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Diversity And Inclusion 6 Min Read

Govt nudges employers to do more on women's workforce participation: Safety creches, flexibility in focus

The Union Ministry of Labour and Employment, in an advisory to employers, has urged organisations to take proactive steps to boost women's workforce participation by strengthening workplace safety, expanding access to creche facilities and enabling flexible work arrangements. In this context, ETHRWorld interacted with the HR leaders at Vedanta Indian Silk House Agencies and Luminous Power Technologies to delve deep into the women's participation in the workforce.



Swastik Sarkar • ETHRWorld

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Highlights

- Vedanta Group has set a clear aspiration of achieving 30 percent women representation by the end of financial year 2030-31.

- Luminous Power Technologies has deployed lady security guards during women shifts.
- For retail sector companies, flexibility is particularly important for enabling women to sustain long-term careers in customer-facing roles.
- Many women in smaller towns face resistance from families when considering retail careers.



Industry leaders pointed out that improving access for women employees requires an integrated approach combining workplace safety, flexible policies and social security provisions.

The Union Ministry of Labour and Employment, in an advisory to employers, has urged organisations to take proactive steps to boost women's workforce participation by strengthening workplace safety, expanding access to creche facilities, and enabling flexible work arrangements.

The July 2025 advisory emphasises better implementation of existing labour laws, including provisions on maternity benefits, equal pay and social security, while also calling for gender-neutral hiring practices and greater representation of women in leadership roles to create more inclusive and supportive workplaces.

Though women's participation in the workforce has increased in recent years, there is ample scope for further improvement. These can be addressed through effective implementation of existing policies by employers, the advisory said.

The Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) indicates that there has been an increase in women's workforce participation by 13.9 percent from 22 percent in 2017-18 to 35.9 percent in 2022-23.

According to the advisory, there are several challenges that need to be addressed to encourage women to participate in the workforce predominantly, by proactive initiatives by the employers towards improved access to safety, flexibility and social security.

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In this context, ETHRWorld interacted with the HR leaders at [Vedanta](#), [Indian Silk House Agencies](#) and [Luminous Power Technologies](#) to delve deep into the issue of women's participation in the workforce.

Translating policy into shopfloor participation

At [Vedanta](#), increasing women's participation in operational roles has become a key focus within its [manufacturing and mining](#) businesses.

A Vedanta spokesperson said the organisation has already begun integrating women into frontline technical operations.

“At Vedanta, inclusion is embedded into our core manufacturing operations, with focused efforts to increase women's participation in frontline and technical roles. Across business units, the company is working to strengthen representation in shopfloor and operational roles,” said the spokesperson.

Following the government's 2019 regulatory reform allowing women to work in underground mines, Vedanta Group company Hindustan Zinc became the first in India to deploy women mine engineers in underground operations.

"Today, women are deployed across underground production, technical and emergency response roles, including three all-women underground mine rescue teams and women operating in night-shift assignments," the Vedanta spokesperson added.

Retail company Indian Silk House Agencies has also taken steps to integrate women across its nationwide store network.

Darshan Dudhoria, CEO, Indian Silk House Agencies, said women now play a central role in customer-facing retail operations.

“Across our 64 stores in 13 states, women make up half of our store teams, actively leading customer engagement, visual merchandising and daily operations on the shopfloor,” Dudhoria added.

The company has also introduced structured onboarding programmes for women entering formal retail work for the first time, particularly those from smaller towns where employment opportunities remain limited.

Shikha Gupta, CHRO, Luminous Power Technologies, said that perceptions around women's capabilities in manufacturing have changed significantly over the years.

The company's transformer manufacturing department has seen growing participation from women in technical production roles.

“When the transformer department at Luminous was established in 1999, manufacturing was manual and seen as a male domain. Today, women operate critical machines, including foil winding, primary winding, core filling, crimping, soldering and testing,” Gupta added.

According to Gupta, integrating women operators has delivered tangible business benefits.

Making shopfloors safer and more accessible

Industry leaders pointed out that improving access for women employees requires an integrated approach combining workplace safety, flexible policies and social security provisions.

“At Vedanta, tele-remote technology for underground mining, integrated control rooms, real-time monitoring and standardised operating procedures have reduced direct man-machine interface and manual intensity in frontline roles,” the spokesperson said.

The company has also introduced life-stage support policies aimed at improving workforce retention.

These include a year-long childcare sabbatical, structured parenthood benefits, spouse hiring to support dual-career mobility, and a 'No-Questions-Asked' work-from-home day each month focused on mental and physical wellbeing of employees.

For retail sector companies, flexibility is particularly important for enabling women to sustain long-term careers in customer-facing roles.

Indian Silk House Agencies has implemented flexible rostering and strengthened workplace safety frameworks across its stores.

"As a brand where women lead the shopfloor experience, ensuring their safety, flexibility and social security is not supplementary, it is operational. All our stores are fully 'POSH-compliant' with Internal Complaints Committees in place, and we ensure safe commute support, particularly for team members working evening shifts or in new geographies," Dudhoria said.

In manufacturing environments, robust safety infrastructure is essential to encourage women's participation.

At Luminous, the company has introduced multiple workplace safeguards.

To ensure safety and social security of women employees, apart from having POSH committees, creche facilities, women paramedical staff, CCTV coverage, the company has deployed lady security guards during women shifts.

"Our top management regularly meets women employees and encourages their participation in leadership roles. We also ensure consistent pay parity across genders and regularly review compensation

structures to promote fairness,” Gupta said.

Persistent barriers and the path forward

Despite progress, companies acknowledge that structural and cultural barriers still limit women's participation in manufacturing and shopfloor roles.

One of the key barriers in manufacturing continues to be the historically male-dominated nature of heavy industry, which has influenced representation levels on the shopfloor over time.

To address this, Vedanta has set a long-term representation goal.

“The organisation has set a clear aspiration of achieving 30 percent women representation by financial year 2030-31 and is prioritising balanced hiring at entry levels to build long-term diversity across functions,” the Vedanta spokesperson said.

In the retail sector, cultural factors and geographic mobility continue to shape hiring dynamics. Dudhoria of Indian Silk House Agencies said many women in smaller towns face resistance from families when considering retail careers.

“In many Tier II and Tier III cities, women entering formal employment, especially in a shopfloor environment, is still culturally uncommon,” Dudhoria observed.

To overcome these barriers, Indian Silk House Agencies is focused on local hiring and visible representation.

Manufacturing companies also say long-standing stereotypes around

physical strength and safety continue to influence hiring decisions.

According to Gupta of Luminous Power Technologies, mindset shifts remain an important part of building inclusive workplaces.

“Despite progress, gender biases persist in traditionally male-dominated sectors like manufacturing. These roles are often perceived as physically intensive, limiting women’s participation,” Gupta said.

Luminous is attempting to broaden opportunities for women by opening new pathways into technical careers.

“Women leaders at Luminous actively engage with university students across leading B-schools and engineering institutes to shape perception, encourage women to explore technical careers, and inspire as visible role models,” said Gupta.

From policy to practice

Industry leaders said that the next phase of progress will depend on sustained collaboration between policymakers and employers.

While national data reflects growing participation, companies believe real change happens when policies are translated into everyday operational practices from hiring and training to safety infrastructure and career progression of women employees.

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