



VOLUME: 02
ISSUE: 06
FEBRUARY 2021

WOMEN'S DAY SPECIAL



TABLE OF CONTENTS

4 Women & Energy

Women & energy
Looking for the right
solution, nor the simplest
neither the easiest. **6**

8 WOMEN
EMPOWERMENT
An attempt

Women; A Journey
beyond imagination **12**

14 The Phenomenal
woman

15 A tranquil
atmosphere helps
in career growth

16 SELCO A spring of
contentment

17 Rebuilding life
through solar
energy

18 Breaking gender
stereotypes through
solar energy



EDITORIAL

In mythology, the three chief deities are invariably depicted with their consorts: Brahma with Saraswati, Vishnu with Lakshmi, and Shiva with Parvati. In the Ramayana, Rama is incomplete without Sita; the traditional greeting is 'Sita-Ram'. In the lore of Krishna, the blue God is inextricably linked with Radha. Devotees greet each other saying 'Radhe-Krishna'. The goddesses in Hindu mythology are hardly reticent, coy, shy. Durga is the warrior goddess, astride a lion, with weapons of different kinds in each of her hands. Kali has always been regarded as the Mother of the Universe, the Adi Parashakti.

In India, the principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Indian Constitution in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles. The Constitution not only grants equality to women, but also empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women. The government has created the space for international agencies to work with state governments, local non-government organisations and private corporations on a plethora of projects to support women from different socio-economic backgrounds. Despite these efforts, India's ranking on global surveys of gender equality has not improved significantly over the years. While India has taken some measures on human development, its global standing on gender equality remains low. India's ranking in the Global Gender Gap Report, commissioned by the World Economic Forum, declined from 108th in 2018 to 112th in 2020.

In rural areas, gender disparity is still significant. Women continue to be relegated to household tasks, with little or no say in economic decisions. Levels of literacy, nutrition and access to health care continue to be poor, and social welfare parameters are lower than neighbouring Bangladesh. The renewable energy sector can be a leader by encouraging women leadership and involving women voices in the climate action dialogues.

Policies and strategies vary widely, but many have one thing in common – they are not designed from the perspective of gender inclusiveness. This low participation of women in sustainable energy is a problem because it curtails women's rights to be fully engaged in all political and economic activity. It is a problem, furthermore, because it has been demonstrated by countless studies, that female participation in corporate boards is good for the bottom line by increasing profits, reducing risk, and heightening involvement of the company in sustainability endeavors.

SELCO celebrates womanhood. Right from its inception, SELCO has encouraged women to be at the forefront of the climate agenda. Through its programs like women business associates and SEVA Bandhu, it has ensured women participation in the sector even from the rural areas. Many such inspirational stories are covered in this edition of Suchalana. We hope the readers enjoy this women special edition.

COMMUNICATIONS TEAM, SELCO



WOMEN & ENERGY



RICHENDA VAN LEEUWEN
EX-DIRECTOR SELCO INDIA

Having worked on renewable energy and energy access issues for many years, I have seen how the context of and for women and energy has changed in the sector globally over time, through initiatives such as Sustainable Energy for All and more recently Sustainable Development Goal 7. Both focus on energy access that recognizes the importance of energy for sustainable development for women.

This has given me great encouragement, as we have seen increasing levels of representation including in leadership, although we are still failing short as a sector.

The renewable energy industry globally hires more women than traditional energy companies, yet

women in India represent only 11% of the employees working for rooftop solar companies, compared to around one third globally. More targeted support for women's engagement both as employees and entrepreneurs is needed to help them reach their full potential and overcome residual barriers that often stand in their way.

I remain hopeful in another area as well – the recognition globally that women are central to addressing energy challenges, both in terms of being leaders in energy provision, but also recognizing the centrality of energy solutions to women's lives, in reducing burdens and drudgery and offering solutions to help livelihoods, education and health. Across all these areas women can benefit from, and provide solutions

for, their energy challenges. Women champions at the community level as well as the regional and national level can help to show the way to encourage other women to be confident in adopting new technologies and solutions that can enhance opportunity. With role models to help guide them, they can make their careers in the renewable energy sector, charting new paths for women in energy companies large and small as well as in policy making.

As we look beyond COVID to addressing climate challenges, recognizing that women globally remain the most vulnerable to the negative effects of climate change, it is imperative that women are supported as entrepreneurs who can bring innovative solutions into the mix. They can be the solution providers to their own local challenges and need to be given full equality of opportunity to make this happen. This means tailoring business development support to women entrepreneurs, especially those who do not have networks or language skills that put them at an advantage. It means helping them to have equal access to debt and equity or other needed financing to build their businesses, and at the same time ensuring that solar solutions are tailored to be equally accessible and available to low-income women-headed households.

SELCO has done great work in these areas. It is not finished. As we look beyond International Women's Day, our collective work will be done when we no longer need to designate a special day, when every day is International Women's Day, because equal opportunity is embedded across all our work. I look forward to that time, and the benefits it will bring to all.

WOMEN & ENERGY

Looking for the right solution, nor the simplest neither the easiest.



MS. ELENA CASOLARI
DIRECTOR, SELCO INDIA

In these trying times we have often felt lost : expectations for a poverty-free world and gender equality have abruptly faded away, just leaving rubbles of good intentions and partially unfolded efforts. The lift aimed at advancing women has stopped indefinitely. On the other side the global pandemic has re-invigorated our sense of urgency, calling for a new crusade against injustice.

I am firmly convinced that times are ripe for seeding the right seeds that can bring about a new beginning.

Energy and finance stand as two powerful “triggers” in advancing our new crusade towards a just and better reconstruction , but they both need to be reshaped and cured in their own fundamentals.

Both industries are the least gender balanced, with rooted secular conscious and unconscious gender biases, male dominated cultural barriers, sticky floors that prevent women from climbing the

leadership ladder.

In finance, and specifically in global VC, only 10% of general partners are women, less than 9% of risk capital is allocated to women led enterprises (and % are even less favourable in some countries, in India in 2019 only 6,5% of the funding raised among the top 150 funded startups went to women-founded/ co founded companies. (Source: Venture Intelligence, India)

Nevertheless Authoritative reports tell us that Companies with gender balanced boards and gender representation across their workforce have a better rate of innovation and they are more resilient and generate sound impact



for their stakeholders. (source: Gender lens investing impact opportunities through gender equity, 2018, Cambridge Associate)

Channelling the right funding into the right hands can make a huge difference, spur innovations and disrupt the status quo.

Exactly what we need right now.

The prevailing narratives in both the two industries stem from biased culture and unveil a biased idea of power: just think of the overcelebrated supremacy of unicorn company; the horn beautifying the unicorn shape embeds the masculin idea of power: a “sword” aiming at the sky. The range of prevailing images in finance borrowed from the zoologic world (bull, bear...) reveal the usual “stereotypes”: Competition and aggressivity over collaboration, ego supremacy over group dynamics , net worth against actual value, big against small. In finance we should embrace the idea of financing “built to last” companies, diversity balanced companies, even small, rather

than nurturing the distorted idea that only “big” male dominated companies improve our portfolio economics and better the world.

In Energy, women struggle, we seldom see women engineers, technicians wearing helmets climbing electric poles, energy designed products aimed at women, done by and for women; companies unwisely ignore or underestimate that women make the majority of household purchasing decisions.

Let us go beyond the current narratives, scrap the surface and dig the deep layers and support women in energy and in finance: women in finance will more likely enhance a more balanced capital allocation and women in energy will more likely advance a new idea of rebuilding, with inclusive innovative solutions. We should advocate the emerging idea of intersectionality between climate finance and gender lens investing as “a strategy to unlock a sustainable future” as it was magnified at the 2021 Gender Smart Investing Summit.



WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

An attempt



KHUSBOO AGARWAL
SELCO INDIA, BANGALORE

THE PERSPECTIVE

Since the beginning of time, I think it has been all about power. Who's stronger? Richer? Wiser? In this pursuit humanity has been put on a trial on multiple occasions.

One such dreadful omen that was cast on humanity purely based on power was gender discrimination. Throughout history women have been discriminated on a number of grounds. This was however not the real problem. The real problem began when the discrimination was considered rational and was normalised. The social structure was built in such a way that the women were deprived of all the rights and were viewed as a liability. It was accepted among all sections of society that a woman was lesser than man including women themselves. This was embedded in our intelligent minds.

Race, gender, age, sexual orientation

are the few grounds to name based on which discriminations have happened. The people living in cities and towns are probably marginally better than in villages where the education levels are low and access to internet/television is not as extensive. Can we blame them? We cannot because this is the premise set by the history itself.

Women are assaulted & insulted because they are projected to be the inefficient & less capable compared to the men. In the entire world, women's rights continue to be violated and disrespected disproportionately due to legal discrimination, social norms, and economic inequality. According to the report by Walk Free Foundation, the International Labor Organization and the International Organization for Migration, there are an estimated 40.3 million people living in slavery globally and 71% of them are women and girls. There are 35 countries that don't give equal land rights to women. Till today in India, many cultural practices encourage dowries in marriages which symbolizes gender discrimination. According to the World Economic Forum, women own less than 20% of the world's land. This is an issue because owning land can contribute greatly to both social and economic empowerment.

In most societies, gender norms define women's role as largely relegated to the home, as mother and caretaker, and men's role as responsible for productive activities outside the home. This is a clear discrimination on men's & women's role measuring the credit comes out from any performance evaluated by a society. Accordingly, any norms influence institutional policies and laws that define

women's and men's access to productive resources such as education, employment, land and credit. The first & foremost initiative to be taken at the primary level to remove gender inequality is 'Women Empowerment'.

WOMAN AND LIVELIHOOD-REAL LIFE STORIES

To sensitize our thought on women empowerment, I thought to talk about some exceptional case stories where a few women have come to the front of the society to serve 'difficult activities' and fight against poverty to make their own family financially & socially sustainable.

While searching for such exceptional case stories, we arrived at Banashankari – an ever charming & one of the oldest neighbourhoods of Bengaluru. Banashankari is an emerging micro-market in the southern quadrant of the city. Unknown to many of the citizens that the most of the micro / retail businesses are led by women. Yes, it is true that many of the women have chosen this place for their livelihoods to support their families.

MANIRATNAMMA- A HEART OF FIRE AND COURAGE

Maniratnamma, who is over 60 years and a very known face as a market vendor but has a painful journey to share. 30 years back when she lost her husband, couldn't think what to do with her children. The hunger made her stand at the street of Banashankari with two children. Maniratnamma began selling vegetables & fruits in the market & made the footpath her own home. Things became worse when she realized that

Chandrika, her daughter, was affected by a rare disorder where she couldn't stand by herself. Today, Chandrika is paralyzed & move with a wheel chair by some well-wisher. Prakash, Maniratnamma's son is not so good at counting numbers & weights. He didn't get any support for education & hence, is really helpless managing the business alone. The whole day Maniratnamma has to be there on the footbath with her daughter aside for earning Rs. 300 – 400/- daily to run the whole family. She has AADHAR CARD but no home to stay. Irrespective of any weather condition, she has to live beneath the Namma Metro Shed & travel for food to the restaurants. Apart from the issue of earning for basic survival, women street vendors like Maniratnamma also have to tackle several other issues. Uncertain and insecure working conditions, lack of support, regular threat of eviction, harassment by local officials, and crimes against women are battles they fight every day. Maniratnamma is an inspiration to each one of us just not as a woman street vendor but as a person who is still fighting against all the negatives & smiles with a



positive energy to all of her customers!

We can clearly see that after the threshold is cracked, no ounce of discrimination can stop people from achieving what they want. Maniratnamma defied all odds and continues to struggle in her old age to support her family.

SATHIYAPRIYA- A DREAM

Let's move on to the next inspirational story & talk about a very young lady security guard at Banashankari Metro Station. Sathyapriya, a 29 year old lady will be seen often when you pass through the metro station. Her parents who were construction labourers from Thiruvannamalai of Tamil Nadu couldn't afford her education & got her married at the early stage of life. Now she is settled at Bengaluru along with her husband, who is a street vendor & with two children. She has to support the family to fight against poverty. Vijayan (35), her husband earns Rs.300-500/- daily which is not sufficient to pay the house rent & fulfill all the daily needs of the family. Sathyapriya had a dream to become a police officer & couldn't fulfill it. The poverty which deprived her from education pushes her every moment to support her children to provide a better education. COVID situation made her family helpless where she & her husband had to borrow money at a high interest rate to support their daily family needs. It is quite a risky activity in this COVID pandemic where she has to check each of the women entering the metro station. Sathyapriya is standing as a strong pillar of family with 360 degree support & has also proven that women are great security workers. She is the one out of many women who still face



a lot of prejudice when they tell others that they work as a security guard as so many people are still stereotypes. But the world is changing. Sathyapriya makes us proud as a home-maker and balancing her life as a security job personnel showing her skills in communication, attention to detail, multi-tasking and empathy at her profession – especially when Social and Legal discrimination against women is a major obstacle in emerging and developing countries like India.

The narrative that I want to draw the attention towards is not a case for men versus women. However, it's important to acknowledge that the legal, policy and social norms in the past have not been favourable to create a sustainable impact

on women's economic empowerment. I believe that the ecosystem in the past, be it because of prevailing conditions or gender biases, at the time, would have led to women being treated in that manner.

CONCLUSION

However, today in the 21st century, I don't see a reason for women to be treated differently from men and I believe we are moving towards a direction where women are being recognized and given due recognition for the work beyond the unpaid care and domestic work they do. But the change is being reflected in a very small segment of the society. Hence, we need much more structured policy norms to create a scalable and sustainable impact on the rest of the woman's population.

There are deep rooted problems-the structural barriers that exist in the society, gender discriminatory practices that deny women socio economic rights in many laws of different countries.

Hence on this beautiful International Women's day, I would wish that everyone become a global champion for rights of women and girls. More and more efforts should be taken towards removing gender diversity and equality of women along with men which should start from our home first. Let the work and responsibilities be distributed equally and respect women in essence. Then the celebration of women's day shall no longer be required and then every day would be substituted by equality day. I truly believe that the future is going to be an exciting workplace where caregiving and bread making will have equal respect and women will be represented 50% at every level in the workforce.

Women; A Journey beyond imagination



PURNIMA K N
SELCO INDIA BENGALURU

For a moment I was emotional when I was asked to write about women and the strong emotions just passed my mind. It's not easy to define a woman, but normally she is compared to mother earth because of her tolerant nature. A woman is a replica of love. She is as earthy in forgiving. Females are the appendix of hundreds of bonds as daughter, sister, friend, lover, wife, mother and grandmother.

Yes. Today, women have set footprints in all fields and have proved themselves in all walks of the society. Unlike in olden days, modern women do not restrict to few fields but have championed in all the professions.

There can never be a better family supporter than a woman, because every moment she only thinks about her family, hence she is also known as a synonym for sacrifice. There are many examples of women who have abandoned their personal achievement and opportunities for the family. And many times women



have just neglected themselves by just taking care of family members. Perhaps all working women are struggling to find the right balance.

But it's time to change, at least considering the health, women need to change for good and take care of their health by eating proper nutritious



food. We must include meditation & pranayama in our daily activities. Health checks should be done periodically.

We hear the news of the atrocities being committed on girls but we always blame the girl for that and ask her to behave appropriately.. It's very much needed to teach children how to respect women at an early age to reduce the crime against them and also teach the children that women are as equal as men.

Female is not just a human but also a powerful soul. In the family she is a light & spirit. She must be properly identified and encouraged, and her strength, ingenuity, and intelligence should be allowed to bloom. Only then will the society be able to move forward. We have to stop considering a woman as a weak person and encourage her by giving all the respect which she deserves.

Women & SELCO

I have been working for the past 28 years. I have been an employee of Selco for over

17 years. There is never an inadequacy of respect, encouragement, job security and knowledge sharing for women in our organization. The Environment in SELCO inspires and encourages the fe

male employees.. I have not seen these facilities in my previous organization and hence this is the main reason for my long journey in SELCO.

The organization is also recognizing the women of our society by providing them with business partners opportunities and encouraging them to make a decent income and also help them by providing renewable energy based livelihood. I am always obliged to the honorable view that the organization has towards women.

G.S.Shivdrappa have written a poem in Kannada "sthree endare aste sake", which mean women is much more than being just called women. Yes everyday is women's day and when everyone realizes this then the celebration of Women's Day becomes meaningful.

The Phenomenal woman



RAMYA & CHANDRAKALA N

SELCO India Bengaluru

Yatra naryastu pujiyante ramante tatra Devata, it means where women are honoured, divinity blossoms there, and wherever women are dishonoured, all action no matter how noble it may be, remains unfruitful.

Indian culture has given a unique position for women.

There is no field where the woman is not seen. From home, office, politics, to cinema, the woman has made her mark.

Women's empowerment has reached a new stage in recent days. Like women, men also play a very important role in Women empowerment. There goes a saying that there is always a woman behind a man's success. Similarly there will always be a man behind women's success. A best example for this is Infosys Foundation's Sudha Murthy. She stood behind her husband and became the reason for his success and her husband Narayana Murthy was responsible for her success and even before that if Sudha Murthy's dad wouldn't have educated

her then she wouldn't have been in the position where she is now.

SELCO could be the best example for women empowerment. In SELCO most of the branch OA's (Office Admin) are Women. SELCO believes that women can also be a good leader and is nurturing them by providing a proper platform. I think this is the proper way of empowering a woman. According to Swami Vivekananda, if there is no development in the status of women in a society, then that society cannot flourish. There is no other way for the world to improve without developing a woman. Because a single-winged bird cannot fly. So the two wings of a perfect society are male and female.



According to us, women's day is not just for women, but for whole mankind. Hence we definitely need a celebration. Everyday we pray and adore women in the form of god and even in the form of our mother but never express it openly, hence women's day an opportunity to express openly. To encourage and make her feel more special, this day is very important.

Let's celebrate women's and let's encourage each other and grow together.

A tranquil atmosphere helps in career growth



SUREKHA HEGDE

SELCO India, Mangaluru

When the whole family said, it's a waste investing on daughters' education. It was my father who stood up against them and encouraged my education. It's because of my father I could complete my degree. After completing my education I got a job in a private company. But I had quit it after 3 years as I got married and shifted to Karkala.

But later when we shifted to Mangalore I got a job opportunity at SELCO. I was appointed as office admin and along with that I got an opportunity to train the new employees on office administration. Later in 2010, I was promoted to regional auditor and it changed the course of my career because I had the opportunity to meet with several influential people of society. Hence my self-esteem increased. Before my life would revolve just around my house and office but now I got the chance to visit different branches and meet them. And this interaction with new people and new places helped me in gaining knowledge. Latrine 2012, the CSD section was launched and I was

given the incharge of it. With the help of my colleagues I was able to handle it successfully.

In 2013 I was promoted as a Manager of CSD, which boosted my confidence to work more. Later in 2014 I was promoted as senior manager of CSD. Being a lady if I could climb into the ladder of success that's because of my colleagues' support, without them I could not achieve anything. They never treated me as just a woman but respected me for the talent I have and encouraged me to do better work.

I was lucky that I work in such an organization where women are equally respected as men. But it's not true in everyone's case. Because most of the organizations just try to pull women down. But In SELCO when I had to do work beyond my knowledge, I was supported and encouraged with training and skill required for the work.

2020 is one important year for me. I was appointed as a CSD department head. Each time I get promoted, my confidence to work more increases and i feel encouraged to take more responsibility.

SELCO is a Model for the way women are treated by organizations and plays a very important role in their empowerment. If they receive respect and encouragement from the organization, they will be able to advance to a higher career. I am always grateful to SELCO colleagues for creating such ambience for women to develop herself.

SELCO A spring of contentment



CHANNABASAMMA
SELCO INDIA BELLARY

I come from a rural background, but I had parents who emphasized on education. Hence I could complete my graduation. After completing my graduation I joined an NGO in Bellary and worked there for 3 years, but due to some personal reasons I had to quit my job. After that I got an opportunity to join the SELCO Bellary branch as Office Admin. In the early days of my career, I found this job to be a challenging task. But higher-ups at SELCO were very encouraging. So it was not difficult for me to face the initial challenges.

I was then offered the responsibility of the Sindhanur branches office administration. I was given the opportunity to train new employees about the office administration and such activities boosted my confidence and also helped me gain more knowledge.

In 2010 I was given additional responsibility of Accounts and Administration department and along with taking the responsibility of managing the Bellary branch, I was also visiting several SELCO branches for audit purposes. This responsibility enabled me to become

more professional and also helped me to interact with the staff of other branches.

I believe that we should grab the opportunities that come on our way and take more responsibilities. The firm has given me such opportunities. This is because of the responsibility I got in the year 2015 of overseeing the Bellary branch. Indeed this was challenging, but the support I got from my seniors made me climb one more step in my career and also gave me more spirit to take more challenges. Maybe because of this I was appointed as Admin Manager in 2018.

The senior accounts team guided me a lot which is also a reason for my success. I was tasked with managing all the functions of the Internal Audit Division independently. Though I managed the department independently, without the help of colleagues nothing would have been easier.

2020 was very important for me as I was promoted as Area manager of Internal Admin and was also given the responsibility of a women, Business Department and my area of work got expanded and I got to interact with a lot of women BA. I was happy to introduce SELCO to all the women BA and motivate them. Indeed 2020 is the year of learning for me, I got to learn a lot. I am thankful to SELCO for providing such opportunities for me. Women need a peaceful and safe environment to work which SELCO provides to all its women employees. And I think I am lucky because SELCO provides a career which respects every employee equally and gives priority for women safety.



On a regular day, if you walk into Padma's house, you will see her juggling between handling production and sales of food items, engaging in her catering business, imparting her knowledge on cooking to community members, and even moonlighting as a speaker to local self-help groups that visit her for advice on being a successful entrepreneur. Padma, a self-made entrepreneur from Doddasidanahalli, a small town of over 100 households, in the district of Chitradurga, Karnataka.

The untimely death of Padma's husband led her to start a small home based catering business to support her two children along with working at anganwadi. She manually prepared rotis and vegetable sabjis to supply to people working in the locality. Making rotis manually was a very arduous task and she could not afford to hire help either. Mixing flour for the same purpose

would take over half a day and sometimes would lead to physical pain as she had to mix it in huge quantities. Padma invested in a solar-powered roti-rolling machine and a flour mixing machine and was installed at her home, which reduced her production time, increased her income, and reduced her costs considerably. This enabled her to hire women to help her in her business. The technology provided her immediate accessibility and constant reliability. The technology has played an important role in her success as an entrepreneur.

She says, "I am happy that I have invested in solar or else I wouldn't have been where I am today and would never be able to educate my daughters. Solar powered roti rolling machines have helped me to prepare rotis any time of the day without fearing for uneven electricity supply and now my physical pain has reduced as I use solar powered flour mixing machine."



BREAKING GENDER STEREOTYPES THROUGH SOLAR ENERGY

Being a blacksmith is not an easy job, it is very strenuous and requires skill. A lot of physical effort is required and a blacksmith always needs extra human support to complete his work. Physical exertion in the long run results in arthralgia, athetosis, myalgia and respiratory problems too, also making iron tools requires working

long hours in front of the furnace and involves extreme drudgery. Hence it is considered to be a men's job. Looking at the hazards involved in this profession the next generation does not find this aspirational.

Solar powered energy efficient blowers are designed to reduce the drudgery and

increase productivity which also results in a clean environment.

In most traditional livelihoods, women always tend to perform the most drudgery-prone tasks, such as kneading clay in potter communities; cleaning, destoning, and sifting paddy within farming communities; and fanning fire to keep it alight in a blacksmith's workspace. Appropriate



technologies such as blunger/pugmill, rice mills, and blacksmith blowers/power hammers can help reduce the day-to-day physical stress, reduce health risks, and allow women to carry out other tasks as well. Lakshamma from Hassan district in Karnataka was engaged in the task

of fanning the fire in her husband's blacksmith workspace, while he would hammer and shape the tools. They belong to a traditional blacksmith community, where the tasks performed

have been passed through generations, including the gender roles. They invested in the blacksmith blower, a simple tool powered by solar energy. This eliminated the need for constantly fanning the fire through the day. After the intervention, Lakshamma is now also engaged in crafting the tools herself, which she would never have had the opportunity before. This has given her husband time to engage in the sale of their tools, which has helped increase their income with access to additional markets.

