behaviour as well as interpersonal relationships and group dynamics provide us the tools to re-examine and re-craft the way organizations can be developed and managed to respond effectively to social needs. Within this context, organizations, including business, must be able to meet the needs of the people who work for them as well as benefit from their products and services. Learning to change and helping people change and adapt rationally is a major challenge that managers face.

V. Constraints to Women in Management

The low representation of women in management positions is a result of limited access and slow mobility. This situation is known as the "glass ceiling". Fewer women are able to rise within the ranks of organizations. Further, fewer numbers of women are recruited to the vast range of jobs that are considered to be more suitable for men. When compared to their male counterparts, who have much better access to almost all employment opportunities as well as smoother vertical career mobility, women face many barriers. Several constraints can be identified based on the case studies undertaken by us and the available literature. These are enumerated below:

1. Social Expectations and Gender Stereotypes

In many of the organizations studied, women are considered to be acceptable as senior managers. Although they are capable of performing the expected role, there continues to remain an opinion that they are not suitable for some sectors or divisions. They are perceived as having problems with travelling and working at night. There is a strong belief-that women are more appropriate than men for some sectors, particularly feminized professions such as education and nursing. Although an overall positive opinion prevails in support of women working in the formal sector, both men and women were of the opinion that due to cultural reasons women may find it difficult to be effective leaders in organizations in Sri Lanka. Furthermore, women managers were expected to have certain masculine styles and were at the same time expected to be feminine in the way they dealt with their work and subordinates.

The social stereotyping of women as a group that needs protection and as being more suitable for some types of roles and work, pervades society and may be a major hindrance to women accessing management positions. Furthermore, gendered expectations of performance and behaviour which have little to do with objective indicators of performance or ability may also discourage women accessing management positions. As much as men have these values and beliefs, women too have internalized them. Changing them will require interventions from/with both women and men.

Women being primarily responsible for child bearing and rearing were perceived as a problem by most organizations. All organizations considered it a cost to recruit women who may then take maternity leave. The problem was thought to be further aggravated by the notion that mothers focus more on the needs of the family, and thereby neglect their work. This stereotyping affected women accessing positions of leadership.

All women may not decide to become parents, and even if they decide to, it will only be for limited periods of time. The concept of investing in people as assets and nurturing them as team members, and taking care of their personal needs was not found in the organizations studied. Often the socially defined roles of parenting responsibilities expected of women were considered to be "personal problems" that should be addressed by the person and not by the organization or the employer. Thus the "social cost" is borne entirely by the women. Neither the state nor the organization or employer is prepared at present to share in this responsibility even to a limited extent.

2. Gendered Occupations

Occupational differentiation occurs based on specialization and efficiency when individuals are trained to perform a limited but important role in an organization. Gender stereotyping limits opportunities for women to enter into different occupations as certain occupations are socially defined as being more appropriate for women and others for men. This in turn prevents women from accessing such employment and from being successful in non-traditional areas. As such, they cannot be role models for the other women. A vicious cycle is developed and remains to be broken.

3. Recruitment Practices

All organizations maintain that they are equal opportunity employers. They however agreed that women were not recruited for certain types of jobs. This was because they felt that women are not suitable and did not persue the required skills and experience. Women were not recruited into divisions that required employees to travel. However, there was a predominance of women in supportive services. Secretarial, reception and finance divisions tend to be dominated by women. This is justified with the statement that women were more suited for these roles. The organizations contacted did not have a clearly articulated recruitment policy or a mechanism to address gender imbalances.

Thus socially created gender differentials in skills, attitudes and aspirations continued to be reinforced within organizations. Furthermore, organizations did not have programmes or strategies to attract people, irrespective of gender, to the different divisions. A relatively passive approach was adopted. Organizations did not consider the possibility that there may be potential good leaders among women. Women leaders were not identified or nurtured. Nor were there any career counselling programmes by employers to address these imbalances.

4. Decision-making

Most often decision-making in organizations were done at the top, by the executive officers. Most organizations followed a hierarchical top-down approach.

People at lower levels had limited opportunity to influence organizational decision-making mechanisms. Thus their ideas did not get transferred into organizational policy or actions. Informal or formal mechanisms of communication, where concerns and ideas can be discussed freely and acted upon, were rarely in place. Other than in the form of a complaint, issues that affect women or gender relations among employees within a particular strata or among different strata of the organizational hierarchy were not discussed.

Centralized, hierarchical, top-down decision-making structures continued to safeguard the *status quo* and were less prone to innovations or the empowerment of the workforce. These decision-making mechanisms tend to perpetuate the ideology of the persons at the top and are less sensitive to the needs and realities of those at the lower strata.

5. Support Services

The effective functioning of any person depends to a great extent on a reward. Part of the reward system is the manner in which needs and aspirations are met. The world over, many organizations are now beginning to provide special services for their women employees, by incorporating and responding to their needs. This is done through the adoption of a human capital development philosophy, as well as the redefinition of the social responsibilities of the organizations.

> **However, the organizations studied in Sri Lanka had no special services. Many felt that gender was a need limited to the garment industry where more women are employed at lower ranks on the shop floor. There was also a belief that such services may be counterproductive and discriminatory to men. There was reluctance on the part of most organizations to bear part of the social costs involved in rectifying social injustices related to gender discrimination.**

For instance, child bearing and rearing is often considered the sole responsibility of the women but the benefits of a well cared for child extends to the whole of society. The planning horizon tends to be the short term, and long term investment on the staff, particularly on women, remains to be realized. Thus the lack of a supportive working environment for women, prevents them from making the required commitments to their work and careers.

> **Women themselves showed an inability to recognize such services as a requirement for the "good health" of the organization; nor as a long term strategy for good management.**

6. Family Support

> **Balancing multiple roles effectively so as to be equally successful at the workplace and in the family calls for extremely high capabilities and resources. Performing work and family roles equally well with no support from other sources, puts tremendous pressure on women. Often, they are unable to cope. It is now well known that supportive family systems enhance the ability of women to cope. In the past, extended family**

> **structures provided the required support. However, as the nuclear family becomes more common, the members of the nuclear family will need to share roles in order to make women perform effectively in their multiple roles.**

Among younger families, there is a greater tendency for men to share in the domestic chores. Yet, the overall social institutions that help families understand their multiple roles, responsibilities and rights are not developed effectively in the country to provide the required information or guidance. Women often suffer as a result of an inability to cope. With the pressure of multiple responsibilities and labour this in turn adds to the reinforcement of gender stereotyping i.e. that women can't do their job properly. Although the family has an important influence on the productivity and well-being of individual employees, organizations or employers are not proactive in providing the necessary support or information in this domain. The family is treated as strictly private and not as a social institution that needs to be understood and improved. In some organizations outside the sample of case studies, functions and activities are organized for family members to develop greater camaraderie and a sense of community. However, this is not a common practice. These programmes have great potential for improvement and institutionalizing gender concern.

7. Organizational Culture

All organizations have their own unique culture. Some organizations are conscious of this. They define and nurture certain values, practices and behaviour and take action to preserve the organizational culture. Such organizations have well-articulated visions, goals and plans with decisive leadership that direct the organizations towards their long-term goals. In other organizations this aspect is neither recognized nor managed effectively.

> **The manner in which women are perceived, stereotyped, and related to is also part of the organizational culture. In most organizations of the study, women in senior management positions were not a problem for male subordinates. But in all organizations there was an expected model of behaviour and personality that was thought to be appropriate for women managers. Such expectations are there for men too. The constraint is that the gendered stereotype of women as mangers may act as an invisible barrier for women to get into management positions, if they do not conform to these expectations.**

The manner in which people interact, interpersonal relationship patterns, organizational hierarchy, social communication systems, methods of decision-making and symbols of identity are aspects of the organizational culture. The manner in which people are treated and the way in which they relate to each other is a valuable part of organizational culture as it has a direct bearing on the wellbeing of women employees. Gender sensitive and supportive

organizational cultures can be developed with specific interventions and activities. Yet, such practices were not identified in the organizations studied.

8. Learning Culture

Successful organizations constantly adapt and change with the external environment. To remain at a competitive advantage, organizations are required to have the appropriate mechanisms to monitor and synthesize information from the external environment and take appropriate action to modify goals, strategies and plans. Thus, organizations are required to develop a learning culture in order to be competitive, effective and successful in the long term. Obviously all organizations to some extent are sensitive and responsive to the external environment. But, a learning culture will require an organization to recognize this as a part of how they function. In such an organization there would be mechanisms to generate appropriate information based on which decisions are taken. This information could be extracted from external sources as well as generated from within the organization. Organizations need to be self-reflective and transparent; make information about the organization easily accessible to staff; and enable critical feedback to decision-makers. Study circles, research and monitoring committees and seminars, are methods of effecting a learning culture.

> **Among the organizations studied, learning was limited to individuals, with limited intra-organizational efforts taken at making effective use of available information amongst management employees. Thus learning about leadership, gender and gender stereotyping, organizational effectiveness etc., were not undertaken as a collective exercise for all employees among the organizations studied. This may be a reason for many of the persons who participated in the survey having very traditional stereotyped images of women and being ignorant of the methods adopted by other organizations to promote gender equity.**

9. Organizational Structures

Organizational structures also make up the organizational culture. The formal organizational hierarchy, working groups, committees etc., and the organization's rules and regulations make up the organizational structures. Some organizations have positions that are directly relevant to the well-being of employees. The human resource development officers or the personnel director usually takes care of work-related needs and concerns of employees. In most organizations the concerns of women are seen mostly as related to addressing grievances. This is a positive aspect but limited in scope. Further, gender issues tend to be discussed informally. However, it was not possible to identify working groups within organizations that were addressing issues of gender justice or human resource development.

> **What was happening was that in most organizations, a department is made responsible for the well-being of all workers, and they decide what concerns for all employees of the organization. Often these divisions do not approach challenges from a gender sensitive perspective. The lack of appropriate structures hinders women from getting into management positions.**

10. Research and Information

The importance of assessing appropriate information to take decisions is well recognized. All organizations studied had the benefit of being members of the Chamber of Commerce which provides organizational management support services including information on business and markets. Mechanisms for research on human relations, organizational culture and gender were not in place among the organizations studied. All organizations monitor their outputs, feedback from clients and customers, as well as market opportunities.

> **However, organizational culture and structures were not a focus of research. This does not appear to be part of the organizational culture of the federations of organizations that make the National Chamber of Commerce of Sri Lanka or the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce.**

Information required for decision-making at the organizational level is generated from within and not based on rigorous and objective research approaches.

The organizations do have access to journals and bulletins that provide information on management. However, only a few researchers contribute to their forums. The capabilities of organizations and collectives to do their own research are limited.

11. Education and Training

The quality and effectiveness of organizations depend on the skills and attitudes of the employees. At recruitment, the organization can identify candidates with appropriate skills. However, once recruited, to be effective and up to date with new information and methods, training throughout the career is necessary. This is so due to the information boom and rapid transformation and improvement in technology and communication. The formal education sector is considered to be ineffective in providing the training required by employees to a rapidly changing world of work.

Some organizations in the private sector as well as individuals are undertaking various programmes to inform and educate prospective employees of the expectations of work organizations and employers in general. However, these programmes are mostly limited to the urban area. A stronger functional link between educational institutions and organizations that recruit persons for various

posts will be mutually beneficial. If young people are aware of the expectations of future employers they could be more rational in decision-making and in selecting options for the future.

> **The organizations studied were not involved in public education programmes or the formal education sector. The Chambers of Commerce are formally associated with the government efforts of instituting educational reforms to make public education more meaningful. This is a link with great potential that needs to be strengthened. Such links will help in the medium term for organizations to be more gender sensitive and socially accountable.**

12. Redress Mechanisms

Redress mechanisms are necessary in addressing problems faced by employees. Often the breakdown in interpersonal relationships, conflicts and harassment may affect the well-being of employees. These will have many negative effects, both on the victim and the organization.

> **Most organizations identified mechanisms that address grievances and complaints. However, once damage is caused, it may cause permanent harm to the relationship between the employee and the work organization. It is more prudent to have preventive mechanisms. Mechanisms and programmes for preventing gender-related conflict or victimization were not common among the organizations studied. Such preventive mechanisms will require education, training and awareness campaigns.**

13. Gender Policy

> **None of the organizations studied had a gender policy. There was widespread skepticism among the persons met about the necessity for a gender policy for their organizations. Most people felt that a 'gender policy' would be discriminatory, not required, and required only where large numbers of women are employed - such as in factories. That a gender policy was related to welfare and had the potential for exploitation. This misconception was quite widespread.**

Areas such as recruitment, promotions, human resource development, career mobility and succession that are vital for an organization's long-term development require clear policies, and the linkage of that policy to the goals and vision of the organization. Arbitrary decision-making, stereotyping, perpetuation of gendered differentials, continue due to a lack of a gender policy. A clear gender policy would require an analysis of the issues and constraints, and provide a better understanding of the organizational culture. Not initiating this also tends to perpetuate myths as people have widely different

views about women's capabilities in management. Dispensing of these biases are necessary to develop a more conducive and productive organizational culture. Unfortunately organizations have not adopted this approach.

VI. Women in management: The Case Studies

A selected number of companies were studied to develop profiles of the gendered aspects of management. A set of questions guided the interviews based on issues that were identified earlier. (Annex A).

Constructing the reality of the structures, functioning and dynamics of an organization requires adoption of a triangulation approach in research. A valid approach will require adopting several methods. Each method has merits as well as limitations. Each may complement the other. Such a triangulation in approach includes observations, interviews of representative samples of people from all strata of the organization, perusal of documents on policy and procedural matters, annual reports, minutes of meetings, and review of investment and expenditure patters. Further, the appropriateness of each method needs to be validated before adoption. Due to the time limitation, we adopted a single approach. This included interviewing a few persons, usually two, to get an insight into the organization. What are reported are the views expressed by those interviewed and the inferred status based on the interviews and the observations that took place during the visits to the organizations.

Inferences drawn from the case studies

Ten companies were selected for in-depth case studies. These were visited in addition to the others surveyed. The CEO and/or other senior persons in management were interviewed.

The additional interviews included women in senior management posts and if available, the person in charge of human resource development, to get a clearer understanding of the dynamics within the organization in relation to women in senior management positions. It was an exercise in mapping the organizational culture, the attitudes, opinions, decision-making processes and the situation that women face in their day-to-day work environment. A qualitative approach was adopted to understand the dynamics and organizational culture, to identify the issues and draw inferences on what needs to be done to bring about gender equity and equality and fairness at the workplace for women managers. The purpose was to understand general situations and trends and not to undertake individual organizational analysis. In order to identify a broad spectrum of issues different types of businesses were chosen to capture common issues that could be focused on in developing the *gender policy guide*, which was the final goal of this book.

The types of companies selected for the case studies on women in management:

1. Soft toy manufacturing
2. Tea trading
3. Information technology service
4. Five star hotel
5. Bank
6. Garments manufacturing
7. Wholesale and retailing
8. Plantation management
9. Industrial manufacturing
10. Confectionary

Complexity and variability: The situation among the private sector organizations is not similar and often there is considerable variability and contextual differences on many aspects. Thus, generalizations were drawn with caution. Nevetherless, there are many lessons to be learnt, inferences drawn and issues to be followed up in order to ensure a more gender equitable and equal work environment and opportunities for more women to be in management positions.

Women in management as a special resource: The numbers of women in management posts remain low. The situation that men and women face at entry level to organizations as well as when they progress in their careers once employed are different. Many women and men have recognized and identified the special strengths and skills that women brought with them to a 'team of management'. However, there was also a notion that there were no differences between men and women. We are not debating the fact, nor are we debating about the sources of these differences, which may be social and learnt behaviour. Yet, due to socialization process that make women ready for in adulthood, they have differences in skills, attitudes and expectations - as do men. Managers who recognize that women bring special skills are able to use such persons to optimize the functioning of the organization. Being open to new ideas, explanations, research findings and a willingness to learn may be more helpful than adapting a closed mind to possibilities.

A) The Chief Executive Officer of a local subsidiary of an international IT company with an annual turnover of Rs. 30 million, where there were no women in any of the senior management positions had the view that, *"Women have special skills. They are more focused in their jobs, and more productive. Women tend to finish their work during working hours as opposed to men who always feel they have to 'hang around' till late hours trying to do work that should have been done earlier. Women tend to manage their working hours effectively. It was a woman operations manager who had introduced proper procedures to the organization, an invaluable input, recognized and appreciated by senior management."*

B) Further, a senior woman manager of a soft toy export company stated that, *"Women in general are more honest and hardworking, which is a major advantage to any organization. They are also more dedicated to their assigned work, take their job more seriously as managers, are better decision makers, and since they are more people-oriented, others find it easier to deal with female managers than male managers".* She also feels that *"women are more efficient than men, and women can do any type of work, if the opportunity is provided, in this organization it was a woman who had mainstreamed and developed a sound financial management system".*

However, in a reputed tea trading company, the human resource development officer felt that *"women are more efficient and in control than men are"*, but was not willing to accept that they could be a strength and supplement the profile of management skills in the company. *"If women have the confidence and the qualifications they can take any senior management post, similar to men, but they do not have unique and different capabilities to men,"* was his final comment.

Although there is an awareness of women sometimes having unique capabilities, there are sociological reasons why there is a reluctance to concede to these strengths. In a company whose core business was in marketing, there was a belief that women may not be able to travel long distances and hence not suitable for senior posts.

"Although women are good at interpersonal skills, at senior positions we can't afford to grant maternity leave and deal with situations were they can't travel and stay overnight. These are too costly for the company." While women managers maintain that, *"We can do any task men do in our company we are ready to travel, but most men and families think we can't and shouldn't,"* is a common situation that affects women adversely in many ways.

Thus there is a need for increasing awareness of gender issues in management. Applied knowledge of the theories and models of management will benefit managers to optimize human resource use. In all of the case studies where women managers were contacted they felt that women had to work hard and constantly prove themselves to be good in the eyes of the male colleagues or superiors.

A human resource development approach targeting the senior managers will also make such organizations become more gender sensitive and more productive in the long run.

In the ten companies selected for the detailed case studies, it was clear that the senior managers felt that women can do any executive management task as well as men do. But it is the social conditioning and expectations that often prevent them getting the opportunities.

Need for gender policy: The situations in the companies studied confirmed once again the need for gender policies and guidelines at company level. None of the companies had a gender policy or a set of guidelines. However it must be recorded that several companies had welfare-oriented facilities and privileges to accommodate the special needs of women.

Two senior managers in the soft toy export company stated that *"gender policy is really not needed, we provide for all the needs of the workers. A gender policy means favouring women and this is not good and fair by men. We need to treat both men and women equally".* However, the need for the company to be sensitive to the needs of pregnant women or mothers with infants was thought by the two to be necessary. There is confusion about equality and equity. The same senior mangers in the company stated that they provide for special requirements for sanitation etc. in the factories for women; however, in the light of equality, stated that, *"It is not proper to have special treatment for women, since it is not fair by men!"*

The chief executive officer of the IT service provider company stated that they did not have a gender policy and had faced numerous difficulties when an earlier attempt was made to introduce one. *"A gender policy is necessary for the company. This will ensure better interpersonal relationships and create greater awareness of the importance of women's work and contribution in the organization. Our company does not have special programs for women. We feel that this is unnecessary and unhealthy, for women to be treated differently. But all laws and regulations related to maternity leave and the like must be followed."*

Managers desire to be fair and are unable to deal with being equitable and just. There is a need at senior management levels to understand the differences in the key concepts of equity and equality. The gender policy guide that is an output of this study will help provide some clarity to mangers on these concepts.

It was interesting to note that one company that had extended rest room facilities to women, withdrew this facility, because they felt that the productivity had suffered as a result of the action.

Without a strong commitment, and a policy that will direct decision-making, initiatives to improve the quality of work life in organizations can be short-lived and arbitrarily dispensed with.

Perceptions and awareness of a gender policy vary among senior management. It is clear that there are widespread misconceptions and even fear of having a policy. Many felt that their companies did not discriminate in an unjust manner between men and women at recruitment and therefore there is no need for a gender policy. Others felt that adopting a gender policy may disrupt the social harmony within the organization and create more problems for women. However, none questioned the different rates of recruitment between men and women for different job categories, accepting this to be part of social reality that one has to contend with. There is a widespread prevalence of a very narrow notion of gender justice, limiting it to a narrow definition, even within the context of recruitment.

A simple comparison of women and men in an organization to assess if an organization is having a good gender profile is too simplistic and clouds many issues. This was attempted by some male managers. The presence of more women in certain departments was given as an excuse and rationale as to why there were less or none in other departments. Accounts, secretarial, and now, computer divisions are becoming concentrated with women. This was flagged by some as successes in being fair, and to show that they recruited women. Senior management needs to be sensitive to maintaining a qualitatively better profile of the staff, with greater equality in the distribution of staff at all categories and levels. Here, what is important is that there is no direct or indirect discrimination at recruitment, but companies adopt a proactive stance to create opportunities that are attractive for women and men to join at all levels; where candidates also have a fair choice in selecting careers depending on their likes and dislikes as well their aptitudes, rather than face a situation of open hostility or discrimination.

The fear of having a gender policy may be the realization that there is an explicit binding nature of such a clear statement. However, the fact that a policy can be developed that can be progressively improved upon and to be inclusive of issues within a workable timeframe was not clear in the minds of managers. Furthermore, the processes of policy formulation can be designed to be a learning experience that can prepare employees, including management, to adjust to required changes. Such processes or approaches were not known to the management.

> The human resource development officer of the tea trading company explained that *"The distribution of women in the organization hierarchy reflects past recruitment patterns. Therefore the number of women in senior posts is few. We do not have women in senior executive positions other than in the finance department. There is a tendency to recruit more men than women, mainly because the line of work requires a lot of travel and women find it hard to drive, go out of Colombo on work or even work late at night".*

Such situations can be avoided if companies had a gender policy that provided guidelines on how to manage recruitment processes to ensure long-term strategic needs of the organization.

> In the same organization, a woman employee stated that, *"The men have an unfounded belief that all women are unable to balance family life and professional work and they are incapable or do not like field work and travelling. This is not correct".* This position on the other hand is a typical reaction denying the multiple burdens that women have to shoulder at home as well as the social pressures they have to contend with when undertaking equal responsibilities at work.

A more healthy approach is to be realistic of the social and personal context within which women and men work and make necessary adjustment in the way companies design job responsibilities and create a conducive work environment to obtain the best talents of the people they employ. Such an environment with the required structures, decision-making processes and incentives, need to be logical and consistent. This will be easy for companies to ensure if they have a well-designed gender policy to direct themselves.

> A male human resource manager, in a company headed by a women, agreed that there are few women in senior management positions. In this company of 80 employees, only 6 are women. *"Women are unable to clock in long hours and are not as aggressive as their male counterparts. Being aggressive is necessary to succeed at senior positions of management. This is a requirement that most women can't meet due to the personal situations faced by them."* The women chief executive officer of this company, was of the opinion that there is no need for a gender policy. A gender policy, on the other hand, could have provided the framework for action that could break traditional notions of what women are capable of and not. Thus it is clear that organizations, no matter who heads them-men or women, will benefit from some capacity building interventions to be sensitive to the gender dimensions of the work settings. Such an approach may help management understand the relevance of gender policies to guide decision making in their organizations.

> Further, a company that had been in operation since 1955, made a major change by appointing a women to its board of management for the first time this year. The company had six senior executive positions (heads of departments), half of whom were women. The organization does not have a gender policy and the need for such a policy was also not recognized. The organization claims that it does not discriminate against women. The head of corporate services, a woman, stated that *"Men tend to do a better job!"* Even while choosing a candidate for a particular job, being proactive to hire a woman does not cross their line of thinking. *"At*

> *recruitment, more women apply for posts of clerks and receptionists and secretaries. Therefore, these posts are mostly filled with women candidates. The organization does not provide any special services or welfare benefits for women. The company started providing rest rooms for women recently but since this facility was thought to be misused and thus affecting work output, the management discontinued it,"* she stated. She went on to elaborate that the constraints women face in the company *"are purely personal"* and thus should be addressed at that level and need not be the concern of the entire organization. These concerns are mostly to do with maternity leave and neglect of work during child rearing. This is a major constraint that the organization faces, a result of which is the deprivation of promotions etc. for women.

This becomes an issue when hiring women. However, there are many women who manage their careers and family equally well. With persons at the top being gender biased and narrow in perspective, the chances that employees get a fair deal is quite doubtful.

> **The gender biased nature or gender blindness is not limited to men, women can also have incorrect beliefs if they have not had the occasion to question these notions and broaden their perspectives and knowledge.**

It is clear that there is a need for clarifying and changing people's incorrect notions of what a gender policy entails; as its intentions and contexts of formulations remain unknown and hence feared. There is much to be done to change these perceptions and improve knowledge amongst managers.

Interpersonal relations and company culture: The dominance of a masculine culture is very common among the companies studied. This was the case with the findings of the survey too. This situation has many implications for women who have the potential and the willingness to aspire to become senior managers. In several organizations there were interpersonal conflicts that had a gender dimension. The redress mechanism and the support system to iron out root causes were not present. This situation had resulted in a deteriorating quality of the work environment. Such situations lead to discontent, low productivity or even loss of valuable employees. It is also at times a violation of the rights of the employee.

> Interpersonal rivalry may be a waste of human energy that could be directed for more productive purposes. The office manager of the soft toy manufacturing company stated that *"men are jealous of the efficiency and make nasty remarks at female managers. But the company did not take these dynamics seriously. So, it is the women who have to deal with the problem at a personal level".* Such open rivalry and hostility may be reasons for females to leave organizations without gathering sufficient experience in one place, which is considered important when promotions are granted. The situation may take a different form where the opinions of women are not taken seriously by the male counterparts.

In the IT service provider company, the CEO stated that *"some men who have a different upbringing have a difficulty dealing with women colleagues as equals. Due to a certain superiority attitude, they find it difficult to discuss matters critically with women colleagues and come to more effective decisions."* Such rivalries can be effectively addressed. For instance the situation was seen by the human resource development officer of the tea trading company visited, as a challenge that can be effectively managed. *"Conflicts between men and women are not uncommon. These situations arise due to misunderstandings and stereotyping of the capabilities of women as weak and indecisive. But among educated and well-behaved persons this is not a serious problem."* Thus, through training and other management interventions, such problems may be addressed effectively.

It is not uncommon for companies with a long history of management by men to develop a masculine work culture. When women are recruited to such organizations they find the work environment intimidating or even repulsive.

This can be due to the verbal banter that has led to conflicts within the organization, confirmed by a chief executive of a company that we interviewed. He stated that this situation is *"due to the basic lack of respect for another person, and applied not only to the male staff but to female staff as well.*

This situation has happened even though at a personal level people get along quite well, but when it comes to business, the males tend to dominate. For example, if there is a disagreement with regard to a work related issue, the males tend to get aggressive and feel that they have to dominate. If the team leader is a female, the males often have a problem with her decisions even if she is right. These situations are resolved by both parties being brought together and having open discussions. These incidents have affected the productivity of the company. This situation had a lot to do with education and the awareness of people in society. For example, when male and female employees go for a meeting, the male is taken seriously by the client. This sometimes causes unhealthy friction between the two employees and conflicts within the organization".

A transparent participatory approach to decision making that helps managers to overcome traditional notions of male driven individualistic methods will help improve interpersonal relationships in organizations that strive towards gender parity in its senior management levels.

Organizations need to have a clear strategy in human resource management/development to address these conflicts. A gender policy that incorporates, where required, the company position with regard to such conflicts, how they

need to be addressed, and preventive mechanisms will help develop a more conducive working environment for both men and women.

Acceptability as managers:

There were some men in management who felt that women may not be accepted by subordinates. *"Taking maternity leave and thereby not being available for important decision making processes ...", "... unable to travel long distances and stay overnight ...", "... being soft minded and not aggressive enough ...",* were some opinions expressed by males who felt that women were not suitable for senior executive positions. These ideas were not accepted and agreed to by any of the women managers we interviewed. On the other hand, many men were of the opinion that women are quite capable, like them, to hold management positions. The notion that women as a whole are not suitable to hold management positions is totally unfounded and based on personal experiences and erroneous beliefs. Often many men interviewed did not examine the fact that not all males are suitable managers. In the same token some men and women will be most un-suitable to hold management positions too. *"A woman who has the leadership qualities, personality and the right attitude will be suitable for management positions",* was the opinion of a senior human resource manager. By and large, male subordinates will accept women as managers. *"It depends on who the person is and their skills and capabilities as well as the style of management that the person brings to the setting".*

A more definitive and positive outlook expressed by a CEO of a company was, "…. *the same rules apply to both genders. In this business we look for quick and forward thinkers, someone familiar with the business,who can grasp and learn the business quickly. Women are not different to men in management styles and abilities. Individuals may have different approaches and styles and I feel that this is not based on gender differences.The entry of more women will be a benefit to the organization".*

Capturing the synergies of a team of senior managers made up of both women and men would be of a strategic advantage to organizations.

Furthermore, it may be in the interest of organizations to have more women in senior management positions. It is imperative then that management take a proactive stance to change the work setting accordingly. The workers may need to be psychologically prepared and trained, and the working environment changed to ensure success. The practices, social dynamics of the organization may also need to be critically examined and modified to create an enabling environment for all to function in a more productive manner as more women scale the career ladders and come to the top management positions. Good management requires accepting progressive changes and creating the environment to change rather than resist progress and change.

The inability or reluctance to travel at night or long distances was a situation disliked by most managers. Managers also tend to stereotype all women and disregard that there could be women who will be willing to take these challenges at work and perform equally well. All women in middle and senior management posts held the view that this was not a major problem in itself, if they too, like their male counterparts, were provided with transport and other required facilities. It was up to the women to deal with social stigma and break barriers. In companies male senior managers were of the opinion that women find it difficult to travel and stay overnight in distant places. Such opinions held by persons in senior executive positions will have a major influence on how the company addresses this concern and even affect recruitment and promotion decisions.

However, it is in the interest of the organization to examine the conditions under which the employees work and to provide the safeguards and facilities to obtain the optimum outputs from both male and female managers. It will also be good socially responsible conduct on the part of the company to ensure that all employees, irrespective of sex, are provided with transport as a standard practice, without making it an issue when the requesting employee is a female.

The inability to work late is also cited as a problem associated with women. There were many women who were able and willing to work late when the occasion required such commitments. However, it is quite understandable that women who shoulder a larger share of domestic responsibilities will find it more difficult than others to put in extra hours of work routinely. Such situations must be known to employees well in advance. If such requirements are also made known to new recruits, persons can plan in advance for such work related needs for time, and if required, travel. People must be provided the opportunity to plan accordingly.

Transferring the social benefits of women undertaking the reproductive role entirely on them and making it an opportunity cost to be borne entirely by women is not a just and fair situation. The redress requires examining the issue from a broader perspective where the state, employees and employers identify their role in ensuring a more fair work setting in which the costs of domestic/ reproductive responsibilities (borne mostly by women) and benefits (procured by all of society) are shared in a more equitable manner.

A further manifestation of this complex malady is the reluctance and denial of maternity leave and other benefits to female employees. The reluctance to employ women, citing the reason as maternity leave, reflects this situation. Many senior managers are quite strong in their opinion about this situation and are reluctant to consider appointing women to senior management positions feeling that the reproductive roles, particularly motherhood, will interfere with the contributions she would have otherwise made to the company profits. Their loyalties are narrow and limited to productivity and profits and lack vision of the processes and human costs involved. Losses

due to this situation for women are particularly high at senior management positions. When there is reluctance to recruit women due to this belief then the chances of women coming up to senior positions are also limited. This is a situation that needs critical thinking from a broader "socially responsible frame of reference", addressed by the tripartite stakeholders: labour, management and the state.

Breaking Stereotypes and facilitating change

It is noteworthy that many persons felt that to be successful in management is to have the right personality. So, if you are a woman and still had the correct personality, you would be a successful manager. When we examine and disaggregate this concept of 'personality', or the expectations, it is a masculine social construct or defined by men in an organizational cultural context that is also masculine. Being aggressive, hard working, tough, withstanding pressure, not emotional etc., are the expected characteristics of a successful manager and also the dimensions of an appropriate personality for a woman in a senior management position.

Yet many persons interviewed recognized the advantages to the company of senior women managers who brought with them characteristics such as *"patience"*, *"being able to work under stress, being better controlled of their emotions"*, *"being systematic"*, *"being more acceptable to intervene in difficult interpersonal conflicts"*, notions of the nurturing and facilitator were clearly seen as required and advantageous traits in senior management. The stereotyped aggressive, commanding persona as the ideal manger has little practical sense in modern management contexts to deal realistically with the challenges faced on a day-to-day basis in organizations.

The notion of a "rough and tough" manager is challenged theoretically as well as by the empirical and qualitative data we have. There are many models of successful managers who are not typecasted according to this masculine model. Old stereotypes of the "tough" manager have undergone radical change. Unfortunately, many remain in management positions with this notion of the ideal manager. Persons with such beliefs could be a major constraint to introducing changes and must change for the wider good of the organization and society as a whole.

In modern organizational management it is clear that specialization and differentiation is necessary. The primacy of a team taking decisions and being responsible has come to stay. In such a context what is necessary is a "pool of talents" or a "profile of management capabilities" that can strategically drawn on to make decisions in the best collective interests of the organization.

In such a framework, persons with aggressive as well as others with nurturing capabilities will be required. A combination of the typical "masculine" and "feminine" traits or capabilities within the pool of senior executive managers that are used strategically could be the more rational and "smart" approach to face competition, plan for the future and succeed in future growth and development of business. A healthy balance of females and males in senior management positions and executive authority that enables optimum use of them will be most advantageous.

In the above context it is vital that companies examine their work environments and adopt strategies to provide for the optimum working conditions for both women and men. Such optimization should benefit the individual women and men and also the company in the long run. A policy guide will help companies introduce required changes to prevent any form of discrimination of women as well as to take proactive initiatives to create a conducive work environment for all. The study shows ample evidence that it will be in the best interest of the employees, the organization and also for the greater good of society, that gender policy guidelines are developed and adopted.

> **For many, it is bound to be a difficult journey since the process will question one's closely held beliefs. The situation may also require one to question long-held notions about 'self'. Therefore, some individuals and organizations will require a major shift in thinking. This may be facilitated by a combination of support systems. The gender policy guide and the manual developed to help companies use the guide are two such efforts promoted by the Ceylon Employers' Federation and the International Labour Organization for Sri Lanka.**

VII Recommendations

The number of women trained in the universities of Sri Lanka in liberal arts, humanities, management and law outnumber men. The numbers of women studying marketing, finance and accounts is also high. Although women get employed, they are concentrated in certain sections and sectors. Their access to senior management positions and vertical mobility within organizations is found to be low. In Sri Lanka, the number of women in senior positions of management is limited. On the other hand, women in business have started their own collectives. Globally, the trends are that organizations are making the required structural and procedural adjustments to accommodate women and men where they do not have to compromise on their multiple roles. These changes are being instituted to have win-win situations.

These new arrangements are beneficial for employees, the organization and society as a whole. Such realignment and reorganization of relationships will require many changes. The recommendations presented below are for employers and leaders of organizations to consider.

1. **Awareness Creation:** Create a better understanding of the major concepts of organizational strategic management and policy. Within this context, decision-makers, leaders and all employees need to understand basic concepts of gender justice, equity, organizational culture and collective responsibility. This could be accomplished by well-designed training and awareness creation programmes. Recent research findings, trends in global business culture, new measures/indicators of how well business is performing such as 'Quality of Work Life', corporate social responsibility, long-term business interests etc., should be made integral component of training and awareness programmes targeted at present and future managers.

2. **Information resources:** Information about the existence of discrimination and unfair practices adopted at recruitment, and promotions that deprive women of career mobility as well as the organization of the professional inputs of competent women, need to be collated and synthesized. This information base, if reflected upon by organizations, its collectives such as the Federation or Chambers, as well as by researchers, can be effectively used to improve the situation. The information can be systematically and periodically collected, analyzed and inferences drawn for necessary action. A bold approach is required. Introspection can be painful but in the long run, a very potent tool used for diagnosis of latent problems. The information generated and knowledge gained should then be made available to organizations as a means of helping them change and improve. Self analysis gender audits, and gender impact assessments are two such methods now widely used by many in the development and State sectors, that can be effectively utilized in the private sector.

3. **Tool Kits for Gender Policy Formulation:** Design and develop easy to use tool kits to help organizations develop appropriate gender policies, interventions and action plans. These tool kits are to be used by policymakers or working groups in organizations.

4. **Information Pack on Gender Policy:** It will be useful to develop information packages which put gender in the context of good management practices for organizations to learn from and adopt. The policy package needs to be developed considering the need to balance work and family responsibilities adopting a holistic approach considering organizational goals in the context of wider social responsibilities. This package could include information from industrialized countries as well as from the region. Legal, psychological and management justifications need to be part of the information package. Profiles of good practices that cut across all aspects of organizational management and development that promote gender justice and equity need to be developed. These information packs are to be used by trainers and human resource development personnel of organizations.

5. **Gender Sensitivity Training:** There is a need for the human resource development personnel as well as the CEOs and the top line of management

to be provided with opportunities for gender sensitizing training and the development of skills to incorporate gender issues in planning and organizational policy formulation.

6. **In-house Training:** Organizations must be encouraged to undertake training of their staff. Such training should be linked to changes that could be achieved by adopting gender sensitive practices in their day-to-day operations as well as in strategic decision-making. The latter is to ensure mainstreaming and sustainability of the initiatives.

7. **Organizational Restructuring:** Organizations should be encouraged to examine different management structures that are more appropriate to address gender and other challenges. To be competitive and effective, organizations need to re-examine their structures and the manner in which they function. Facilitating this process from the outset will be helpful not only to make the required changes but also to be gender sensitive.

8. **Linkages:** Strengthening and broadening the links that employers and private sector organizations have with the formal education sector is required. This linkage should help a two-way learning process. Young women and men will be better prepared for future career options while organizations will also become more sensitive to changes underway in society as well as among young people. Their aspirations and capabilities need to be understood to change the mindset and attitudes of senior management of organizations.

9. **Campaigns:** The widespread beliefs of gender stereotyping and inappropriate practices need to be targeted for change. Social awareness campaigns which include mechanisms for mainstreaming need to be implemented if long-term change is to be effected. A multitude of options can be used in designing a campaign. Media interventions and inputs to the on-going education reform efforts of the government, programmes with the Chambers of Commerce at national and regional levels, competitions for organizations and managers, special training programmes, career development and leadership training programmes for women, etc., can be combined to develop a campaign to bring about required changes in awareness.

10. **Networks:** To help women of different strata - students, junior managers, entrepreneurs - and to address constraints faced by them in accessing positions of management and in career mobility.

11. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** The situation faced by women in management should be systematically monitored. The mechanisms and capacity of an organization to undertake this effort need to be developed and the required resources provided for this purpose. A database should be developed on the present status of women in management and the institutional support systems available.

12. **Management Study Inputs:** Organizations need to encouraged, and resources found, to facilitate a process of introspection and strategy development to formulate policies that would make them more socially responsible and gender sensitive. This will require the provision of technical expertise or know-how.

13. **Research and Information Dissemination:** All organizations will require valid and relevant information to make appropriate decisions to institute gender justice and equity. Organizational management research, with a special emphasis on gender dynamics, need to be encouraged and the available resources for research into these issues enhanced. Facilitating social scientists to undertake research may also be required. This can be done through a training workshop and also by providing seed funds to undertake research. The research agenda in this area needs to be developed with the participation of all stakeholders. The mechanism for dissemination of findings in an effective manner should be identified and strengthened.

14. **Support Groups:** There are many women who face similar challenges in relation to their career and occupational mobility. Developing support groups for women to critically examine the issues faced and to develop and implement strategies to address these problems should be encouraged. This will require awareness creation, and assistance in the formation of support groups and the strengthening of their capabilities. Existing women's organizations such as the Federation of University Women, Women's Chambers of Commerce, women's NGOs etc., could be supported to undertake programmes to help women in management as well as to educate and assist other women.

15. **Social Support Systems:** The family will remain an important social institution that will have a major influence on the manner in which women find access to and succeed in management positions. Organizations need to recognize this fact and undertake programs and strategies to help families make necessary adjustments in role-sharing and attitudes to help women succeed in their aspirations. Building a close-knit and reliable workforce and women managers in particular will require senior management to redefine how they will perceive and relate to the families of the employees.

16. **Image Building:** It is necessary to create and build positive images of women in management as well as of organizations that take a proactive stand, in encouraging women to succeed in management. These images should be used at all appropriate opportunities to educate the public, managers and leaders of organizations. Given the acceptance of corporate responsibility and also the increasing sensitivity of consumers to products and services offered by organizations, incorporating human rights and gender justice into its image-building efforts will be a prudent strategy.

17. **Improving Gender Relations:** Organizations should be encouraged to adopt mechanisms to improve gender relations and the manner in which

women are treated by male colleagues. This can be accomplished in several ways. Creating greater opportunities for interactions and communication both formal and informal helps breakdown stereotypes and gender blindness. Programs designed with specific objectives to improve gender relations can be implemented by those responsible for human resource development. Group discussions and time for reflection on issues pertaining to gender and organizational goals help people identify their roles and positions in a gender sensitive organization. A needs assessment undertaken by a relatively neutral person who could be objective will help identify critical areas for intervention in order to achieve the gender goals set for itself.

18. **Transforming Organizational Culture:** Many of the suggestions listed above will, if adopted, contribute to major changes that will ensure gender justice at the workplace. However, these interventions must become routine and mainstreamed into the annual work plans, values and norms of good conduct and practices in organizations. Such internalization of ideas and ideals among all levels of people is possible only if an enabling environment is developed. Developing an enabling environment is the responsibility primarily of management. The need to balance family and work should be recognized in the best interest of the organization as well as society at large. Corporate social responsibility should incorporate this vital aspect. Managers, in collaboration with the other tiers of employees, must develop and adopt an organizational policy frame and guidelines within which gender-just practices based on a new normative order is possible. The participation of all strata of the organization - both women and men - will ensure an output that reflects the needs of the employees that are also sensitive to the context and realities of the organization. Such an approach will also ensure ownership of the policy frame and guidelines that are developed, and a commitment to adhere to them. This may need facilitation by competent resource persons. Once a set of principles and interventions are adopted, the management must carefully nurture the employees, creating opportunities to reinforce these principles and making them part of the organizational culture. Commitment, genuine internalization, and practice will be required by management and others to transform organizational culture, which will require time and effort.

Towards Gender Equity and Equality
Future Directions for Enterprises

Wijaya Jayatilaka and Maithree Wickramasinghe

This chapter offers a comprehensive list of suggestions drawn from the previous chapters, on the process by which to transform work institutions towards achieving the goals of gender equity/ equality. The review of literature, survey of 100 private companies, and detailed case studies of selected companies and women workers have provided us with clear insights into the situations faced by management and workers within organizations. Our focus has been on instituting gender equity and equality at the workplace.

The recommendations presented here are drawn from the study. Our efforts have also been enriched by the findings of similar studies (both from Sri Lanka as well as other parts of the world) that have attempted to understand as well as find solutions to the challenges at the workplace. Depending on the extent to which workplaces are prepared to restructure their organisations, they need to undertake such exercises as gender analysis/gender needs assessments. These should assess the configurations of men and women within the organization, and indicate their specific needs and functions. At the same time, organizations would need to make a conceptual shift towards gender sensitivity (through gender training/gender-based policy change) and a sincere, long-term commitment (through gender mainstreaming procedures) to eliminate the systemic bias inherent in organizational structures and cultures.

This requires, in particular, recognizing the accountability of the work institution to its work constituency (through gender audits and monitoring), putting in place incentive structures as part of affirmative action to promote gender equity/equality, the use of internal mechanisms to assure gender justice, and by making an intellectual appeal for gender equity/equality.

The recommendations are presented without great detail, since the issues and the rationale were discussed in the preceding chapters. They are listed under nine headings reflecting important areas of intervention. The wider the adoption of the package of recommendations, the greater the possibility for sustained change in the organizations and society at large. The recommendations listed can be looked at as a menu of options to be considered by work organizations when developing a gender policy as well as when designing interventions or programmes to promote a more conducive work environment for their greatest asset - their women and men workers.

I. At Policy Levels

- Articulate the organization's commitment to gender equity and equality through the adoption of gender-related policies and other standards as 'best' business practices. For example:

  o   Gender Equity/Equality Policies

  o   Equal Opportunity Policies

  o   Gender concerns articulated in Employee Handbooks

  o   Gender Equity/Equality Handbooks

  o   Codes of Conduct at the Workplace

  o   Sexual Harassment Policies

Such a commitment will provide clarity and set the framework to develop clear procedures and guidelines to adopt and mainstream the best procedures.

- Direct organizational 'diversity' initiatives towards changing attitudes and reducing structural gender inequalities in the organization. It is not uncommon for employees to be segregated within their workplaces; and not have experience in dealing with persons different to them. This is particularly true of those who have worked long periods of time with the same type of people or colleagues and superiors. Introduction of persons different to them than those they are familiar with can sometimes trigger off tensions and micropolitics that may be counterproductive to the organization. Hence, there is a need to manage 'diversity' initiatives.

- Introduce gender equity/equality expectations, commitments, rights and benefits into staff contracts. The expectations of the organization vis a vis gender equity/equality is best mentioned explicitly in all organizational contracts, thereby creating consciousness and avoiding confrontations later. This may require a re-examination of existing contracts as well. The organization may need the expertise or may decide to develop the capacity of an officer to be able to undertake this task for the organization.

- Create a company position/role to initiate attitudinal change and monitor gender issues in the workplace. Many workers as well as management are bound to find it difficult to change their attitudes, long-held beliefs and learnt behaviours relating to gender stereotypes. Identifying a person to develop her/his capacity to help others change may be a prudent and strategic way of addressing the requirement for individual change.

- Set measurable goals and specific time-frames for achieving gender equity/ equality. Developing an annual work plan with clear targets in line with available resources and time, ensures steady progress towards achieving the desired changes.

- Integrate goals of gender equity/equality into the business plan and make adequate financial provision in company budgeting. One method of

ensuring long-term sustainability is to mainstream these efforts to routine and strategically important activities or functions. Incorporating gender issues into the organization's business plans and budget ensures that appropriate, defined activities are identified and the resources allocated for such interventions are utilized.

- Create consciousness amongst all employees about the Company's commitment to gender equity and its benefits. Top-down approaches and directives are often not the most effective methods of getting people to change. A major shift in thinking such as adopting a gender policy will require that all employees are adequately informed, sensitized and readied for the adoption of policies and initiatives that may follow. This allows for people to align their thinking and behaviour in accordance with the new directions of the organization vis a vis gender equity/equality.

- Make managers accountable for gender equity/equality; linking their performance appraisals and rewards to its achievement. The commitment made by the organization towards gender equality/equity may not automatically result in the required changes at the workplace. The efforts will be more effective if the persons responsible for tasks are specifically identified and all are aware of their responsibilities.

- Implement in-house gender awareness training programs/publish a gender equity/equality employee handbook for all employees. Training should address masculinity issues of men's difficulties reconciling work and family as well as tensions related to affirmative action. The gender concerns and issues are usually contextual and must address local/organizational concerns. Thus, the programs and initiatives must be designed and implemented based on the ground situation of each organization and specific needs of staff.

- Put in place monitoring mechanisms and reporting methods on institutional progress towards gender equity/equality. For the successful mainstreaming of gender concerns, regular monitoring and reporting is vital to ensure that the organizational initiatives do not flag. These can either be in the form of periodic reports on gender equity/equality or as part of other monitoring and reporting practices.

- Undertake employee surveys to obtain regular feedback on policies/ measures to achieve gender equity/equality. If the organization is to make a long-term concerted effort at changing the minds and behaviour of the employees, constant feedback about the effects of the initiatives, the responsiveness of the employees and the constraints faced must be known in order to make timely modifications to the initiatives/programs and for their continuity.

- Conduct 'equal opportunity audits' to ensure gender balance at all levels of the organization. The long-term sustenance of gender equality/equity

within an organization needs to be nurtured, and constraints identified and resolved. Regular gender audits will help identify constraints, and can be a learning process with valuable insights to make the required changes for gender justice.

- Appoint competent women to visible, senior positions in strategic areas of the Company as part of organizational policy. Such persons can be role models as well as an inspiration to inspire other women workers and help formulate their own career paths.

- Ensure that competent women (who are gender sensitive) are appointed to committees, boards and other agenda-setting/decision- and strategy-making bodies. Such appointees will ensure that the proceedings and decisions are gender balanced by incorporating gender concerns in decision -making.

- Implement a comprehensive sexual harassment policy, clarifying what constitutes harassment, along with Company mechanisms for redress. There is plenty of published information from Sri Lanka as well as elsewhere to assist organizations in this exercise.

- Make certain that workers are not penalized at the workplace for their sexual orientation/ transgender status. Often, despite the skills and productivity of a worker, identity issues may interfere in the smooth operation of an organization. Aside from a Company's commitment to non-discrimination on such grounds as sex/gender, race, relegion, caste, age, marital status, disability etc., its positive stand on worker sexuality and status needs to be clarified.

- Ensure that all images and publicity material of the Company are gender balanced and promotes opportunities for both women and men. It is from the publicity material that people formulate opinions about an organization. The positions and policies adopted by the organization to create a gender just work environment needs to be projected in its publicity material to keep stakeholders informed of such vital initiatives.

- Adopt a holistic approach incorporating gender into the human resource management plan of the organization. The decision-making executive pool of personnel should have the required balance of personal (male and female) as well as management orientations to meet the widest range of internal and external challenges.

II. Recruitment and Selection

- Prepare gender-sensitive job descriptions and specifications. Build a team of like-minded employees sensitive to gender issues and committed to the gender policy of the organization in the long term. It is necessary to create consciousness and encourage applicants by incorporating the required specifications in job descriptions.

- Ensure that recruitment advertisements are non-discriminatory. In accordance with a gender just philosophy or the new organizational value system, all advertisements including those placed for recruitment, must be designed to reflect non-discrimination.

- Utilize a wide range of avenues to search for female candidates. Given the present gendered system of socialization and injustices in our society and media, the organizations may need to be proactive when searching for potential new recruits (particularly women). Thus, the need to use a wide system of publicity including the use of networks and informal means.

- Ensure that all staff responsible for recruitment is committed to gender equity/ equality. Recruitment is often a long drawn process, with the involvement of many persons in the organization (directly as well as indirectly). Those involved in the decision making process in recruitment must be gender sensitive; so that they take correct decisions at all stages, to ensure gender justice at recruitment.

- Eliminate gender based vertical/ horizontal/divisional segregation through affirmative action in recruitment. Most organizations have a concentration of female workers in certain job categories, levels and divisions. Affirmative action at least in the short and medium term is required to change this situation. There is need to address the social structural causes of the situation at least within the institution (by providing proactive training/ promotions/quotas etc) if not in terms of larger society.

- Make sure that women are present on selection panels. When female candidates are selected for positions it is very important to have female members on the panel, not only in terms of numerical gender equality but also in terms of substantive equity. This provides reassurance to candidates; ensures greater credibility and robustness of the process, and prevents any personal gender biases that may influence decision - making.

- Ensure that interviews and selection procedures are gender sensitive and the panellists are skilled to handle gendered issues. Often persons who are not gender trained or sensitive may cause embarrassment, or be extremely inappropriate in conducting interviews and jeopardize the entire decision-making process. Such situations must be avoided through training and proper briefings.

- Articulate organizational commitments to gender equity as well as gender equity/equality expectations from employees in employment contracts. The organization and its employees must be explicit in their outlooks, expectations and commitments to gender equity/equality. This helps in achieving greater transparency as well as accountability while promoting and strengthening organizational culture.

III. Training and Development

- Identify impediments to women's career progress and make the required structural changes where appropriate. Such structural impediments may be difficult to identify as they may involve accepted organizational structures and practices, organizational culture and micropolitics; but if not removed, they may hamper career mobility and disable the organization from benefiting from a more gender equitable work force.

- Provide men and women with traditional and non-traditional skills training. For instance, training for men in secretarial work, nursing and for women in electronics, mechanics etc. Gender stereotyping can be removed to a great extent by providing equal opportunities, provision for rotating tasks, and training to develop the required competencies in both men and women. Such approaches have the inbuilt possibilities of finding more suitable persons for positions. It also helps to break the traditional gendered division of labour at the workplace.

- Provide men and women with non-formal skills training. This would develop skills that men and women do not customarily possess due to their gendered orientations. For instance, training for women in conducting meetings, undertaking emergency decorations, driving; and men in managing the reception desks, acting as hosts for events, managing sick employees etc.

- Ensure that both men and women are selected for additional training and career development opportunities. Gender bias towards training men can be avoided by ensuring that both women and men are trained for the required skills. An appropriate gendered Continuous Professional Development (CPD) program will ensure that this is undertaken effectively.

- Rotate women in job assignments so that they can acquire career-building skills. This will ensure that individuals do not stagnate in certain positions or divisions. Stagnation does not allow for the growth of people or systems.

- Encourage the provision of advisors/mentors and networking systems through which women can learn not only from other women, but also from men. This is important as it will serve to integrate women workers more firmly into organizational systems/cultures while promoting personal growth. And *vice versa* by providing female advisors/mentors for men.

- Develop human resource/career development plans for all employees in collaboration with the employees. This would help rectify the structural impediments of certain job categories that prevent upward mobility.

- Formulate a long-term projection of a human resource plan for the organization that can clearly show the gender balance of the work force.

This would allow for the dismantling of gender segregation; promote equal participation and upward mobility of all workers.

- Encourage and support women's participation in career-related training (both local and foreign). A long-term human resource development plan should address these career needs as well as the other gendered needs of the employees.

- Promote training on participatory decision-making, sensitivity to affirmative action and issues related to masculinity, family and work. These should be incorporated into an ongoing capacity building program.

IV. Performance Appraisals

- Utilize evaluation criteria that are not gender biased. Existing evaluation criteria need to be re-examined and modified if required. If new schemes are to be introduced they must be developed, by taking into account the gender differences of employees in the organizational setting as well as outside.

- Outline explicit performance objectives and criteria of assessment so that employees are aware of them and the standards that they have to achieve.

- Involve gender-sensitive women in determining the appraisal procedures (establishing the criteria, content and structure of the appraisal interview, etc.). It is expected that this would allow for the integration of alternative skills, procedures and systems into appraisal schemes.

- Take into consideration alternative work and management styles. (For example: participatory approaches, collective problem solving, people-orientated methods, the facilitation of decisions, subtle forms of motivation, conflict prevention and early resolution, liaising and networking schemes etc.)

- Use participatory methods of appraisal to ensure greater internal validity of the mechanisms developed as well as a greater sense of ownership.

- Make line managers aware that gender equity/equality is a bottom-line issue. The commitment of the organization should be reflected in the belief amongst line managers of its importance so as to ensure that gender justice is not merely given lip service. Thus the organization must have mechanisms to monitor as well as to rectify problematic situations that are well known to the line mangers.

- Conduct periodic review of procedures to ensure responsiveness to any new challenges faced by employees and their changing gender roles.

V. Promotions

- Improve advancement opportunities through changes to the administrative promotion systems so that promotion schemes are more gender sensitive and adjusted to meet the requisite situations and needs-particularly of career women.

- Redesign job ladders. Often career paths are not designed to help women workers to move vertically - to the higher levels of the organisation. The traditional male-dominated workplace is fast changing with women coming into all sectors of the labour force. Career ladders need to be re-examined and designed with a more diverse stakeholder group in mind.

- Enforce affirmative action programs designed to increase the opportunities for women moving into non-traditional jobs and managerial positions. This must be adopted in the short/ medium term (at least) to rectify injustices inherent in social systems.

VI. Remuneration

- Adjust pay rates so that jobs of equal value are paid equally.

- Adjust pay rates so that equal payment is given to equal working conditions/ time.

- Adjust pay rates so that equal payment is given to similar categories of work and thereby address gender bias in remuneration schemes.

- Adopt equal pay or equal work norms that are linked to standards of effort/difficulty and establish comparable units to ensure equity/equality.

- Rectify existing gender-based anomalies in the wages of employees in manual labour and the informal sector. This is a requirement that will ensure a more just labour market, and the private sector could act as a catalyst in bringing about this change.

- Ensure that wage schemes/structures as well as individual earnings are transparent.

VII. Working Conditions

- Management should ensure that all workers are provided with gender-sensitive infrastructure /amenities. Facilities such as toilets and restrooms, crèches, lockers to keep personal belongings, dining areas, sign boards in locations reserved for women, sick rooms, access to emergency medical/nursing care, adequate lighting in the premises of work, common areas, sork surroundings etc. are widespread positive practices.

- Management should also ensure fair treatment of workers as well as fair

conditions of work, where work is outsourced or where home-based work is part of its production and service delivery strategy.

- Ensure that all machinery, equipment and tools are designed for use by both women and men. Frequently, these are designed by male designers on the assumption that they will be utilized by male workers; and are often cumbersome for women to use. Thus, organizations need to ensure that there is gender sensitivity vis a vis the design of workplace equipment and ensure that women as well as men are trained in their usage. Providing feedback to manufacturers with regard to gendered concerns becomes important in this context.

- Minimize occupational hazards by conforming to safety/health standards. This is a basic requirement and a biding legal obligation to all employees. Yet, there are considerable areas for improvements in many industrial, plantation and service sector work settings.

- Ensure the security of women employees (from sexual harassment/gender-based violence) within and around the workplace. Often women are the targets of other employees - superiors, colleagues as well as subordinates—where harassment and violence is concerned. All employees must feel totally secure in the place of work as well as in the surrounding areas so that they do not have additional stress to deal with. The adoption of existing provisions as well as taking proactive measures to ensure a safe workplace will be a major achievement for any organization; as a means of developing both employer loyalty and organizational reputations.

- Account for occupational stress. Often employees work in high stress situations. The stress incurred may be in terms of the physical task performed and the physical risks involved, as well as mental stress where deadlines and targets are concerned. Stress affects people's physical and psychological well-being quite noticeably. Companies must be mindful of such issues/conditions and act favourably to help people cope with workplace stress. There is a growing body of knowledge on this topic that management should be familiar with so as to adopt appropriate strategies.

- Recognize and take responsibility for occupational ailments. With the widespread dependency on machinery at the workplace and in the work field, work-related illnesses are on the increase. Appropriate ergonomical designs relating to work environments, furnishings, equipment etc., as well as allowances in terms of time and medical care for the affected workers need to be introduced.

- Account for family crises. Almost all employees have family responsibilities. In countries like Sri Lanka, there are strong social values associated with family ties. Sometimes, when there are major crises at home, people are torn between two sets of loyalties. Further, due to the poor social support

systems and the underdevelopment of the service sector, individuals have to respond to family crises at unexpected times. If management accounts for such situations and responds in constructive ways to these domestic needs it would be a clear reflection of a wholesome organizational ethos and good public relations.

VIII. Allowances/Benefits

- Introduce parental leave. This is becoming increasingly common the world over and in Sri Lanka. Parental leave recognizes the dual responsibilities of parenting by both the father and the mother - a situation that may lead to greater family harmony as well as added commitment to the employer.

- Conform to existing maternity legislation. Subtle as well as direct violations must be avoided.

- Provide enhanced maternity benefits beyond the minimum statutory requirements. This approach may be a radical departure from conventions where the private sector follows the state in providing benefits to workers. On the other hand, it must be noted that when it comes to other initiatives and benefits such as technology, efficiency in management etc., the private sector is far ahead. The same recognition and generosity is required when it comes to maternity benefits.

- Provide the facility of extended leave of absence for family obligations. Some workers may have long term family obligations. Such responsibilities may prevent a person giving her/his best to the organization. Attempts to retain the member may require - innovative ways of helping the person through extended leave, flexi-time, working from home, etc.

- Ensure that workers who return after maternity/paternity leave, or after extended absence due to family obligations, are able to return to their former positions or to posts of equal rank.

- Ensure that workers who return after maternity/paternity leave, or after extended absence due to family obligations, are not discriminated against. These discriminations may not be overt; therefore, management needs to be conscious of the subtle ways in which such prejudices operate within organizations.

- Adhere strictly to existing legislation which calls for the provision/ facilitation of safe transport for women workers working late. This calls of the recognition that there is a wider problem in the country as far as safe and efficient transport is concerned; and that the risk of being attacked and violated at night, in public places, is far greater for women. Employees' security should be paramount to maximize on their well-being and productivity.

- Provide company crèches for employees' children.

IX. A New Work Culture

- Introduce flexible working arrangements/ rest periods/holidays, and ensure that employees who opt for them are not penalized for doing so.

- Undertake the funding/execution of employee domestic tasks as a company benefit. The strict division of work and home is arbitrary and unhealthy in most cases. By promoting the notion of an integrated work-home approach, the organization could support employees by helping them cope with certain family responsibilities such as child care and care for the elderly or sick.

- Create company/product/service images that are centred on concepts of equal opportunity or gender equity/equality.

- Implement measures aimed at downsizing the investment of employee time and impart it to the employee. Where downsizing is done as a measure to increase efficiency and improve productivity, transfer some of the benefits to the workers - not only to the shareholders. This will enhance the quality of work life and worker commitment.

- Redesign work patterns and mechanisms to ensure gender equity/equality and encourage women's participation. Where possible, organizations could redefine work arrangements and processes of staffing to encourage women to undertake work/tasks that are traditionally undertaken by men, and vice versa. This experiential/experimental learning increases opportunities for both women and men.

- Move towards the progressive reduction of working hours, and the reduction of the amount of required overtime.

- Take into consideration the place of employment of the spouse and the educational possibilities for children in the case of transfers from one locality to another.

- Regulate the terms and conditions of employment of part-time and temporary workers and homeworkers. All terms and conditions of employment, including social security and provident fund contributions should be equivalent to those of full-time and permanent workers.

- Validate the consideration of family responsibilities as a reason for the refusal of an offer of employment (for the purpose of avoiding the loss/ suspension of unemployment benefits).

We have attempted to provide a comprehensive list of ideas to give a range of options that organizations can select from - depending on their vision for the future as well as the context in which they function. With these options we hope that organizations will be able to think broadly and strategically in

developing an enabling environment to harness the energies of both men and men. And to institute fair working conditions for all. The challenge is to develop a new work culture that takes the equality of the work environment into consideration. Especially so that it will enable a healthy reconciliation of family and work through an appropriate policy framework. And institute mechanisms and practices that will fulfill organizational goals, while being collectively responsible for the well-being of all.

Glossary of Conceptual Terms

Affirmative Action: originally to mean an institutional policy decision to tip evenly balanced scales in favour of a candidate from an under-represented group. This includes preferential hiring and quota systems. Can also mean taking into account gender differences in organizational policy and practice so that the existent oversights, gaps, and outright discrimination are rectified.

Androcentric: male-centredness. Assumption that the experiences of men are generalizable to women; that the male is the norm that provides 'the objective criteria' through which women's experiences can be organised and evaluated.

Brick Walls: metaphor to signify the ideological and structural barriers preventing the horizontal and divisional mobility of women within the workplace.

Gender: socially, culturally and individually constructed notions of what it is to be or expected of a man or woman in terms of roles, responsibilities, characteristics, behaviour patterns, morality, professions, dress codes, rights and so on.

Gender Division of Labour: the differentiation and distribution of the tasks involved in the production of goods and services—paid work by men and unpaid family labour by women.

Gender Equality: a state or position of being the same, especially in terms of social status or legal/political/employment opportunities and rights. To extend to women the same rights and privileges as men and vice versa.

Gender Equity: recognizing and accounting for the gender differences between men and women (especially the hitherto ignored needs and interests of women) through policy, structural and practical interventions.

Gender Segregation: gender divisions of labour within the paid labour force.

Gender Stereotypes: a standardized and sometimes pejorative idea or image held about a person on the basis of gender.

Glass Ceiling: metaphor to signify the ideological and structural barriers preventing women's upward mobility (especially into management) in the workplace.

Micropolitics: the conflicts, anxieties, pressures, resentments, competing needs and interests as well as power imbalances which influence the everyday transactions of work institutions.

Organizational Substructure: intangible interactions and practices of an organization such as gender relations, conventions of behaviour, family/work splits, and moral codes etc.

Organizational Superstructure: institutional arrangements such as work/ management tiers, promotional ladders, labour/financial exchanges, corporate practices, and institutional mechanisms.

Patriarchy: the literal meaning being the rule of the father of patriarch. Is used to name the system whereby men generally dominate women. Refers to the structural as well and ideological subordination experienced by women in terms of the law and its implementation, religious and political ideologies and practices, cultural and moral values and practices, relations between men and women within the family and outside, reproductive, economic and labour power, sexuality, violence against women, daily events, and so on.

Practical Gender Needs: needs centred on practical necessities such as living conditions, food, employment, sanitation, etc.

Sex: the biological difference between men and women founded on the different male and female reproductive organs as well as the differences in body features and psychological makeup.

Sexual Harassment: Any unwanted sexual attention including leering, pinching, patting, repeated comments, jokes and insults, lewd gestures, the exhibition of (male) organs, rubbing, suggestions of a sexual nature (even on the telephone), the display of pornographic material, pressure for sexual favours and bribes. It can take the form of attempted and actual rape.

Strategic Gender Needs: needs centred on the subordinate position of women such as better pay, measures to combat sexual harassment, control over the body etc.

Transgender: complex movement towards transcending a person's existing sexual and gender identity through cross-dressing, scientific and surgical interventions and so on.

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Foreword

Today, women are active everywhere in the economic sphere. Job opportunities for women in an ever-expanding labour market are increasing. Some gaps between women's and men's wages, treatment and opportunities in the workplace are gradually shrinking, and women's education and entrepreneurship are rising. More women than ever before are completing higher education and moving into management positions.

Yet, discrimination based on sex still pervades the labour market. Inequality between women and men is a determining factor in world poverty, with women comprising 60 % of the worlds working poor. In many countries women have higher unemployment rates than men and make up the majority of workers in the informal economy. Unpaid care work in the family and the community is still widely regarded as women's work.

ILO therefore recognises gender equality as fundamental to the decent work goals of promoting productive work for women and men in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity.

Women in Sri Lanka have always been involved in economic activities, but their labour force participation has fluctuated in relation to national policy changes and shifts in international trends. Female labour makes a significant contribution to national production and income through their presence in plantation agriculture, migrant domestic labour and the export-oriented garment industry. Women also tend to be located in home-based economic activities and as sub-contracted workers with little or no protection by legislation. For the past few decades, the female unemployment rate has been double that of males and women and are being concentrated in the casual, low skill and low-paid jobs in the formal and informal sectors. Most women are in occupations with low incomes and limited opportunities for upward mobility. The small number of women in professional and administrative occupations confront the 'glass ceiling' that restricts career advancement and entry into the higher employment levels.

I am very pleased to present to you the book "**Beyond Glass Ceilings and Brick Walls -Gender at the Workplace"** written by **Ms. Maithree**

Wickramasinghe and Dr. Wijaya Jayatilaka, This publication is based on a study commissioned by the Employers Federation of Ceylon (EFC) and the International Labour Organization (ILO), to assess gender equality and equity barriers that exist in the workplace for women workers and women managers at various levels of the Sri Lankan private sector. Based on the main findings of the research study, a joint ILO – EFC seminar was held in 2003 on "Women in Management", an initiative which resulted in the formulation of *Guidelines for Company Policy on Gender Equity/Equality* (ILO 2005).

ILO is strongly committed to promoting women's rights in the world of work and eliminating all forms of gender based discrimination at work. International labour standards adopted by the ILO guarantee women workers' rights and promote equal opportunities and equal treatment for men and women in employment. Sri Lanka has ratified the ILO Conventions 100 and 111 concerning discrimination and women workers' rights and national legislations reflecting these international standards do exist. Progress has however been slow in raising the awareness of women workers' rights and the understanding of gender issues in the workplace by both workers and employers and if not reinforced will not create a gender responsive working culture achieving gender equality at work.

This book aims at raising awareness about the challenges faced by women workers and managers, and provides guidelines on how to make work organizations more gender-responsive. It provides greater insight into developing gender equitable and strategic management policies and structures to enable women to break through the 'Glass Ceiling' at all levels of work, in particular in relation to recruitment, selection, training and development, performance appraisals, promotions, remunerations, communications, working conditions, prevention of sexual harassment and workers with family responsibilities.

I hope that the readers of this publication – be they employers, executives, human resource managers, academics, trade unions, NGOs and others – will find inspiration in the examples provided and gain substantive knowledge to initiate their own organizational actions to reconsider their work ethics, and be inspired to promote new work structures and management cultures that are gender equal / equitable - so as to enjoy the maximum benefits of worker satisfaction, as well as the enhanced efficiency / productivity of their organizations.

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to the two authors for their excellent work and true commitment to highlighting the issues surrounding working women. I also wish to thank the many organizations and colleagues, who have contributed to the realization of this book. In particular, I would like to thank the Employers' Federation of Ceylon (EFC) Mr.Gotabaya Dasanayaka, Director General and other officers for their assistance in coordinating the survey. Within the ILO, special thanks goes to Ms. Claudia Coenjaerts, former Director of the ILO Colombo Office, Ms. Jyoti Tuladhar (ILO Geneva), Ms. Reiko Tsushima, (ILO New Delhi), Shafinaz Hassendeen, Ms. Pramodini Weerasekera and a special thanks to Ms. Sharmila Daluwatte, who worked tirelessly to coordinate all the efforts.

Tine Staermose
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Acknowledgments

Introduction

This book is written with a number of objectives in mind. Firstly, it is our intention to convey the macro situation and status pertaining to the participation of women in the Sri Lankan labour force, particularly in the private sector. Secondly, to illustrate the specific gendered experiences of women workers and women managers in their respective workplaces. Thirdly, we wish to consider the implications of these particular gender experiences and issues from a perspective of strategic management. And finally, to provide guidelines on how to make work organizations more gender responsive to suit the complex needs of strategic management of the present-day private sector.

The book is based on a study commissioned by the Employers' Federation of Ceylon (EFC) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) to assess gender equality and equity issues and barriers that exist in the workplace for women workers and women managers in various sectors and levels of the Sri Lankan private sector. The original survey of 100 private sector workplaces, 6 case studies of women managers and 10 case studies of women workers were later expanded to include a further survey of 66 women workers. This was done with the intention of providing a more comprehensive view of gender concerns in workplaces as experienced by the women themselves. The overall initiative resulted in the formulation of Guidelines for Company Policy on Gender Equity/Equality (ILO 2005) and a manual (forthcoming) on how to operationalize a gender policy.

It is our fervent hope that the end result of this exercise will improve women's working conditions, and provide equal opportunities and gender justice - for both women and men in the private sector. We also hope that employers will take the cue from this book to reconsider their work ethics, and be inspired to promote new work structures and management cultures that are gender equal and equitable-so as to enjoy the maximum benefits of worker satisfaction, as well as the enhanced efficiency and productivity of their organizations.

Background

Today's complex environment of a rapidly globalizing economy with its incumbent economic pressures on families has made increasing demands on the supply of labour. More women have entered the labour market along with men for purposes of subsistence as well as to fulfil interests and aspirations for more advanced lifestyles and standards.

Yet, patterns of labour distribution are not uniform for men and women; nor do women and men enter the labour market on even terms. On the whole, not only are there more men in employment than women, but men also occupy different occupational categories, different levels of employment and sometimes even different divisions within companies. This results in what is commonly referred to as gender segregation of the labour market (Hartmann 1982). Analyses of segregation patterns usually convey the following:

- Vertical segregation - the tendency for women to be concentrated in the lower rungs of the labour market, whereas men are generally found in all strata while being inclined to dominate the highest levels.

- Horizontal or occupational segregation - the tendency for men and women to be employed in different occupations from each other across the entire spectrum of occupations.

- Sectoral or divisional segregation - the tendency of certain departments or divisions within an institution to be occupied exclusively by men or by women.

Furthermore, the conditions in which women and men work, the status they are accorded, and the standards applicable to them differ frequently on the basis of their sex/gender, aside from other defining factors like educational and professional qualifications, ethnicity, class, caste, language proficiency, sexual orientation and identity. In particular, it is our contention that skewed gender ideologies and subtle gendered value systems are reflected in **organizational superstructures**. These are aspects of employment structures and practices such as management, recruitment, wages, and promotions.

Moreover, these same gender unequal perceptions, values, ethics, and morality also propagate **institutional substructures** or subcultures at the workplace - as a norm. Even more insidiously, these are maintained, reproduced and resisted through **gender micropolitics -** or the way in which power is relayed in everyday practices (Morley, 1999) - for instance, in terms of such issues as morality, language, dress codes and codes of conduct at workplaces. In fact, it is possible to even see work organizations as gendered entities (Goetz, 1992) where gender relations and gender politics are daily carried out.

These inequalities in the labour market, and more pertinently, in the workplace, have been historically related to the gender division in labour, which place men in the public arena of life, and women in the domestic sphere - resulting in a split between work and the family (Rao et al, 1999). Yet, in today's context, Sri Lankan men and women have multiple roles and responsibilities that are dynamic and flexible, involving both the household and the public realm: as economic producers and as decision-makers, in politics, social/cultural activities, as family members, child bearers and child carers, and as household managers.

Moreover, Sri Lanka takes pride in a high literacy rate, equal access to education and employment opportunities and a fairly egalitarian policy in the distribution of educational and training facilities.

Yet, the numbers of women in senior management positions who are directly responsible for decision-making and the management of organizations remain low. This is in spite of the fact that in most university courses (including management, law and the liberal arts), the numbers of women outnumber men, and large proportions of women attend management and accounts training programmes offered by private educational organizations and institutes. The need to examine the situation of women workers and the role of women in management in the private sector in Sri Lanka arises due to these apparent contradictions.

Sri Lanka, along with other nations, subscribes to gender equity and equality (Wijayatilake, 2004) to ensure equal access to resources and opportunities and gender justice as part of its social and development goals.

We feel that such national goals can be realized only when all social and economic institutions adopt policies and mechanisms calculated to ensure gender equity/equality. This includes all sectors - government, non-government, and private. The role of the private sector and business grows in importance when considering the emphasis placed on this sector for economic growth and employment generation. Hence the relevance of examining more closely, the opportunities, practices and threats to gender justice in women's employment in the private sector - as workers and managers as well as in terms of career mobility.

From the point of view of the employee, it has been recognized by law - both globally via international standards, and in local legal provisions - that the right to work is an inalienable right of all human beings, irrespective of sex, race, class, caste, religion, political opinion, sexual orientation etc. Various other rights documents and legislation also stipulate equality in all aspects of employment.

When considering employee rights, it is important to make distinctions about three types of rights. The first category, based on practical or fundamental needs such as employment rights, is common to all employees. In modern capitalist societies, governments, in collaboration with the private sector, see to the fulfilment of these rights.

The second set of needs, covering areas like maternity rights/ benefits, are those that are specific to women because of their specific biological/reproductive features, and are usually addressed through state legislation and policies. The third type of needs or rights can be seen as strategic needs based on gender relations and codes of conduct such as the need for institutional mechanisms and procedures to combat sexual harassment. It is important that both the state and private sectors recognize and legitimize these needs through appropriate institutional measures.

Furthermore, because historically, men have, by and large, dominated organizational structures and management tiers in the workplace, it is possible to see current institutional mechanisms as being, by and large, **patriarchal** in nature and work practices as **androcentric**. In other words, they reflect the dominant needs, values and interests of those that control them - usually men.

Hence, a majority of workplaces do not exhibit structures, procedures and even work cultures that take into consideration the differing requirements, interests and standards of women employees or women management. The ensuing micropolitics at the workplace, we argue, consisting of everyday tensions, resentments, conflicting interests, networking, personal and political strategizing, and other influences etc., (Morley 1999), endorse the existing status quo.

Women who work in settings that are not sensitive to their needs find the adjustment difficult. Although capable of undertaking any type of work, when women enter the workforce, the work culture is often not conducive to their outlook, values, and aspirations, since they are socialized to be different to men. However, management researchers have found that there are certain advantages and positive features that women bring into organizations. Gendered socialization has added value to women that can be of benefit to the overall resource profile of an organization.

The long-term development of organizations, especially in the private sector, relies a great deal on sound planning. The wisdom of scientific management know-how is constantly reviewed revised and improved. New approaches to understanding organizational behaviour and strategic decision-making are widely adopted. Integration, organizational structures, strategic controls, strategic leadership have become vital in a competitive market driven economic system. Social relationships in organizations are recognized to be a vital aspect that will determine the strength and capability to deal with competition and innovation. Managing a diverse workforce that will include women and men is important within this context. The reality of more women joining the workforce, women becoming more educated and skilled in all spheres of work, more women taking a stake in the corporate board rooms, are realities that call for greater understanding of the gender dimensions of work and management.

From the perspective of many employers, it is increasingly acknowledged that gender equity and equality is good for business. Faced with increasing competition in the marketplace, an organization's human resources are seen as its most precious asset.

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There is a competitive advantage for organizations that maximize the potential of their *entire* workforce, address the needs and aspirations of *all* of their workers, both male and female, and promote women into management. This is because gender equity and equality can also affect institutional outcomes through diversified management, increased efficiency, and enhanced productivity. Furthermore, the differing perspectives, attitudes, work and management styles of men and women can foster innovation and creativity in the workplace.

From the point of view of good corporate governance, then, there is currently an increasing trend on the part of leading organizations to better manage workplaces by conforming to good practices that are accepted by international standards of human resource management, and are in keeping with concepts of personal rights and gender justice.

This involves an organizational approach that promotes gender equity and equality. Here, we use the term **gender** to refer to the socially constructed roles and responsibilities, status, expectations and relationships of men and women (adapted from Rao et al 1999). It is worthwhile reiterating here that our perceptions of gender and our executions of gender are defined socially, according to various ideologies and discourses (religious, political etc.) through social institutions (schools, workplaces etc.) and practices (cultural, familial etc.) as well as real-life experiences of gender.

Thus, we can talk in terms of people being socialized or socially learning (Mischel, 1970) how to become men and women or to have gendered identities (Kohlberg, 1966; Wickramasinghe, 2002). Most often, views of gender identities are based on pervasive **gender stereotypes** - a standardized and sometimes pejorative idea or image held about a person on the basis of gender (Pilcher et al 2004).

But, neither men nor women are homogeneous groups, and gender identities vary with such determinants as age, geographical location, social class and values, ethnicity, sexual orientation, cultural practices, and scientific interventions.

Moreover, gender roles and responsibilities are not static, and can change with time, crisis situations and so on.

The concept of **gender equality** means that women and men should have equal opportunities and conditions for realizing their full human rights and potential to contribute to the work organization (especially at management levels) and to benefit from the results. On the other hand, the concept of **gender equity** means the recognition and equitable valuing by the work organization of the differences between women and men, as well as the social expectation of the varying roles/responsibilities/ status/relationships of men and women.

Instead of demanding that women be similar to men, gender equity requires women's empowerment through specific measures designed to eliminate barriers to gender inequalities and actively promotes the recognition and participation of women - resulting in gender justice. The following quotation illustrates the point further:

"Gender equality, or equality between men and women, entails the concept that all human beings, men and women alike, are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations set by stereotypes, rigid gender roles and prejudices. Gender equality means that the different behaviours, aspirations and needs of women and men are considered, valued and favoured equally. It does not mean that women and men are the same, but that their rights, responsibilities and opportunities do not depend on whether they are born male or female. From this it follows that gender equity means fairness of treatment for women and men. This may include equal treatment or treatment that is different but which is considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities." (ILO 2005)

The two concepts must be seen as being complementary, rather than contradictory - recognizing the need for equal (based on parity and equality) as well as equitable (based on difference and justice) treatment - due to the current unrecognized, unequal and sometimes discriminatory situations and relations between men and women within work institutions.

Because women have been historically excluded from possessing/ exercising **power** within work organizations, the operationalization of gender equity/equality requires a fundamental shift at the policy and executive levels of institutions to redistribute power.

We propose that there are at least six overlapping ways of exercising power that need to be accessed for institutional change. These are:

i. **positional power** derived from an office or title in the organization;

ii. **agenda-setting power** - the capacity to include or exclude what should be in the institutional agenda;

iii. **hidden power** - the ability to decide what is legitimate/ the norm, or not, for discussion;

iv. **power of dialogue** - **the ability** to press for organizational change;

v. **power of conflict**, in terms of confrontational action or pressure tactics; and

vi. **power of consensus - building,** by relying on multiple forces such as mentoring, coalition building, legislation, etc., to reshape organizations (based on Rao et al 1999: Luke 1997).

For the successful institutionalization of gender equity and equality within organizations, women as well as men must have access to the above avenues of exercising institutional power.

Methodology

The book is based on:

a) A survey of 100 private sector workplaces (with the use of questionnaires) to ascertain the numbers of women/men employed at each workplace, as well as their levels of employment. The companies selected for the purpose of sampling illustrate both diversity and the typical. They include a range of manufacturing and export industries and trades such as garments, food, tea and rubber; and companies in the service sector such as

IT, hotels and travel. There is also representation from multilateral companies to smaller privately-owned establishments.

b) Interviews with structured questionnaires of 66 women employees from various levels of employment, industries, divisions, and occupations to find out the common concerns of women in their workplaces. These employees are not affiliated to the 100 companies selected for the survey.

c) In-depth interviews forming case studies of 10 working women, again from various ranks, industries, and divisions of employment (unrelated to the above survey and interviews) from within the private sector in and around Colombo to provide an in-depth understanding of women's working experiences.

d) In-depth interviews with 10 women managers (not associated with the above survey and interviews) from various ranks, industries, and divisions of employment forming case studies of workplaces to convey the status and conditions under which women managers operate.

e) Primary literature that illustrates/affects the status of women workers and to a lesser degree, women managers.

f) Further detail is drawn from secondary research literature on the subject, so as to sketch the multiple facets of the Sri Lankan labour market and workplace issues.

The rationale for the quantitative data and the sampling processes in terms of workplaces, women workers and managers was to capture/compose a wide range of the diverse gender dimensions of workplaces. While it is not possible to provide statistical generalizations due to the minimal count of the survey, it is, however, possible to provide an indication of the trends and patterns of what is typical or average.

On the other hand, much of the book is centred on qualitative data. The working women/women managers who were interviewed represent various vocations and diverse echelons of age, class and ethnicity from in and around the city of Colombo. These in-depth interviews illustrate these women's work histories/lives, as well as the work conditions and cultures of their places of employment. Again,

they serve to provide an overall indication of the gender issues/barriers/ redress affecting women workers and mangers in general.

One of the main drawbacks in the collection and composition of data was the fact that a number of work institutions were not always willing to cooperate wholeheartedly with the research study.

Some were simply not interested in participating in the study, while others were pressed for time, and consequently, constraints were imposed on the interviews. In some instances, company management preferred to select the respondent women workers, and on occasion, were even physically present during the interviews. Women were seen to open out more, and speak freely when interviewed privately. However, some of the women workers were reluctant to speak and share their experiences freely - fearing reprisals from management and colleagues. Some wanted to meet the fieldworkers in private places where they felt it was safer to speak out. These circumstances were indicative of the 'problem' we were attempting to study, and highlighted the importance of careful investigation and follow up.

As noted earlier, the book does not by any means profess to encompass or represent the wide range of occupations, employment levels and sectors that currently construe the labour market in Sri Lanka. Nor does it cover all gender issues affecting women in the workplace. Rather, it is an attempt to illustrate the *types* of gender issues that affect the workplace *in general*, which, for the most part, place more women (than men) in a disadvantageous position, both in their vocations and their personal lives.

The book is divided into two sections. Part One sets the scene vis-à-vis the Sri Lankan labour market and private sector companies as well as the perceptions and lived experiences of women workers. In contrast, Part Two addresses the concerns of women managers from a framework of strategic management and offers guidelines for private sector companies to initiate and operationalize gender equity/equality in the workplace.

Chapter One on Gender and the Workforce begins by delineating the current legislation that impact on gender concerns. It then proceeds to give a national picture with regard to gender configurations and compartmentalizations in the Sri Lankan labour force through available data.

This is followed by a more localized indication of the participation and positioning of women and men in private sector workplaces. Finally, it provides a more personal picture by introducing women workers and women managers under study and highlights the reasons why women, in particular, go to work.

Chapter Two on Gender Dimensions of Organizational Structures, Cultures and Micropolitics deals, on the one hand, with the experiences of women at the workplace by focusing on institutional structures and practices that preclude gender equity (The experiences of women are highlighted because it is commonly accepted that women, more than men, are disadvantaged in the workplace.) These include issues relating to the superstructure and micropolitics of the workplace: recruitment and other procedures, appraisals and promotions, wage structures, and conditions of employment. Some of the issues discussed can be seen as non-gendered or as generic management issues, and therefore, problematic for both women and men. However, it needs to be argued that even what are considered to be 'genderless' problems may pose an additional twist for a woman employee due to norms regarding gender identities.

On the other hand, this Chapter also concentrates on the more intangible aspects of organizational subculture that impact negatively on women. Here, the book refers to the substructure and the micropolitics of workplaces that arise from various gender - inequitable assumptions founded on gender-based roles and responsibilities, gender relations and gender-based expectations etc., which serve to propagate a general atmosphere of discrimination, insensitivity and injustice in the workplace.

Chapter Three looks at Management Issues in Promoting Women's Participation and Gender Justice, under three sections. First, a few major concerns in management are highlighted briefly as the basic framework. Second, it assesses certain important 'gender in management' issues relevant for the assurance of greater gender equity and justice. The third section is a set of case studies undertaken for the purpose of identifying the present status of women in management as well as the opportunities and constraints faced by women managers. Here again the focus is on the experiences of women managers on the basis that there exists 'a glass ceiling' on women's upward mobility.

Chapter Four provides recommendations for gender equity and equality measures in private sector workplaces. These guidelines address the restructuring of work organizations at all levels through the mainstreaming of gender issues - policy and management, structural and attitudinal changes, workplace practices, monitoring, and aspirations for a new work ethos.

They are founded on the review of issues concerning women workers and women managers highlighted in the earlier chapters, and works on the premise that if work organizations are to adopt the ideals of gender equity and equality, there is a necessity to not only dismantle glass ceilings and brick walls of structural impediments, but also to tear down the more subtle frames of mental barriers.

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