

Outline of Special Technical Speech

Workforce STEM Pipeline Needs to Re-imagining: Improving Access and Participation of Women in STEM

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Despite the demands in the global workforce, women's labor force participation is significantly disproportionate in many countries and Sri Lanka is forecasting a lower rate. However, Sri Lanka is a fore-runner in many human developments, healthcare, education, and gender equality among the South Asian countries, yet the contribution from the female workforce to the economy is at a persistently low rate around 30-35% of working-age women during 2011-2020. This is a significantly lower rate given the fact that higher educational attainment of the female population in Sri Lanka. It is an alarming indicator for the female STEM workforce where the technology industry has far more work to do to attract women to STEM careers.

The world bank report hypothesized three major reasons for the Workforce gap: (1) household roles and responsibilities, which fall disproportionately on women, and the associated sociophysical constraints on women's mobility; (2) a human capital mismatch, whereby women are not acquiring the proper skills demanded by job markets; and (3) gender discrimination in job search, hiring, and promotion processes. The solutions to the key question "How do we re-imagine and build a pipeline of female talent in technology?" need much careful exploration. This presentation will share some of the suggested solutions and initiatives taken in the local context to reduce the gap of the female STEM workforce in the industry.