

'Lean in' to opportunities rather than 'Lean back'

Despite the advances in education and opportunity, women still remain under represented in senior leadership positions across the globe. The situation is particularly grim in India.

According to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2013, only five per cent of working women in India have made it to senior leadership positions, much lower than the global average of 20 per cent.

A majority of companies are making gender diversity a priority by setting aspirational goals for inclusion of women in their workforce. For a woman, becoming a leader is not just about being put in that role, or acquiring and adapting new skills and style. It involves shift in her identity, inner will to lead and support structures that encourage her to prioritise work over family.

It is this blend of organisational support and the inherent shift.

Given this backdrop, FICCI Ladies Organisation organised an interactive session with Sheryl Sandberg, COO of Facebook, on the theme 'Lean In: Women, Work and Will to Lead' to deliberate upon issues that can encourage women to pursue their ambitions.

In her address, Sandberg stated that three things need to be primarily addressed, in order to bring about a visible difference in the percentage of women participation in workforce and thereby, propelling the economy of the world. This can only be achieved by addressing stereotypes, ensuring equal and fair treatment and achieve balance at home, she stated.

Sandberg said women who are at the helm of their affairs

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are either considered officious or too aggressive in their approach. This mindset needs to change and a woman should be respected and recognised for her ability.

In her welcome remarks, FLO President Neeta Boochra stated it is imperative for woman to pursue her dreams with grit and determination, in order to achieve the full potential. She added that this is the need of the hour as also imperative to unleash the leadership of both women and men.

Other who attended the meeting were Lise Grande, UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative; Ebyan Mahamed Salah, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Somalia; Marie Leontine Razanadrasoa, Republic of Madagascar; Gennet Zewide, Embassy of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia; Darja Bavdez Kuret, Ambassador of the Embassy of Republic of Slovenia; Idris Diaz, Acting Deputy Mission Director, USAID; Kiran Mehra Kerpelman Director, UNIC and Erin Wroblewski USAID Project Development Officer, amongst other business women, entrepreneurs and professionals. ■



L to R: Sheryl Sandberg, COO, Facebook; Dr. Manju Kalra Prakash, Assistant Secretary General, FICCI; Neeta Boochra, President, FLO and Archana Garodia Gupta, Senior Vice-President, FLO.